



# Press Release

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## **ASSASSINATION OF ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER SHOULD NOT SLOW PEACE PROCESS CHAIRMAN OF PALESTINIAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE TELLS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**Palestine Observer Says Assassination Proof of Terrorism's Growth;  
No Surrender to Those Who Wish Return to Days of Fear, Hate, Says Israel.**

The assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin should not lead to setbacks in the Middle East peace process, the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People said this morning, as the General Assembly heard 14 speakers in taking up the question of Palestine.

The Observer for Palestine stated that the tragic assassination was proof that terrorism had grown in Israel in a conducive climate. The Middle East peace process was facing difficulties because of the racist ideas of extremist parties within Israel.

Israel would never give in to those who wished to return to the days of fear, war and hate, said the representative of Israel. Israel and the Palestinians had been on the road to a just and lasting peace for over two years, and Israel would continue to seek a new era of cooperation and peaceful co-existence among Egypt, Jordan, Israel, the Palestinians and others.

The representative of Saudi Arabia said the Palestinian issue was the axis of any efforts to achieve progress in the Middle East. Violent acts aimed at hampering the peace process were worrisome. So, too, was the continuation of some Israeli practices. Of particular concern were efforts by Israel to change the demography of the Palestinian lands, which was a clear breach of the United Nations resolutions on the Middle East and of the Declaration of Principles.

The representative of Syria said those who attempted to convince the world that peace between Israel and the Palestinians had become a reality were deluding themselves. Israel had been attempting to establish its vested interests through a distorted peace that ignored the Palestinian people's sovereignty and did not accept the principle of land for peace.

Statements were also made by the representatives of Malaysia, Japan, United Arab Emirates, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Indonesia, Iran, China, India and Algeria. The Rapporteur of the Palestinian Rights Committee introduced the Committee's report.

The Assembly will meet again at 10 a.m. Thursday, 30 November, to continue its consideration of the question of Palestine.

### Assembly Work Programme

The General Assembly met this afternoon to begin consideration of the question of Palestine. Before it are the Secretary-General's report on the matter and the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

The report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (document [A/50/35](#)) reviews the situation relating to the question of Palestine and provides detailed information on the activities of the Committee, such as the seminars and symposia it sponsored in Rio de Janeiro, New York and Vienna over the past year.

During the year under review, the Committee noted with satisfaction that the peace process initiated in 1991 in Madrid had continued despite many difficulties and that the parties had affirmed its irreversibility and their determination to continue that process. The Committee had welcomed the signing in September of the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The Committee emphasized that the transitional period had reached a crucial stage which required the full and effective implementation of the agreements reached, as well as confidence building measures, particularly an end to the policy of settlements, land confiscation and closures, as well as an end to acts of violence aimed at jeopardizing the peace process.

On 6 November, the Committee's Bureau condemned the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, and expressed its hope that that criminal act would not have an adverse effect on the Middle East peace process, the report states.

Concern was expressed about the continued deterioration of the Palestinian economy and the problems of poverty, unemployment and lack of adequate infrastructure faced by the Palestinian Authority. In that connection, the Committee urged Member States to expedite the provision of assistance to the Palestinian people in order to help the Authority build solid foundations for peace. The Committee emphasized the need for the full engagement of the United Nations in the peace process and in the process of building the Palestinian self-government institutions, as well as in providing assistance to the Palestinian people. The Committee expressed its firm belief that it could make a valuable contribution to the United Nations endeavours during the transitional period by continuing to promote dialogue and to educate and mobilize international action for the successful outcome of the agreements reached by the parties until a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement is achieved.

The report contains a separate section on the action taken by the Department of Public Information, which included, as in previous years, the provision of press coverage of all meetings held at Headquarters relating to the question of Palestine as well as coverage of seminars and symposia away from Headquarters. Among other activities of the Department discussed in the report are the distribution of relevant materials over the Internet and other electronic networks; the production of four "UN in Action"/CNN World Report segments on a variety of topics relating to the question of Palestine; and the organization of a training programme for a group of eight Palestinian media practitioners at Headquarters to strengthen their professional capacity as information media personnel.

