



Press Release

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QUARTET 'ROAD MAP' FOR TWO STATES WAY OUT OF ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CRISIS, SAYS SECRETARY-GENERAL AS PALESTINIAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE OPENS SESSION

Committee Elects Bureau, Adopts Work Programme

At the opening this afternoon of the 2003 session of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the Bureau was re-elected, the work programme was adopted, and Committee members heard Secretary-General Kofi Annan urge that the way out of the extremely dangerous situation between the Israelis and Palestinians was the "road map" aimed at a two-State solution.

"Let us not fall into the trap of imagining that it cannot get any worse. It easily can", said the Secretary-General in a statement read out on his behalf by S. Iqbal Riza, Chef de Cabinet. Already, the human cost of the crisis had been appalling. Since September 2000, more than 3,200 people had lost their lives – the great majority of them Palestinians, but also many Israelis. Thousands more on both sides had been wounded, again preponderantly Palestinians. Deplorably, the majority of the victims had been civilians.

Still, there was a way out, he said. A broad consensus had emerged on the need for a two-State solution. The "[road map](#)" drawn up by the Quartet – the United States, European Union, Russian Federation and United Nations – aimed to help realize that vision, set out in Security Council resolution [1397](#), of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace. The road map was performance-based and hope-driven, with clearly defined phases and realistic time-lines and target dates. Its implementation would end the occupation that began in 1967, establish an independent, viable and democratic Palestine within three years, bringing hope to Palestinians and ensure security for Israelis.

Speaking in his national capacity, Papa Louis Fall (Senegal) urged stepped-up efforts in that relentless pursuit of common effort to promote and maintain, at an international level, the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. He, therefore, endorsed the Secretary-General's judicious proposal calling for the deployment of a credible multinational force of international observers, whose presence would make it possible to break the vicious cycle of violence and horror in that tormented region.

It was up to the Committee to urge all parties to step up their efforts for the effective implementation of the road map in order to realize the dream of a two-State solution to the crisis, he said. The Committee must work tirelessly to mobilize public opinion, in order to overcome the difficulties "littering the road to peace" and in order to relaunch negotiations and extricate all parties from that vicious cycle of destruction.

The representative of the Permanent Observer Mission for Palestine, Somaia Barghouti, said that not a single day had passed in which the Palestinian people had not suffered from the wrath and brutality of the Israeli occupying forces. Not a single aspect of Palestinian life had been unaffected by the relentless military campaign being carried out against the Palestinian people. Against that backdrop, on 28 January, the Israeli electorate returned to power the Likud government of Ariel Sharon, despite the numerous controversies and allegations surrounding both the Prime Minister and his party.

In other business, the Chairman outlined the Committee's work programme for 2003 and updated members on developments. The officers of the Bureau, re-elected today, are: Papa Louis Fall (Senegal), Chairman; Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla (Cuba), Ravan Farhadi (Afghanistan), Vice-Chairmen; and Walter Balzan (Malta), Rapporteur.

Summaries of Statements

Delivering the statement of the Secretary-General, Mr. RIZA said that stifling closures and curfews, extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detentions, house demolitions, continuing settlement activity and the often excessive use of force by Israel had only added to long-standing Palestinian anger and resentment. At the same time, cruel and devastating terrorist attacks against Israeli civilians, including suicide bombings, had revived old fears. Because of that spiral of action and counteraction – because of that pervasive climate of recrimination, retribution and deep mutual distrust – the reserves of good will that existed a decade ago seemed to have been exhausted.

Achieving a settlement, as outlined in the Quartet's road map, required great patience and tenacity, he said. One key factor would be the willingness of Palestinians and Israelis to take parallel steps in the security, institution-building, humanitarian and political areas. Indeed, progress in any one of those areas was heavily dependent on progress in the others. Moving ahead in tandem offered the most promising path away from the current impasse and towards a reactivation of the political dialogue. The Quartet stood ready to facilitate that process. Ultimately, the parties themselves would have to

summon political will, show good faith and demonstrate a readiness to make the painful compromises that would fulfil the mutual obligations outlined in the road map.

