



International Labour Conference

**Provisional Record**

99th Session, Geneva, 2010

**8****Third sitting**

Thursday, 10 June 2010, 10.10 a.m.

*Presidents: Mr de Robien and Mr Nakajima*

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**REPORTS OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE GOVERNING BODY AND OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL: DISCUSSION**

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Mr TROTMAN (*Worker, Barbados, speaking on behalf of the Workers' group*)

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A second blow for the Workers' group, and the second blow against the goodwill we were anticipating, was struck on Monday, 31 May, when many of us were making our way to this Conference in Geneva. Last June – as well as in the June before that – we had conducted very positive discussions calling for the peaceful coexistence of the citizens of Israel, as well as for an independent State of Palestine, whatever citizens might choose to call it. We were asked for technical and other assistance for Palestine, for the workers there to move and work, and for students to move in furtherance of their education. We were hoping, Mr President, to speak about efforts to improve and strengthen relations and to achieve social and economic progress. Regrettably, we have now been forced, as the Workers' group, to condemn the killing by the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) of some nine civilians aboard a ship carrying relief supplies to the people of the Gaza Strip. Our group does not need to enter into the details of this horrendous action. However, it feels that simple human compassion and a respect for justice and human rights will require that we all support the call for a full independent enquiry into the facts surrounding the attacks and the murder, and the bringing to justice of those persons found responsible. Nothing short of full condemnation by this Conference will suffice. It must also be affirmed that the marginalization and impoverishment of some of the people in Palestine will not lead to peace, security or development in the region and that both the Palestinians and the Israelis must be assisted in the greater effort to renounce violence and to find a negotiated peace. The blockade must end and more technical and financial support must be given to the Palestinian people.

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*Original Arabic: Mr AMOSH (Minister of Labour, Jordan)*

Any observer of events in the West Bank and in Gaza will confirm the degradation of the economic, humanitarian and social situation that has resulted from collective sanctions, military incursions and the Separation Barrier. The deterioration in the economy is reflected in unemployment and increasing poverty. It is the Palestinian workers who have been the principal victims of this deterioration.

We greatly value the important role played by the ILO and its Director-General, Mr Somavia, in supporting the workers and the employers.

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Ms SUNDNES (*Worker, Norway*)

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At the heart of the conflict is Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories which has caused soaring unemployment and poverty among the Palestinian people.

The trade union movement in those territories operates under extremely difficult conditions. ILO will continue to support and cooperate with the

Palestinian trade unions.

We defend the rights of Israelis and Palestinians alike to live in peace and security. The United Nations must take a leading role in peace and diplomacy in the region and must assume responsibility for the reconstruction of Gaza and ensure delivery of food and buildings, so that the workers of Palestine can obtain full and productive work.

If the UN track proves unsuccessful, the Norwegian Government must take the lead in an international campaign against the occupation. A call for an international boycott should be considered.

The Norwegian Labour Confederation adopted a statement on 1 June this year demanding that the 4 June 1967 borders be respected, that the establishment of Israeli settlements be stopped and the wall torn down. Finally, we think that the United Nations should appoint a commission to investigate possible violations of international law and Conventions.

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*Original Arabic: Ms ABDEL HADY (Minister of Manpower and Migration, Egypt)*

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The annex of the Director-General's Report refers to the situation faced by workers in the occupied Arab territories, namely the blatant violation of basic human values and international labour standards.

From this rostrum I would like to appeal to the ILO and the international community to put an end to this blockade of Gaza and to provide financial and technical assistance, in order to support the Palestinian Authority in establishing an independent Palestinian State.

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*Original French: Mr DIAW (Minister of State, Minister for the Public Service, Labour, Employment and Occupational Organizations, Senegal)*

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In concluding, I would like to reaffirm Senegal's commitment to continue its full involvement, alongside all the Members of the ILO, in overcoming the economic and social crisis, so that human dignity is preserved and universal peace is attained. In doing so, naturally I am thinking especially of the Palestinian people and all the Palestinian workers who have been unfairly deprived of the full exercise of their fundamental rights.