The Committee continues to consider that the Special Information Programme on the Question of Palestine of the Department for Public Information

is very useful in raising international awareness concerning the Middle East, according to the report. The Programme is contributing effectively to an atmosphere conducive to dialogue and supportive of the peace process.

The report of the Secretary-General on the question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East (document [A/50/725-S/1995/930](#)) states that the past year has been important for progress in the Middle East peace process. The Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza Strip signed on 28 September 1995, represented a significant step forward in the implementation of the declaration of principles.

The report adds that the Secretary-General hopes that the resolve and dedication to peace shown by Israeli and Palestinian leaders would continue to guide them through the transitional stage until a permanent settlement is reached on the basis of Security Council resolutions. It is hoped that those developments, along with the ongoing implementation of the Israeli-Syrian and Israeli-Lebanese tracks of the Middle East peace talks, would lead to a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The United Nations will continue to support the peace process, politically and economically, in order to reinforce what has been achieved in the course of negotiations, the report says. The United Nations Special Coordinator, Terje Rod Larsen, will continue to serve as a focal point for United Nations economic, social and other assistance to the Palestinians throughout the occupied territories.

Statement by Chairman of Palestinian Rights Committee

KEBA BIRANE CISSE (Senegal), Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, said that the Committee was convinced that a global, just and durable resolution to the Palestinian problem could only be established through respect for Security Council resolutions [242 \(1967\)](#) and [338 \(1973\)](#) and abiding by several basic principles. Those were the retreat of Israel from all the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, Jerusalem included, and from all the other occupied Arab territories; the respect of the right of the States of the region to live in peace within secure and internationally recognized borders; and the recognition of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, in particular their right of self-determination.

The Committee hoped that the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin would not lead to setbacks in the peace process, he said. It appreciated the interim Israeli Prime Minister's declaration affirming that the tragedy would not in any way affect the peace process. The Committee had been very pleased by the progress made in negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians over the past year, and in particular by the signing of the interim accord in Washington. It hoped that that pact marked the beginning of a new stage in which the Palestinian people would be able to exercise their right to self-determination and their sovereignty over their native land.

To support that peace process, he continued, the international community needed to provide increased support to the Palestinian people and their leaders. In that regard, the Committee appreciated the several initiatives under way that were intended to facilitate investment in the region and reinforce cooperation. It also thought that the peace process should be accompanied by a considerable effort on the part of the international community to deal with the many critical problems posed by the transitional phase, including the socio-economic situation of Palestine. The Committee itself, along with other relevant United Nations services, would continue to lend the indispensable support of the Organization to the peace process until it was successfully concluded. It hoped that Member States that had not yet participated in that work could see a way to do so and thereby reinforce the contribution that the United Nations could make at that important stage of the peace process.

JOSEPH CASSAR, Rapporteur of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, presented the Committee's report. He said the Committee was encouraged that the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations had proceeded during the last year despite repeated delays and acts of violence. However, the situation in the areas still under Israeli occupation gave reason for concern. The Committee was also concerned about the deterioration of the living conditions of the Palestinians, and the Chairman had addressed a letter to the President of the General Assembly and the Secretary-General on the issue of the expansion and consolidation of settlements by the Israeli Government in the occupied territories.

Stating that the United Nations had a permanent responsibility with respect to the question of Palestine until a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement was reached, he said broadening the membership of the Committee would greatly enhance its contribution. Seminars on the issues confronting the Palestinian people in the occupied territory had been particularly useful. The Committee intended to continue those efforts and would call for holding an event under its auspices in the territory under the Palestinian Authority. The Committee also stressed its role in bringing together a network of non-governmental organizations interested in the question of Palestine. It also emphasized the role of the Division for Palestinian Rights as a centre for research, monitoring, preparation of studies and collection and dissemination of information.

