



## General Assembly GA/PAL/1125

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Committee on the Inalienable Rights  
of the Palestinian People  
316<sup>th</sup> Meeting (FM)

### **PALESTINIAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE, IN STATEMENT, EXPRESSES UTMOST CONCERN ABOUT 'ILLEGAL AND PROVOCATIVE' ISRAELI POLICIES IN OCCUPIED EAST JERUSALEM**

#### **Committee Also Briefed on Situation on Ground; Hears Reports on Cairo Assistance Seminar, Cyprus Meeting in Support of Peace**

The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People today expressed its utmost concern about "illegal and provocative Israeli policies" and measures in Occupied East Jerusalem – including destruction of Palestinian homes and imposition of restrictions on movement – and reiterated that Israel must refrain from any activities that changed the legal, demographic and cultural character, and status of the area, "the capital of a future Palestinian State".

Unanimously adopting a statement on "the situation in East Jerusalem", the Committee noted that, according to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, between 2000 and 2008, Israeli authorities had demolished some 670 Palestinian-owned structures in the city. Those actions led to the displacement of some 400 Palestinians. Currently, some 60,000 more Palestinians were at risk of having their homes demolished because they were built without the required Israeli permits, "which were nearly impossible to obtain for the construction or expansion of homes in East Jerusalem".

Further by the statement, the Committee said the question of Jerusalem was a key aspect of the question of Palestine and one of the six core issues for the permanent status negotiations. While calling on Israel to refrain from its illegal activities, the Committee said Israel must "scrupulously abide by its obligations as an occupying Power, including the Fourth Geneva Convention". Stressing its strong belief that actions purporting to change or alter East Jerusalem's status or character are provocative and predetermine the outcome of permanent status negotiations, the Committee called on the Security Council to live up to its Charter obligations by upholding its own resolutions that continued to go unimplemented.

Ahead of action, Committee Chairman Paul Badji ( Senegal) said the situation in East Jerusalem over the last weeks and months had become more serious due to the expansion of Israeli settlements in and around the city, and the increase in the number of home demolition orders being carried out by Israel. The Committee's Bureau had discussed the situation at its meeting last week and had drafted the statement so the wider Committee could speak on this serious matter. Acting on a recommendation from Syria's representative, Mr. Badji announced that the statement would be transmitted to United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the members of the Security Council.

Briefing the Committee on the situation on the ground, Riyad Mansour, Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, said border crossings continued to be opened and closed at the whim of Israeli authorities. Goods that passed through were restricted to basic humanitarian necessities only, to be distributed by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and other United Nations agencies. The 120 truckloads allowed in was "way below what the Palestinian people needed in the Gaza Strip" and should rise to a minimum of 1,000 truckloads if reconstruction were to be conducted in earnest.

Turning to the West Bank, he said, over 600 checkpoints continued to hamper the normal movement of people and goods. The intensification of settlement activities around Jerusalem, which involved the demolition of existing homes and displacement of current inhabitants, brought a serious danger of "ethnic cleansing of our people in Eastern Jerusalem". The situation had prompted strong reactions around the world, including at a recent emergency meeting of Arab foreign ministers, which decided to send a high-level delegation to appear before the Security Council on that subject soon. Mr. Mansour would keep the Committee informed on the composition of that group, which was likely to include ministers.

He explained that, if Israel were to implement its plan to link its settlements with East Jerusalem, it would lead to a dissection of the West Bank into three separate areas and a complete isolation of East Jerusalem from the West Bank. At the conference in Cyprus, ministers had agreed to convene a meeting of parliamentarians on the issue, which the Government of Malta said it would be willing to host. The Indonesian Government would hold a conference in Jakarta in two weeks, also focused on Jerusalem.

He said he had observed "a crystal clear consensus" at the global level on the rightful outcome to the Palestinian question -- a two-State solution and the Israeli

withdrawal to pre-1967 borders. For that to happen, Israel must freeze all settlement activities, lift its siege on Gaza and remove checkpoints in the West Bank. Only that would produce an atmosphere conducive for negotiations on the six final status issues: Jerusalem; settlements; Palestinian refugees; borders; security; and water resources.

For their part, Palestinian officials had agreed that it would not negotiate with the new Israeli Administration, led by newly elected Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, unless it agreed to take those steps. It remained to be seen whether the United States Administration, under President Barack Obama, would succeed in bringing Israel around. At the moment, he said, "We do not have an Israeli partner for the peace process."

He explained that the fifth round of internal Palestinian reconciliation talks had just ended in Egypt, to be taken up again in the beginning of July. Among the subjects under discussion were the reunification of Palestinian lands and political system, and preparations for elections, set for 25 January 2010.

He said the people of Palestine were appreciative of the Board of Inquiry's report on damage inflicted by Israeli forces in Gaza recently. The Secretary-General had submitted a summary of that report to the Security Council and the Fourth Committee (Special Political and Decolonization). The Observer Mission of Palestine planned to follow up with the Secretariat on ways to implement the recommendations and conclusions contained in that report on compensation for damage inflicted on UNRWA installations and other United Nations properties, and quantifying the compensations for loss and injuries to people.

He said, finally, he had been delighted to see the Pope in the region, who had called for an independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital. It was hoped that the Pope's moral power would resonate not just among Catholics, but among "all of us", to bring Israel into compliance with its obligations.

