



DIVISION FOR PALESTINIAN RIGHTS

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I. RE-ELECTION OF OFFICERS AT THE FIRST 1989 MEETING OF THE
COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS
OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE: STATEMENT BY THE
SECRETARY-GENERAL

On 26 January 1989, the Committee unanimously re-elected Mrs. Absa Claude Diallo (Senegal) as Chairman, Mr. Shah Mohammad Dost (Afghanistan) and Mr. Oscar Oramas-Oliva (Cuba) as Vice-Chairmen, and Mr. Alexander Borg Olivier (Malta) as Rapporteur.

The Committee also decided to re-establish its Working Group and to elect Mr. Borg Olivier as Chairman and Mr. Pramathesh Rath as Vice-Chairman.

After congratulating the Chairman and other members of the Bureau on their re-election, the Secretary-General made the following statement (see SG/SM/4255-GA/PAL/425):

"The Committee resumes its work with a renewed mandate and in a context marked by the very important events that have taken place in the past year. The uprising in the occupied Palestinian territories, the intifadah, which began in 1987, remains a grave subject of concern for the international community. I am particularly disturbed by the toughening of the measures taken in recent weeks and the high number of deaths caused by bullets. The innocent civilians killed, mutilated or wounded, whose number includes women and children, makes it incumbent on us to find a way of bringing the parties to the negotiating table in order to arrive, once and for all, at a global, just and durable settlement of the problem. For the Israelis and the Palestinians are not the only ones concerned: the intifadah is an integral part of the Israeli-Arab conflict, which, as you know, encompasses a number of closely interlinked questions.

"A number of other very important events should be recalled. I shall confine myself to mentioning the nineteenth extraordinary session of the Palestine National Council, held in November at Algiers, the consideration of the question of Palestine by the General Assembly at Geneva and the important statement made on that occasion on behalf of the Palestinian people by Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), as well as the decision of the United States Government to enter into a dialogue with the PLO. These new developments have relaunched the diplomatic process aimed at a peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Arab conflict and, in particular, of the question of Palestine. I am convinced that today, as a result, new possibilities are opening up for progress towards peace.

"The General Assembly, in resolution 43/176 of 15 December 1988, called for the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East, under the auspices of the United Nations, with the participation of all parties to the conflict, including the Palestine Liberation Organization, on an equal footing, and the five permanent members of the Security Council, based on Security Council resolutions

242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the legitimate national rights of the Palestine people, primarily the right to self-determination. The Assembly requested the Security Council to consider measures needed to convene the International Peace Conference on the Middle East, including the establishment of a preparatory committee. It also requested me to continue my efforts with the parties concerned and, in consultation with the Security Council, to facilitate the convening of the Conference.

"I intend to continue consideration of this question with the Security Council, and I do not doubt that, with the full support of the great Powers, it will be possible to progress towards a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. Some tangible results were achieved last year with a view to the settlement of a number of regional conflicts. The duration and the explosive character of the Israeli-Arab conflict render all the more urgent the need to intensify our efforts in that region from now on.

"As you know, the General Assembly has once again endorsed the recommendations drafted by the Committee and has requested it to continue to promote their implementation. The Assembly has also requested me to continue to follow the situation relating to the question of Palestine and the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Achievement of Palestinian Rights, adopted by the International Conference on the Question of Palestine in 1983.

"There is general agreement that it is, to a large extent, thanks to the untiring efforts of the Committee that the rights of the Palestinian people are now better understood and supported. I am pleased to note that the programme of regional seminars, information activities and meetings of non-governmental organizations undertaken by the Committee has contributed so effectively to ensuring an increased knowledge of this question at the international level.

"The General Assembly's mandate to your Committee gives it, once again, a very full programme of work. I wish to assure you that you may always count on my personal support and that of the Secretariat in the discharge of your important mission."

II. ACTION TAKEN BY THE COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

On 5 January 1989, in a letter addressed to the Secretary-General (see A/43/992-S/20372), the Acting Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People drew urgent attention to the continued grave situation in the occupied Palestinian territory. The full text of the letter is as follows:

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"In my capacity as Acting Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, I wish to draw your most urgent attention to the continued grave situation in the occupied Palestinian territory. Since the last letter of the Chairman of the Committee to you on 6 December 1988 (A/43/946-S/20315), Israel, the occupying Power, has further intensified its policy of repression against the Palestinian people. According to the Washington Post of 2 January 1989, the month of December 1988 was branded by Israeli Parliament members as "black December", during which Israeli soldiers shot fatally 31 Palestinians and wounded more than 400 others.