FAROUK KADDOUMI, observer for Palestine, said the tragic assassination of Prime Minister Rabin was proof that terrorism had grown in Israel in a conducive climate and encouraged by some Israeli parties. The Middle East peace process was facing difficulties because of the racist ideas of extremist parties within Israel.

After 48 years of suffering, he said, the Palestinian people were more in need of peace than any other people. But Israel had frustrated their wish for peace with its lack of respect for agreements and by such policies as imposing famine on the Palestinian people and occupying further territories, building settlements around Jerusalem and declaring it the eternal capital. While the United Nations Charter stressed the right to self-determination, the Palestinians, were still suffering under the yolk of foreign hegemony. The United Nations must make sure that its principles were upheld.

He was concerned, he said, about a recent United States Congress decision to transfer that country's embassy to Jerusalem, contrary to a Security Council resolution and to the Declaration of Principles signed in Washington in 1993. Israel was refusing to allow more than 750,000 Palestinian citizens to return to exercise their right to vote. It was also refusing to withdraw its forces from cities and villages and Palestinian camps, and was maintaining its siege of Galilee. He asked if it were really possible for the democratic process to take place in Palestine under such conditions.

To achieve peace, he said, first and foremost the refugees had to be returned and Israeli settlements in Palestinian territories had to be removed. Eastern Jerusalem had to be returned to Palestinian territory, thousands of Palestinians must be freed from Israeli prisons, and the Palestinians must be free to go in and out of their homeland without Israeli permission. Israeli control of Palestinian resources -- such as electricity, airports and telephones -- could not continue. Free and democratic elections under international supervision must lead to a free and independent Palestinian State. The United Nations must recognize the Palestinian State in keeping with its own resolution of 1988.

The Palestinians had spared no effort to achieve peace, and had made many compromises, he continued. And yet the Israeli leaders were still refusing to implement agreed principles. Israel was still refusing to sign the nuclear non-proliferation treaty; thus its own nuclear weapons could remain a threat to security in the region. The United States was providing Israel with the most sophisticated weapons. That, too, made it hard to establish peace and cooperation.

In closing, he said that a way should be found to put an end to the unjust suffering of the Iraqi people and that it was time to put an end to the unjust embargo against Libya.

GAD YAACOB (Israel) said it had been just over three weeks since the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, who initiated the historic change in Israel and the Middle East. "I personally lost a close friend, with whom I worked for many years", he said. Mr. Rabin paid with his life for his commitment to peace. It was disturbing that there were people -- fanatics, radicals, fundamentalists -- who resorted to murder in the vain attempt to prevent progress. "We will never give in to those who wish to return us to the days of fear; of war; of hate", he said. Israel was determined to continue on the path blazed by the late Prime Minister Rabin and by Prime Minister Shimon Peres.

He said Israel and the Palestinians had been on the road to a just and lasting peace for over two years. Since the signing of the Declaration of Principles in 1993, several agreements had been reached, designed to translate those principles into a framework of cooperation between the two peoples. Early next year, residents of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip would participate in the first democratic, free and contested elections in their history. Israel sought a new era in the Middle East characterized by cooperation and peaceful co-existence between Egypt, Jordan, Israel, the Palestinians and others -- "an era based on dignity and mutual respect; where peace is not some abstract concept, but a daily reality".

He said he was disappointed by the comments of the preceding speaker, who spoke as if he were unaware of the recent developments in the peace process. Two weeks ago, Israeli troops handed over control of Jenin, the first Arab city on the West Bank, to Israel's Palestinian partners. The transfer of responsibilities continued in Tulkarm. On 14 December, the Israel Defense Force was scheduled to complete handing over Nablus to the Palestinian Authority.