Mr. Badji opened the meeting with a brief overview of the past three months, highlighting, among other events, the 2 March International Conference in Support of the Palestinian Economy for the Reconstruction of Gaza, held in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt. That Conference had generated pledges of some \$4 billion in aid covering the next two years. However, he said those funds could not be put to work for Gaza's reconstruction because of Israel's ongoing blockade of the Territory.

He went on to say that on 2 and 3 March, United States Secretary of State Hillary Clinton had visited Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory and, at her news conference with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, she had promised "vigorous and personal involvement" in Middle East peace efforts and had criticized Israel's recently announced plan to demolish 88 Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem as "unhelpful and not in keeping with the obligations entered into under the Road Map". Mr. Badji also noted the Second Summit of Arab and South American Countries, held in Doha, Qatar, on 31 March, as well as the 27-30 April Ministerial Meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement Coordinating Bureau, in Havana, Cuba.

On the United Nations-backed investigations into the recent conflict in Gaza, he said that, on 5 May, the Secretary-General had sent to the Security Council a summary of the report of the Gaza Board of Inquiry. Further, on 8 May, members of the fact-finding mission set up by the Human Rights Council to probe rights violations during that conflict had wrapped up their week-long meeting in Geneva. Mr. Badji said that the four-person team had agreed on a three-month programme of work and that it intended to conduct visits to affected areas of southern Israel and the Occupied Palestinian territory, including Gaza.

Later in the meeting, the Committee approved the provisional agenda of the United Nations Asian and Pacific Meeting on the Question of Palestine, to be held in Jakarta, Indonesia, 8 and 9 June 2009, and the United Nations Public Forum in Support of the Palestinian People, to be held on 10 June. Mr. Badji noted that the theme of that meeting would be: "Strengthening international consensus on the urgency of a two-State solution", and would consider ways in which Governments, intergovernmental organizations and civil society could help the parties resume and strengthen the political dialogue and in promoting and applying the principles of international law to efforts aimed at resolving the conflict.

The Committee also approved the provisional programme of the United Nations Meeting on the Question of Palestine, to be held at the United Nations Office in Geneva, 22 to 23 July 2009. The theme of that meeting, amended today by Ambassador Mansour, would be: "Responsibility of the international community to uphold international humanitarian law to ensure the protection of civilians -- in the Occupied Palestinian Territory in the wake of the war in Gaza".

In other business, Mr. Badji reported on the United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People, held on 10 and 11 March in Cairo, saying that first-hand accounts of the state of affairs in the Gaza Strip had painted "a grim picture of the enormity of the reconstruction task at hand". Gathered under the theme "International response to the humanitarian and economic needs of the Gaza Strip", participants had assessed the recovery and reconstruction needs in the Gaza Strip and identified the most urgent humanitarian and development needs. They also studied the issue of coordinating the work to address those needs.

He reiterated that, although some \$4.5 billion had been pledged to support the Palestinian economy and its reconstruction efforts, Israel was imposing restrictions on the import of materials. Participants at the seminar recognized the critical importance of emergency humanitarian assistance and emergency relief in the aftermath of Gaza's destruction, but also said it could not be substituted for economic recovery and longer-term development. They stressed that Israel must remove all movement restrictions, in line with the 2005 Agreement on Movement and Access. At the same time, progress must also be made on national reconciliation efforts among Palestinians, which would create the right environment for reconstruction and development to take place.

While in Cairo, a delegation representing the Committee had met the Majority Leader of the Egyptian Parliament, the Minister for Legal and Parliamentary Affairs of Egypt, and members of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Assembly. It paid a visit to the Palestine Hospital, administered by the Palestine Red Crescent Hospital and spoke with Palestinian victims of the Israeli offensive in the Gaza Strip. It also met with the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States and other senior officials, and Egypt's First Lady, who is President of the Egyptian Red Crescent Society.

Reporting on the 6-7 May United Nations International Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace, in Nicosia, Cyprus, he said the theme of that event had been: "Action by European, Arab and other parliamentarians and their umbrella organizations for Israeli-Palestinian peace". The meeting aimed, among other things, to emphasize the important role played by national parliaments and inter-parliamentary organizations at the regional and international levels in shaping public opinion, formulating policy guidelines and upholding international legitimacy in support of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine.

He said that, during the plenary sessions, presentations had been made by 19 Palestinian and Israeli experts. The first plenary session had focused on "assessments of the current situation and prospects of for the future", and the second session had examined areas in which parliamentarians could make a difference. Participants had also discussed networking possibilities and had pledged to raise awareness about the situation on the ground and in the political process. During the third plenary, participants had discussed the coordination of international efforts at national, regional and international levels.

At the end of the Nicosia meeting, participants adopted a Concluding Statement expressing serious concern about the deteriorating situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. He said they were particularly alarmed about the status of the peace process in the wake of Israel's military assault on Gaza. They urged the new Israeli Government to declare its support for a two-State solution. They also encouraged parliamentarians to stay involved in the issue and to engage their Israeli and Palestinian counterparts, as well as their own Governments with a view to promoting a political solution to the conflict.

The representative of Egypt and the representative of Indonesia also made brief statements.

The Committee will meet again at a date and time to be announced.

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