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Committee on the Inalienable Rights
of the Palestinian People
323rd Meeting (PM)

Frustration Expressed in Palestinian Rights Committee over Obstructed Diplomatic

Efforts; UN Secretariat's Launch of Facebook Page for Outreach Highlighted

The Israeli policies and practices in the Occupied Palestinian Territory did not give any indication of change, the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations told the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People today.

Riyad Mansour said that Israel continued on the path of violating international law, including international humanitarian law, particularly with regard to the continuation of settlement activities in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, as well other violations in East Jerusalem, such as displacement of residents, evictions, building of settlements – including the approval of 1,600 additional units – and the excavation under the holy sites. The occupying Power was thus pushing the conflict into a religious dimension.

He said that the blockade of the Gaza Strip had now lasted for more than 1,000 days, resulting in an “abhorrent situation” for the people living there. A report circulated by Israel saying that it was loosening the blockade was exaggerated, characterized by John Ging, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) Director of Operations in Gaza, as a “drop in the bucket”.

The latest escalation in Israeli policies had been last week’s acceptance of two military orders by which tens of thousands Palestinians could be deported from the West Bank and East Jerusalem under numerous pretexts, he said. During last week’s Security Council meeting on the situation in the Middle East (see Press Release [SC/9906](#)), many speakers had deplored the Israeli position and had requested Israel to rescind the regulation and not to expel any Palestinian. He noted that whenever Israel had illegally deported Palestinians in the past, the Council had acted and the deportees had been returned.

Neither the Council nor the entire United Nations system should allow Israel to open the additional chapter of violations of international law, he stressed.

On the political front, he said that the Arab side and the Palestinians had approved the idea of Palestinians participating in proximity talks. Shortly afterwards, the Israeli side had announced its intention to construct 1,600 additional housing units in East Jerusalem, as well as 112 units in Bethlehem. That new obstructionist policy had created a new crisis in the atmosphere of the beginning of proximity talks. The Palestinian position, which was also the global consensus, was that Israel must stop all settlement activity, including natural growth, including in East Jerusalem, in order to give proximity talks any chance of success.

In conclusion, he informed the meeting that the Arab Group had sent a letter to the President of the Security Council, the Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly about the desecration of the Ma'man Allah cemetery in Jerusalem, which had been a burial ground for Muslims for over a thousand years. That sacred place, where even some friends of the Prophet might have been buried, should not be desecrated by Israel by its construction on it of a “Museum of Tolerance”.

Opening the meeting this afternoon, the Committee’s Chairperson, Paul Badji of Senegal, briefed on Committee activities conducted since the body’s last meeting on 16 March (Press Release [GA/PAL/1152](#)) and on relevant developments. He announced that, on 18 April, the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat had launched a [page on Facebook](#) as an outreach activity. Facebook would be used to engage with a wide variety of users, including in the United Nations community, diplomats, academics, parliamentarians, civil society, media and the general public.

He also announced that the United Nations International Meeting in Support of the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process and the United Nations Public Forum in Support of the Palestinian people would be held in Istanbul, Turkey, from 25 to 27 May. The Committee then approved the provisional programme for the events.

Reporting on the United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People, held at the United Nations Office in Vienna on 24 and 25 March, and on the one-day United Nations Meeting of Civil Society in Support of the Palestinian people, held on 26 March, the Committee's Rapporteur, Saviour Borg of Malta, said the Seminar had been attended by representatives of 54 Governments, Palestine, 4 intergovernmental organizations, six United Nations system entities and 20 civil society organizations. Presentations had been made by 16 experts.

He recalled that keynote speaker Ali Al-Jarbawi, Minister of Planning and Administrative Development of the Palestinian Authority, had outlined the main points of the Authority's programme entitled "Palestine: Ending the occupation, establishing the State". Many speakers had backed that forward-looking blueprint, known as the Fayyad Plan, which called for Palestinians to unilaterally build the administrative, economic and institutional foundation of an independent State, despite the Israeli occupation.

Participants in the three plenary meetings, he noted, had heard expert presentations on the current situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem; ways to advance the State-building agenda; and the important role played by international assistance supporting the Palestinian economy. Interactive dialogue had followed the panel presentations.

He said the focus of the civil society meeting had been on the separation wall constructed on occupied Palestinian land. Participants had discussed their efforts to uphold international law and to work in the context of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice with regard to the wall. They had also been briefed on the outcome of the first meeting of the Russell Tribunal on Palestine, held in early March in Barcelona, Spain. Participants had been shown two documentaries: *Walled Horizons* and *Refuse to Die in Silence*.

Participants in today's meeting then saw a screening of the same films.

[*Refuse to Die in Silence* , produced by Shai Carmeli Pollak, portrays the creative and non-violent struggle of the people of Bil'in against the construction of the wall, a symbol of resistance in the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory. It also shows the reaction of the Israel Defense Forces against demonstrations, with one demonstrator being shot and killed.

[*Walled Horizons*](#) , a documentary prepared by the United Nations in Jerusalem marks five years since the issuance of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice. It is narrated by and features Roger Waters – a founding member of Pink Floyd and famous for the song *The Wall* – who donated his services for the documentary and is active in Bil'in's Freedom Theatre. The film depicts the damaging impact of the separation wall on both rural and urban Palestinians. It features Palestinians affected by the wall, as well as interviews with Israeli security officials responsible for planning its route.]

After the screening, Mr. Mansour said the movies should be shown to as many groups and individuals as possible. He announced that a similar movie, *Budrus* , would be shown during the current Tribeca Film Festival in New York.

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