"Fanatical terrorist groups still seek to harm our progress. They kill innocent men, women and children", he said. But Israel would not allow them to succeed. Recalling comments made by Israel's first Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion, he said, "We must fight terror as if there was no peace and work toward peace as if there was no terror". He was greatly encouraged by the success of the Palestinian Authority in combating terrorism in the Gaza Strip. The first fruits of the peace process could be seen in the beginning of an unprecedented growth in the Gaza Strip. "For the first time in many years, Gazans are going out at night; not to protest, but to sit in cafes and dream of a better tomorrow", he said. Through economic development, poverty and want, which bred hatred and extremism, could be eliminated. He called on United Nations Member States and the international institutions to enhance economic and social development in the Gaza and West Bank.

RAZALI ISMAIL (Malaysia) said the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza Strip was another major step towards durable and lasting peace in the Middle East. He welcomed the pledge by Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres to forge ahead in the peace process. The situation on the ground, in the daily lives of the Palestinians, however, remained unsatisfactory. The Palestinian living standard in the occupied territories had dropped by 25 per cent. Rapid rates of economic growth and development were needed. Without visible improvement in the living standards of the Palestinians, the peace process would remain fragile.

He was deeply disturbed that the general human rights situation in the occupied territories still remained serious, he said. Violations of human rights ostensibly for security considerations could not be condoned. Restrictions on the mobility of Palestinian labour in the West Bank and Gaza Strip would exacerbate economic hardship. The Israeli settlement policy was another concern. It was disturbing that the expansion of existing settlements had continued unabated. "To strengthen the advocates of peace and to isolate the enemies of peace, we need the political and economic support of the international community", he said. He reaffirmed total support for the Palestinian people and its leadership in the attainment of its inalienable rights to self-determination and independence and opposed any attempt to deny them their rights in Jerusalem. "Development is a prerequisite for lasting peace", he said.

SHUNJI MARUYAMA (Japan) said the Middle East peace process would be recorded as one of significant achievement and profound loss. Japan heartily welcomed the agreement reached by Israel and the PLO. Peace-loving people everywhere mourned the heartbreaking assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. He hoped the parties would remain steadfast in their resolve to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace.

He said it had become clear that the tide of history could not be reversed. The peace process would move forward. "What is required now is the smooth and prompt implementation of the agreement on the expansion of Palestinian interim self-government", he said. Prime Minister Shimon Peres had declared his determination to push the peace process forward with redeployment of Israel forces in the West Bank and scheduled election of a Palestinian Council. Israel had withdrawn its forces from Jenin on 13 November.

He said Japan was steadfast in its support of the peace process. It would cooperate by providing goods and personnel for the election of the Palestinian Council. The election of the first democratic system of Palestinian self-government would stabilize the region and ensure the success of the peace process. Japan had pledged \$200 million for the two-year period beginning in September 1993 and had disbursed to date \$150 million of that for start-up costs of the Palestinian self-government and to health and educational projects. It had decided to extend a portion of its assistance directly to the Palestinian people and would continue to provide the same positive assistance.

He said the Middle East peace process, particularly the Palestinian track, was entering a crucial phase. Extremely difficult issues needed to be discussed. He hoped the parties would confront the issues with wisdom and fortitude. Japan would spare no effort to promote the peace process and to contribute to the social and economic development of the region.

Mr. AL-NAHYAN (United Arab Emirates) said the United Nations had played a major role in supporting the Palestinian people. The Israel-Palestinian agreements were a first step towards establishing a lasting peace. Despite the progress achieved, however, his country was profoundly concerned about the obstacles to peace being imposed by the Israeli authorities. Those included delays in the implementation of agreements and in the release of Palestinian prisoners, violations of human rights, the confiscation of land, and the siege of Palestinian towns and villages. They also included the Israeli policy of colonization, particularly in Jerusalem, the expulsion of Arabs from holy places and the changing of the demographic characteristics of Jerusalem in flagrant violation of Security Council resolutions.