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*(The Conference adjourned at 12.10 p.m.)*

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#### **Fourth Sitting**

Thursday, 10 June 2010, 2.30 p.m.

*Presidents: Ms Powell and Mr de Robien*

#### **REPORTS OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE GOVERNING BODY AND OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL: DISCUSSION (CONT.)**

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*Original Arabic: Mr MAJDALANI (Minister of Labour, Palestinian Authority)*

We have taken note of the international mission Report presented by the Director-General relating to the situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories; the methods used and the conclusions presented are quite remarkable. We appreciate the efforts made to produce this Report; we would like to assure you that we wish to strengthen our cooperation with you in order to improve the observance of labour standards by Palestine.

The actions by the Israelis and the policies of occupation and settlement have led the Palestinian economy to the verge of total collapse, causing increased unemployment and poverty, especially over the past decade. In the light of these facts and the serious violations associated with settlement activity, the Palestinian Authority is nevertheless endeavoring to fulfil its obligations and meet its commitments to the international community and to its people, who are seeking peace, and has adopted a range of measures as part of a national campaign against products made in the settlements. The campaign is based on three essential pillars, namely: the peaceful resistance of the people to combat the Separation Barrier, Judaization, the destruction of our homes and the withholding of identity cards; the continuation of diplomatic and political initiatives at international forums to achieve peace – and I appeal a here for condemnation of acts of piracy against civilians of the liberty convoy and for an international commission of inquiry to be set up and for an end to the blockade of Gaza; and, thirdly, continuing efforts to strengthen our institutional capacity and the boycott of all products from the settlements in Palestinian markets.

The President has also taken a decision to boycott all products manufactured in the illegal settlements of the West Bank, and we have launched the

Pro-programme for National Dignity.

The National Palestinian Authority, in spite of its very limited resources, the tremendous burden that it has to bear, and the activities of Israeli extremists, is not neglecting its duties and is trying to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor and create jobs for the unemployed, through legislative and other action measures and ambitious programmes.

Our people, which has already suffered much, needs your support in order to be able to impose the will of the international community on the Government of Israel. Our people is determined to continue its struggle for a just and equitable peace until all its rights are guaranteed under international law, an independent State is established, refugees are able to return, and all prisoners currently languishing in Israeli prisons are released.

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Ms THAPPER (*Worker, Sweden*)

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The only and lasting solution to the conflict between Israel and Palestine is the creation of an in-dependent, democratic and viable Palestinian State, living in peace and security with Israel. The situation for the people in the occupied Arab territories continues to be very serious. Figures show a very small economic improvement in the West Bank, whilst the situation in Gaza continues to be depressing, as the unemployment rate stands at over 40 per cent, the education system is in ruins and the parameters for economic growth are not in place. The legitimate right of the Palestinian people to statehood and to economic and social development is a responsibility that belongs to all of us. The Palestinians can no longer be denied decent work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity.

The Swedish workers will continue to show support and solidarity to the Palestinian workers in their very precarious situation. Recent events involving the efforts to provide humanitarian aid to the people in Gaza and the violent reaction of the Israeli Government are absolutely wrong and must be condemned.

Mr MOHAMED (*Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment, Mauritius*)

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Since I am now on the subject of equity, the Director-General's Report, *The situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories* shows us a picture that is more than worrying.

The solidarity of Mauritius with the Palestinian people is unequivocal and unbreakable. We are, therefore, deeply concerned by the military raid on the Gaza-bound humanitarian aid convoy in international waters, causing tragic loss of lives and casualties. We strongly condemn this unilateral action by Israel. We look forward to a unified and sovereign Palestinian State taking its rightful place in the concert of nations where the workers of a Palestinian State will also enjoy unity, equity and modernity.

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*Original Arabic:* Mr DAHLAN (*Employer, Saudi Arabia*)

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The efforts made by our Organization to ensure the application of international standards and fundamental rights at work prompt me to ask all the participants, the ILO and all the international organizations to make every effort to achieve the same objectives in Palestine, the Syrian Golan and all the occupied Arab territories.