"According to the latest report of the DataBase Project on Palestinian Human Rights, the total number of Palestinian casualties since the beginning of the intifadah more than a year ago has reached 310 persons killed by gunfire and another 146 persons killed by tear-gas, beatings and other actions of the Israeli occupying forces. Mass arrests, demolition of houses, curfews and other various forms of collective punishment, including deportations, continue to be inflicted indiscriminately on the Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territory.

"The Committee, in particular, strongly deplores the deportation to southern Lebanon on 1 January 1989 of 15 Palestinians from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip who, according to the Washington Post of 1 January, were charged with being involved in leading the uprising. Another three Palestinians from Gaza had been deported on 14 December. The number of Palestinians deported since the beginning of the uprising has now reached 51. According to a military spokesman another 12 Palestinians are awaiting deportation in the near future.

"Such measures are being taken in defiance of Security Council resolutions 607 (1988) and 608 (1988), in which the Council strongly requested Israel, the occupying Power, to abide by its obligations under the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, to refrain from deporting any Palestinian civilians from the occupied territories and to ensure the return of those already deported.

"The Committee also condemns the frequent and widespread use by Israeli forces of gunfire, which has caused a growing and tragic toll among Palestinian civilians, including children. According to The New York Times of 1 January 1989, Israeli troops, on 16 December 1988, shot and killed eight Palestinians during a funeral procession in Nablus for a 16-year-old Palestinian who had been killed a day earlier. During the same week, another four Palestinians were reportedly killed in the West Bank. On 16 December 1988, according to the daily Ha'aretz, three Palestinians were shot and killed in Deir al-Ghusson and Rafah. Ha'aretz also reported that during the last week of December six Palestinians were killed by the Israeli army.

"In view of the gravity of these events, the Committee wishes once again to protest vigorously the continued armed repression in the occupied Palestinian territory, which is in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention, international human rights instruments and United Nations resolutions. Such policies and practices are aimed at preventing the Palestinian people from exercising its

inalienable rights in accordance with the principles of the Charter and the resolutions of the United Nations, and pose grave obstacles to the recent international efforts to negotiate a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

"The Committee once again reiterates its appeal to you to take all possible measures to ensure the safety and protection of Palestinian civilians under occupation and to intensify your efforts towards the urgent convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East in accordance with General Assembly resolution 43/176 of 15 December 1988."

In a further letter dated 25 January 1989 (see A/43/994-S/20424), the Chairman of the Committee drew urgent attention to the escalation of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories as a result of the increasingly harsh measures taken by Israel, the occupying power, to suppress the Palestinian intifadah. The full text of the letter is as follows:

"In my capacity as Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, I wish to draw your most urgent attention to the escalation of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories as a result of the increasingly harsh measures taken by Israel, the occupying Power, to suppress the Palestinian intifadah.

"On 18 January 1989, The New York Times reported that on 17 January Israeli Defence Minister Yitzhak Rabin had announced 'tough new measures' against Palestinians accused of throwing stones in the occupied territories. The measures include allowing a greater number of soldiers to fire on demonstrators, sealing or destroying the homes of stone throwers, fining their parents and confiscating the cars of those who take part in the uprising. The order also liberalized the use of plastic bullets, which are supposed to be non-lethal but can kill a person if fired at close range.

"The New York Times of 23 January reported that more than 30 Palestinians, mostly young people, have been shot and killed by Israeli soldiers in the past month, 18 of them in the last 10 days. In many cases, doctors extracted plastic bullets from the bodies. Increasing casualties have also been caused by the recent introduction (according to Ha'aretz on 13 January and Reuters on 14 January) of a heavier and highly lethal bullet consisting of a metal ball coated with thin rubber, which is reported to have killed at least six Palestinians and to have left several others so severely brain-damaged that they are expected to die. According to a Reuters dispatch of 20 January, the Israeli army said that 492 Palestinians

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had been wounded in the past month. Reuters also reported that at least 370 Palestinians have been killed since the beginning of the uprising.