He said the way to solve the problem was for Israel to end its occupation, respect its agreements with the Palestinians, and help the Palestinian people rebuild their infrastructure, destroyed by occupation. Israel must withdraw from all occupied territories, and all refugees must be able to return to their lands. The Israel settlement process must stop.

ALOUNKEO KITTIKHOUN (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that under the terms of the partition plan approved by the General Assembly in 1947, along with the creation of Israel, an Arab State was supposed to be created. It was his fervent hope that such a State might be established in the near future. Since the signing of the Declaration of Principles in Washington in 1993, Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization had done their utmost to ensure that the peace process remained on track. The international community as a whole must do everything possible to further the peace process to which both parties had committed themselves.

ISSLAMET POERNOMO (Indonesia) said the historic signing of the Declaration of Principles two years ago had been followed by a number of important agreements. The agreement of 28 September 1995 was another important step towards fulfilling the cherished aspirations of the Palestinian people. Delays and shortcomings in the implementation of the Declaration of Principles must be overcome. Acts of senseless violence and political assassination must not be allowed to adversely affect the peace process. "We deem it essential for the parties concerned to begin earnest negotiations on the remaining areas and the final status issues, including Jerusalem, settlements, borders and refugees", he said.

"Progress towards the attainment of Palestinian rights requires drastic improvements in their economic and living conditions", he said. Political and socio-economic development were interdependent. The international community should extend every assistance to the Palestinian Authority to promote sustainable development and prosperity for all Palestinians. Over the last year, the Palestinian Authority had made important strides in establishing its own administration and in improving living conditions in its area of authority.

He said the economic well-being of the Palestinian people was intimately linked to the wider Middle East and North African region. The joint communique issued on 28 February 1995 in Washington was an initial step towards integrating the Palestinian economy into its broader regional framework and in transforming the region from one of conflict and poverty to peace and prosperity.

AHMAD HALLAK (Syria) said the Palestinian people were continuing to suffer injustice, and Israel was continuing to deny them their rights. The Syrian Foreign Minister had that morning sent a letter to the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People reaffirming Syria's continuing support for the Palestinian people. Syria would continue to work for a just and lasting peace on the basis of the

relevant Security Council resolutions and of the principle of land for peace.

To achieve such a peace, he said, Israel must withdraw from the occupied territories, recognize the rights of the Palestinians to return to their homeland, compensate them for the loss of property, and apologize for the injustice they suffered. All measures aimed at changing the status of Jerusalem flew in the face of Security Council resolutions and were a serious danger because they constituted a rejection of international law. Syria was very surprised by the recent United States Congress resolution regarding moving that country's embassy to Jerusalem, and it hoped that the United States would respect the United Nations resolutions, retain its credibility and not offend millions of Arabs.

Israel had been attempting to establish its vested interests through a distorted peace that did not respect the Palestinian people's sovereignty, did not accept the principle of land for peace, and ignored relevant Security Council resolutions, he said. It was refusing to guarantee the rights of the Palestinian people, without which it was not possible to begin to talk about peace. The existence of any people and any State could never be at the expense of any other State. Those who attempted to convince the world that peace between Israel and the Palestinians had become a reality were deluding themselves.

KAMAL KHARRAZI (Iran) said the Palestinian people continued to suffer extremely poor living conditions and the latest report of the Special Committee on Israeli Practices indicated that the situation had deteriorated in many aspects during the past year. The human rights situation was a matter of grave concern. The inhumane practices of the Zionist regime, including closing areas of the occupied territories, demolition of homes, confiscation of land and expansion of settlements, had violated fundamental freedoms of the Palestinian people.

He said a continuing source of tension was the existence and expansion of settlements. One instance of crimes by settlers was the massacre of the worshippers in the Ibrahimi Mosque in Al-Khalil. "The Israeli authorities have carried out a deliberate policy aimed at reducing the number of Arabs and Muslims in Jerusalem and creating a new demographic, geographic and political situation in the city", he said. The international community should condemn such practices.