He said that an important factor would be Palestinian reform. Efforts in that direction had already begun and should be viewed as part of the broader framework of steps outlined in the road map. He urged the Government of Israel to support that Palestinian-driven process by creating conditions that would lead to the normalization of Palestinian life. In particular, Israel should expedite the withdrawal of its troops from Palestinian areas occupied since September 2000, immediately freeze all settlement activity, end the practice of house demolitions, lift restrictions on the movement of people, goods and essential services, and disburse in full the revenues owed to the Palestinian Authority. Israel should also abide fully by its obligations under international humanitarian law, especially the Fourth Geneva Convention.

He urged Palestinian groups, for their part, to unconditionally cease all terrorist acts, and the Palestinian Authority should do everything in its power to combat terrorism. Attacks that targeted civilians were heinous and morally repellent, regardless of whether their perpetrators saw them as reprisals for acts by the other side. International help was vital. The Palestinian people were in dire need of humanitarian assistance and emergency relief. Their economy had suffered a catastrophic decline. United Nations agencies, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), would continue their efforts. The UNRWA, the main provider of basic services to more than 3.9 million registered Palestine refugees, was today facing an especially severe financial crisis.

PAPA LOUIS FALL ([Senegal](#)), speaking in his national capacity, said that the daily management of that painful and frustrating dossier concerned the United Nations and the Secretary-General, who had appointed a Special Envoy for Humanitarian Affairs at a time when the world had its eyes riveted on the “fires” of the latest, alarming news from the Middle East and the unprecedented humanitarian crisis there. He endorsed the Secretary-General’s proposal for a credible multinational force of international observers.

He paid tribute to the non-governmental organizations and other civil society groups for their invaluable contribution and mobilization of political and economic support for the Palestinian people. The Committee was already planning to further involve sectors such as parliaments, universities, and media in the promotion of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

Once again, last year had been punctuated by the intifada, as a result of the humiliations of the Palestinian people, he said. They had been devastated by the acts committed by the Hebrew State, in flagrant violation of the Geneva Convention and in defiance of international humanitarian law. Those unacceptable developments were not serving the cause of peace. The United Nations should continue to shoulder its responsibilities with regard to the Palestinian people until their full recovery. It must also allocate resources, in order to favour the development of the Palestinian State. The Committee was resolute in its commitment to work with all interested actors, without exclusion, to find a negotiated solution and try to change the present reality.

SOMAIA BARGHOUTI, Permanent Observer Mission for Palestine, said there were no positive developments to report since the Committee last met. Like the pre-election period, the post-election days had witnessed the continuation and expansion of the brutal Israeli military campaign throughout the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. At the same time, implementation of the Quartet’s road map continued to be delayed and even obstructed. Yet, that remained the best path towards ensuring security for Israelis and Palestinians and its early implementation would break the current stalemate and allow the parties to actively pursue negotiations.

She drew attention to the extreme hardships suffered by the Palestinian people, including the further loss of life, injury and destruction of homes and agricultural lands at the hands of the occupying forces. In addition, the Palestinian economy had suffered gravely as a result of the occupying Power’s continued imposition of the severest restrictions on the movement of persons and goods, including medical and humanitarian, throughout the territory. The constant Israeli military siege on the occupied Palestinian territory had further deepened the dire humanitarian crisis of the Palestinian people.

As reported to the Security Council by Under-Secretary-General Kieran Prendergast, “there has been no appreciable improvement in the humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territory since the last briefing, and Israel still had not fulfilled the commitments it made to the Secretary-General’s Personal Humanitarian Envoy last August”. Indeed, it was tragic that the situation continued to deteriorate with the ongoing perpetration of Israeli crimes against the Palestinian people, in serious violation and grave breach of international law and international humanitarian law, in particular, the Fourth Geneva Convention, she said.

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