We call on the international community to lift the blockade on Gaza in order to guarantee human rights in this region; we must do everything possible to ensure the creation of a Palestinian State and guarantee all of its rights at the international level.

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*Original Arabic:* Ms HAMADY (*Minister of the Civil Service and Administrative Reform, Mauritania*)

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mr Juan Somavia and to congratulate him on the excellent quality of his Report, as well as the Appendix dealing with the difficult working conditions experienced by the Palestinian workers under occupation. I would like to say from this rostrum, on behalf of the Government of my country, that we condemn the acts perpetrated by the Zionist State against the peace flotilla. We would also like to express our unconditional solidarity with our brothers and sisters in Palestine, and particularly in Gaza.

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*Original Farsi:* Mr YARAHMADIAN (*Worker, Islamic Republic of Iran*)

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The elimination of discrimination, the realization of peace and improvements in socio-economic indicators based on social justice, as well as employment-based growth, are constituent parts of the ILO's work. Thousands of Muslim and Christian Palestinian workers live under the deplorable conditions caused by the racist policies of the Zionist regime and struggle to defend their most basic human rights.

Today, the anxious eyes of the Palestinian children and their empty hands are pointed towards you and all the justice-loving movements of the workers around the world, as well as the ILO.

None of the internationally adopted norms, standards and obligations are heeded or respected by the Zionist regime within the occupied territories. The ILO and the workers' movements of the world face the question as to how they would like to draw up their respective justice-loving policies and plans against "Zionist apartheid" and the plight of a nation's annihilation.

I hope we can stand tall in response to this historic question of the Palestinian children. I salute the thin hands of the Palestinian children; long live honesty, peace, security and justice.

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*Original Arabic: Mr SAED (Worker, Palestine)*

The situation facing our workers and the Palestinian people as a whole stems from the occupation of our land by Israel and its war machine. We have been subjected to all manner of arbitrary measures. There are 615 military checkpoints throughout the territory, for example, disrupting the free movement of people and goods, undermining the economy and making every aspect of life ever harder. As for the racist Separation Barrier, it has deprived us of 20 per cent of our territory, dividing families and villages and keeping children from their schools, farmers from their land and patients from their hospitals.

Unemployment has risen to 15 per cent as a result, leading to a similar increase in poverty. Not only is the continuing policy of land-grabbing and settlement an obstacle to any peace negotiations, but it also encourages the settlers, protected by the Israeli army, to commit crimes against Palestinians. The consequences of the blockade on the Gaza Strip have been disastrous for our people and our workers.

This policy on the part of the Israeli Government has resulted in more than 1.5 million Palestinian people being confined to an open-air prison for over ten years. Protest demonstrations have been organized against the crimes perpetrated during the occupation of the Gaza Strip, most recently against the peace flotilla representing the international support for the lifting of the blockade. Instead of going into the details of the crimes committed by the Israeli forces against those on board the boats, allow me, on behalf of the Palestinian workers, to present my most sincere condolences to the people of Turkey and other countries for the flotilla's fallen martyrs.

We furthermore request that the decision of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights follow its course, and that an international inquiry be conducted in the occupied Palestinian territory.

Al-Quds, the city of peace and religion, is our capital. For more than a decade, however, the blockade by the Israeli authorities has deprived it of all but one colour: that of the occupation.

In spite of all these challenges, we have decided to continue the national struggle in every shape and form against the destruction of our national economy, the Separation Barrier and the settlements; and to strive to achieve our main goal, namely the building of our own independent State.

Finally, I would like to thank the members of the high-level mission for their faithful account of the realities of everyday life for Palestinian people.

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*Original Spanish: Mr NAVARRO FERNÁNDEZ (Worker, Cuba)*

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The Confederation of Cuban Workers (CTC) and the Cuban unions reaffirm their constant solidarity with the Palestinian people and condemn the constant aggression to which they are subjected, the most recent example being the attack on the flotilla carrying humanitarian aid to the population of Gaza.

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*(The Conference adjourned at 7.20 p.m.)*