He said an increasing number of killings, detentions, and mistreatment of detainees were among other aspects of the generally inhumane practices of the occupying forces in Palestine. The Zionists continued to practice aggravated forms of torture in interrogating the Palestinians. The mistreatment of the Palestinian people was in line with the overall policies to dominate the region, through continued occupation of Palestine, southern Lebanon and the Golan Heights. The same policy was pursued through enhancement of the Israeli nuclear-weapon technology. The root cause of the problems in the Middle East must be addressed.

GAAFAR M. ALLAGANY (Saudi Arabia) said the Palestinian issue remained the crux of the conflict between Arabs and Israel. It therefore remained as the axis for any efforts to achieve progress in the Middle East. Recent developments in the peace process were welcomed by his Government. It should be recalled that they were based on a commitment of the peoples of the region to the peace process. Violent acts aimed at hampering the peace process were worrisome. So too was the continuation of some Israeli practices, including settlements. The international community expected concrete confidence-building measures. However the opposite had been done, including continued imprisonment of Palestinians. He said Israel had continuously been trying to change the demography of the Palestinian lands, which was a clear breach of the United Nations resolutions on the Middle East and of the Declaration of Principles. The peace process should be dealt with on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and on the basis of such measures as withdrawal from all Palestinian land, including from Al-Quds Al-Sharif and other occupied territories.

He said he expected the two co-sponsors of the agreements that followed the Declaration of Principles to try to compel the Israeli Government to honour its obligations. The fact that it still insisted on claiming Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its eternal capital, did not change the fact it was in fact part of the 1967 occupied territories and should be included as part of the action taken by the international community. He welcomed efforts to provide the Palestinian people with economic assistance. The Government of Saudi Arabia would continue its assistance to the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people. The report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices gave a very bleak picture of human rights practices in the occupied territories.

WANG XUOXIAN (China) said he was convinced that as long as the Palestinian people made unremitting efforts in their cause and continued to win sympathy and support from the international community, the sacred objective of restoring their legitimate national rights would finally be achieved. China was pleased to note that the United Nations had taken a more active part in the assistance projects and programmes for the Palestinian people in the past year. Until a just and lasting settlement was reached, the United Nations had a permanent responsibility with respect to the question of Palestine. His country hoped that the United Nations would not only muster the support of the international community for the smooth implementation of the Palestine-Israel agreement, but would also make greater efforts for Palestine's social and economic development and reconstruction during the transitional period.

E. AHAMED (India) said there was general recognition that support for the peace process could not be confined to the political track. The Palestinian Authority would require assistance, particularly in the fields of health, education and creation of employment. Infrastructure development would be a primary area of focus. The challenge posed by the pressing requirement of finance and technological support merited the international community's urgent attention. However, the really meaningful impetus for a permanent and lasting solution would have to come from the parties themselves.

RAMTANE LAMAMRA (Algeria) said the Declaration of Principles would represent a turning point if the United Nations redoubled its efforts to achieve a lasting, just and comprehensive peace. However, he was concerned about the delays and procrastination in putting the agreements into effect. He was concerned about the continuing presence of hurdles such as the confiscation of land, economic blockades, and the stopping of the region's inhabitants from exercising their rights. Any delay meant more instability, more tension and more violence, which threatened the security and peace of the region as a whole and opened the door to extremists.

Terrorism was a major world-wide problem, he said. Terrorists were hiding behind religious slogans and claiming to have the one and only truth. The Middle East peace process required more intensive cooperation against terrorism. And in general, the United Nations should try its best to put an end to terrorism.

The issue of the Holy City was at the crux of the peace process, he continued. The Israeli authorities should stop taking any measures to change its nature. Progress also needed to be made regarding the occupied Lebanese and Syrian territories.

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