"In view of the gravity of these events, the Committee wishes once again to protest vigorously at the increasing armed repression in the occupied Palestinian territories, particularly the brutal new measures adopted by Israel, the occupying Power, in violation of international law and in defiance of United Nations resolutions. Such policies and practices are abhorrent to the international community as a whole and have been condemned within Israel itself. They can only result in further bloodshed among the Palestinian people and increased resistance to oppression, thus jeopardizing international efforts to advance towards a negotiated and just settlement of the question of Palestine, which lies at the heart of the Arab-Israeli conflict in the Middle East.

"The Committee therefore wishes to reiterate its earnest appeal to you to take all possible measures to ensure the safety and protection of Palestinian civilians under occupation and to intensify your efforts towards the urgent convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 43/176 of 15 December 1988."

III. FINAL COMMUNIQUE ISSUED BY THE SPECIAL ARAB MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE TO SUPPORT THE INTIFADAH, TUNIS, 12 JANUARY 1989

"The Special Arab Ministerial Committee to Support the Intifadah of the Palestinian Arab People held a meeting at Tunis on 12 January 1989. The meeting was attended by the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Arab States members of the Committee and the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States.

"The Committee heard a comprehensive review presented by Chairman Yasser Arafat concerning the current political circumstances of the Palestinian cause, the continuation of the people's uprising in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip against the Israeli occupation and the sufferings being undergone by the Palestinian people in its heroic confrontation against the inhumane and terroristic repressive practices adopted by the occupation forces. These practices include killing, mass arrests, the demolition of homes, the destruction of crops, economic sanctions, the violation of holy sites and the infringement of freedoms, and a policy of expulsion and deportation designed to empty the occupied territories in violation of the Charter of the United Nations, international conventions and the principles of international law. The review also included a detailed discussion of the necessary appropriate means by which to support the uprising and ensure its continuation and escalation until it achieves its objectives.

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"After considering the steps and measures which it had taken to carry out the programme of work adopted at its first meeting on 20 February 1988 at Tunis, the Committee affirmed that the uprising - now that it was entering its latest stage after a period of over 13 months - required more material support, a heightening of Arab diplomatic activity and preservation of the momentum currently apparent in the Palestinian cause.

"The Committee expresses its appreciation to the non-aligned, Islamic, African and socialist States for their adoption of positions supporting the rights of the Palestinian people and its courageous uprising and for their recognition of the State of Palestine. It expresses its appreciation for the position of His Holiness the Pope and the Holy See towards the Palestinian people and its cause.

"The Committee calls upon the nations of the European Community further to develop their positions towards recognition of the State of Palestine and to work towards the convening of the International Peace Conference and the preparatory committee.

"The Committee considers that the true measure of progress in the United States position with respect to the question of Palestine resides in recognition of the Palestinian people's inalienable national rights, and particularly its right to return, self-determination and the establishment of its own independent State on its national soil.

"The Committee affirms the importance of placing the occupied territories under international supervision with a view to protecting the population and paving the way for an equitable political solution in accordance with United Nations resolutions.

"The Committee reaffirmed Arab commitment to the decisions of the Algiers Extraordinary Summit Conference concerning Support for the Intifadah and stressed the need for those decisions to be followed up and for the provision of additional material support in order to ensure the continuation of the uprising. The Committee also emphasized the need to broaden the information campaign in order to expose the crimes of the Israeli occupation in the occupied territories.

"The Committee adopted a number of decisions in this connection. Among these was a decision to entrust the Secretary-General of the League with the task of drawing up a programme of work for its future political activity, to include visits by all members of the Committee, including Palestine, to permanent members of the Security Council, other members of the Council, the European Community, African and Latin American States and the headquarters of the Organization of African Unity and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries. The Committee also entrusted the Secretary-General with the task of drawing up a programme for its activity in the Arab context with a view to providing greater material support to the uprising, in accordance with the pertinent decisions of the Algiers Extraordinary Summit.

"The Committee will maintain its contacts and endeavours, in accordance with the established programme, with a view to providing the highest level of support and backing to the uprising of the Palestinian people and to increasing the momentum of the just and comprehensive peace process, which guarantees the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people and the withdrawal of Israel from the occupied Arab territories." (See A/44/83-S/20406.)

