



# Press Release

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## **DECLARATION, ISSUED AT CLOSE OF NICOSIA MEETING,**

### **STATES ISRAELI OCCUPATION CORE OF CONFLICT**

(Received from a UN Information Officer.)

NICOSIA, 17 April — Following is the full text of the Nicosia Declaration approved at the United Nations International Meeting in Support of Middle East Peace held in Nicosia, Cyprus, 16 and 17 April:

The United Nations International Meeting in Support of Middle East Peace was held in Nicosia, on 16 and 17 April 2002, under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. Participants in the Meeting included international experts, eminent political personalities, representatives of Governments, intergovernmental organizations, United Nations system entities, Palestine, parliamentarians, civil society organizations, academic institutions and the media.

The Meeting was convened by the Committee with a view to contributing to international efforts at containing the current crisis and resuming negotiations for a political settlement. Broad participation was sought in order to mobilize support by Governments, intergovernmental and civil society organizations for the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine and the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. In the course of the Meeting, the participants reviewed the current situation, evaluated international efforts aimed at bringing the conflict to an end, including current peace initiatives, and discussed the urgency of ending the Israeli occupation and establishing a Palestinian State.

The participants agreed that the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territory remained the core of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. They expressed great alarm that the intensification of the conflict would bring even greater suffering and dispossession to the Palestinian people and would threaten the security and stability of the entire region. The participants noted that, since September 2000, more than 2,000 persons had lost their lives and tens of thousands had been injured. They felt strongly that the policies and actions of the occupying Power on the Palestinian people were excessively severe. The participants emphasized that the continued reliance of Israel on massive military force throughout the Palestinian Territory, the closures and the economic blockades, the incursions into and reoccupation of Palestinian-controlled areas, and all other illegal actions against the Palestinian people must be brought to an immediate end. They were much troubled by the relentless Israeli attacks against the Palestinian Authority, its institutions and its elected leadership. In this regard, the participants voiced their serious concern at the besiegement of Chairman Arafat at his Ramallah headquarters and demanded that it should be ended at once. They also demanded that United Nations Security Council resolutions [1402 \(2002\)](#) and [1403 \(2002\)](#) be implemented without delay and that Israeli troops withdraw immediately from all areas they had reoccupied in recent weeks.

The participants were particularly appalled by the unfolding human tragedy and the unprecedented level of destruction caused by the Israeli reoccupation of the Jenin refugee camp. They called on the Government of Israel to facilitate humanitarian agencies' full and unimpeded access to the camp and for its fullest possible cooperation with United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and the International Committee of the Red Cross. The participants were also greatly dismayed by the continuing siege of Bethlehem and expressed concern that the military operation could cause irreparable damage to the Church of the Nativity and other holy sites in the city.

The participants called upon the Government of Israel to honour its obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention and immediately terminate all acts of violence against innocent civilians, stop destroying civilian and personal property, and cease forthwith all other illegal activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including settlement construction.

The participants expressed their strong conviction that, if left to their own devices, the parties would not be able to reach a peaceful settlement. Peacemaking efforts by the United States, the Russian Federation, the European Union and the United Nations, now working in the framework of the "Quartet", as well as by other international and regional actors should continue and should be intensified. In this connection, the participants welcomed the Joint Statement issued by the "Quartet" in Madrid on 10 April 2002. They agreed that, in order to secure a way out of the present impasse, it was absolutely essential to accompany security measures by progress on the political front and in the economic area.

This combined approach should help the parties realize the vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side within secure and

recognized borders, as affirmed in United Nations Security Council resolution [1397 \(2002\)](#) of 12 March 2002.

The participants urged the close involvement of the Security Council and were of the view that it should be sustained, for as long as it might be required, in order to prevent the crisis from sliding into an even more dangerous phase. They called upon the Council to exercise fully its responsibilities under the Charter of the United Nations and to use all means at its disposal in order to have its resolutions implemented on the ground. They also believed that the political track should be reopened without further delay and pursued vigorously on the basis of the fundamental principles outlined in Security Council resolutions [242 \(1967\)](#), [338 \(1973\)](#) and 1397 (2002).

The participants noted that the League of Arab States Summit had endorsed, on 28 March 2002, in Beirut, the important peace initiative put forward by Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, which called for full Israeli withdrawal from all Arab territories occupied since 1967, achievement of a just solution to the Palestinian refugee problem to be agreed upon in accordance with United Nations [General Assembly resolution 194 \(III\)](#), and Israel's acceptance of an independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital, in return for the establishment of normal relations between the Arab countries and Israel. The participants viewed this initiative as a positive and constructive contribution to the overall efforts at achieving peace in the Middle East.

The participants welcomed the active involvement of the international community in efforts to contain the crisis and resume the dialogue. In this context, they expressed support for the vitally important mission of the United States Secretary of State Colin Powell and his team and were hopeful that it would help restore calm and resume a political process, as called for by Security Council resolutions 1402 (2002) and 1403 (2002). They urged Israel and the Palestinian Authority to cooperate fully in the accomplishment of his mission.

The participants endorsed the idea of deploying some form of international presence to monitor a ceasefire once it was secured. They agreed that introducing an international force could be helpful for restoring confidence and for making headway both in the security and political areas.

The participants reaffirmed the permanent responsibility of the United Nations with respect to all the aspects of the question of Palestine, until it is resolved in a satisfactory manner, in conformity with relevant United Nations resolutions and norms of international law, and until the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people are fully realized.

The participants commended Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations, for his consistent support of the rights of the Palestinian people and his untiring personal efforts in the quest for peace and stability in the Middle East. They also expressed appreciation for the important work done on a daily basis on the ground by the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and his Office.

The participants noted the important role played by UNRWA in rendering varied humanitarian assistance to Palestine refugees for over 50 years. In that connection, they strongly urged the international donor community to continue to support the vital activities of the Agency and contribute generously to its budget, in order to allow it to maintain the level of its services especially under the present, extremely adverse, circumstances. They also called upon the occupying Power to take all necessary measures to assist UNRWA in meeting the urgent challenges, to ensure the safety of the Agency's personnel and the security of clinics, schools and other installations and infrastructure.

It was reaffirmed that international donor assistance was of critical importance to the Palestinian people, particularly during the current period of great hardship caused by the prolonged violence, vast destruction of the Palestinian Authority infrastructure and other property, suffocating economic blockade, as well as by the refusal of Israel to transfer tax and customs revenues collected on behalf of the Palestinian Authority and withheld in contravention of signed agreements. The participants stressed that scaled-up international assistance was central to maintaining the viability and sustainability of the Palestinian economy and livelihood of the Palestinian population. It was of crucial importance for the donors to review their assistance programmes in order to develop quick, effective and efficient mechanisms of disbursing emergency assistance.

The participants acknowledged the increasingly important role played by civil society in providing emergency relief to the population of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem, mobilizing support for the attainment by the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights and for the establishment of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

The Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, H.E. Mr. Papa Louis Fall, and the delegation of the Committee were received by H.E. Mr. Glafcos Clerides, President of the Republic of Cyprus, and H.E. Mr. Ioannis Kasoulides, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cyprus, both of whom stressed the importance of supporting peace in the Middle East at this extremely difficult stage and welcomed the efforts of the Committee in that regard. The Committee delegation expressed its deep appreciation of the active and constructive role played by Cyprus, a member of the Committee since its inception, in the search for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the region.

The participants also expressed gratitude to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and to the Government of the Republic of Cyprus for hosting the Meeting and for the assistance and support extended to the Committee and the United Nations Secretariat in its preparation.

*Nicosia, 17 April 2002*

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