IV. EXCERPT FROM THE FINAL COMMUNIQUE OF THE NINTH SESSION OF
THE SUPREME COUNCIL OF THE CO-OPERATION COUNCIL FOR THE
ARAB STATES OF THE GULF, HELD AT MANAMA, BAHRAIN,
FROM 19 TO 22 DECEMBER 1988

"The current Arab situation

"The Supreme Council reviewed the situation in the occupied Arab territories, recalling the decision adopted by it at its eighth session in Riyadh to support the popular uprising against the occupation and the repressive practices applied by the Zionist enemy in order to bar the people of Palestine from the exercise of its legitimate rights to self-determination and to the building of its independent State. The Council commends the heroic struggle of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories and affirms that the Co-operation Council States will support and back this uprising by all available means until the uprising achieves its objectives. The Supreme Council also commends the resolutions of the Palestine National Council at its extraordinary session at Algiers and the declaration of the independent Palestinian State and expresses its support for the establishment of that State. The Supreme Council also expresses its appreciation to those States which have recognized the Palestinian State and calls upon the other States to recognize it. The Supreme Council commends the statement by Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization, the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, before the General Assembly of the United Nations at its forty-third session on the Palestine item at Geneva and calls upon the international community to support the convening of the International Conference within the framework of the United Nations and with the participation of the permanent members of the Security Council and attendance by all the parties concerned, including the Palestine Liberation Organization, with a view to the achievement of a just and lasting peaceful solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict and the restoration to the Palestinian people of its usurped rights, including its legitimate right to self-determination and to build its independent State. The Supreme Council expressed its hope that the ongoing dialogue between the United States of America and the Palestine Liberation Organization would result in positions leading to the adoption of speedy measures for the convening of the International Conference." (See A/44/84-S/20407.)

V. NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS: ACTIVITIES AND INFORMATION

In the course of December the following information describing recent activities was received by the Division for Palestinian Rights:

- 1) "Disclose: Facts about violations of Palestinian human rights", International Centre for Information on Palestinian and Lebanese prisoners, deportees and missing persons. C.I.I. 14, Rue de Nanteuil, 75015 France.

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- 2) "Report on use of tear gas by Israeli forces against Palestinians in the occupied territories", Palestine Committee for Peace and Afro-Asian Solidarity, B.P. 468 Tunis Cedex 1080, Tunis.
- 3) "Message to the NGO Network", International Co-ordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine, Case postale No. 127, 5 Rue des Morillons, CH-1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland.
- 4) "Message from U.S. Interreligious Committee for Peace in the Middle East", America-Israel Council for Israeli-Palestinian Peace, 4816 Cornell Avenue, Downers Grove, IL 60515.
- 5) "Press release from British Refugee Council regarding expressions of deep concern by British voluntary agencies at obstacles to the right to development in the West Bank and Gaza", Bondway House, 3/9 Bondway, London SW8 ISJ.
- 6) "Information bulletin", International Popular Committee of Artists and Intellectuals for the Support of the Uprising and the Struggle of the Palestinian People in Occupied Palestine, 8 Akadimas Str. 106, 71 Athens, Greece.
- 7) "Statement on human rights with reference to the Intifadah", World Young Women's Christian Association 37, Quai Wilson, 1201 Geneva, Switzerland.
- 8) "Palestine Focus: National Newspaper of the Palestine Solidarity Committee", P.O. Box 27462, San Francisco, CA 94127.
- 9) "Children of Stones Issue No. 5", International Co-ordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine, Case postale No. 127, 5 Rue des Morillons, CH-1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland.
- 10) "Jerusalem", Palestine Committee for NGOs, B.P. 554, Tunis Cedex 1080, Tunis.
- 11) "Bulletin", Middle East Peace Network, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, N.Y. 10115.
- 12) "Rassegna palestinese", Italian review of matters relating to the Palestinian question, Fondazione Internazionale Lelio Basso per il Diritto e La Liberazione dei Popoli, V. della Dogana Vecchia, 5-00186 Roma, Italy.
- 13) "NECEF Report", Near East Cultural and Educational Foundation of Canada, 106 Duplex Avenue, Toronto, Canada M5P 2A7.
- 14) "AJME News", Americans for Justice in the Middle East, P.O.B. 113-5581, Beirut, Lebanon.
- 15) "Amnesty International report on Israel and the Occupied Territories, Prisoner Cases - April to October 1988", Amnesty International Secretariat, Easton Street, London WC1X 8DJ.