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Palestinians in 'Catch 22' amid Doubts about Their Authority, Constraining Aid, But 'Collective Process' on Statehood Envisioned, Rights Committee Told

Committee on the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, 370th Meeting (AM)

Urging the international community to shun unmet expectations from direct Palestinian-Israeli talks over the past 20 years, the top representative of the observer State of Palestine called for the application of a "collective process", which had shown promising results on Iran, Syria and Ukraine.

Addressing the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, Riyad Mansour said there had been no progress in alleviating the plight of the Palestinian people in the occupied territory. The reconstruction of Gaza, despite pledges of support from donors, remained anaemic.

Indeed, the Palestinians were caught in a "catch 22" situation, wherein donors insisted on greater assertiveness and action from the consensus Government before they could disburse funds. "However, you cannot assert authority without the requisite tools, including financial assistance." The international community could help the Palestinian Government by exerting greater pressure on Israel to lift its blockade on the Palestinian people.

Describing the situation in East Jerusalem as extremely difficult, Mr. Mansour said the occupying authorities had severed a city — from the rest of the occupied territory — that had always been the "engine" and "heart" of the Palestinian economy.

A political breakthrough had become impossible following the recent election in Israel, he said, adding that the new Government was completely captive to extremists who were hostile to peace. Commending France for taking the lead in pursuing a collective process through the Security Council to defend the two-State solution, he stressed the importance of a clear timeframe, both to ending negotiations and the occupation to allow the actualization of that goal.

He expressed hope that the next few months would provide a political opening to move forward. If a significant party continued to stand against a Council role, the Palestinians would pursue other avenues, including convening an international conference on implementing the [Arab Peace Initiative](#), as well as going through the General Assembly.

Stressing the need to ensure that the Council was not distracted from the Palestine question amid the many other items on its agenda, Fodé Seck (Sierra Leone), Chair of the Committee, asked Mr. Mansour what role he envisioned for the Quartet in the collective process.

If France's initiative went ahead, Mr. Mansour replied, it would build on the Quartet by enlisting other stakeholders like China and Arab States, thereby improving the chances of success.

Responding to a question from the representative of Namibia, he said the international community should go by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's actions, and not his "sweet words". No one was persuaded by his attempts to repeal his pre-election defiance not to allow a Palestinian State under his watch. The French initiative was in the form of a draft resolution that reflected a significant shift in European thinking, from one of following the United States to leading it on the Palestine question.

Zahir Tanin (Afghanistan), Vice-Chair of the Committee, reporting on the [United Nations Round Table on Legal Aspects of the Question of Palestine](#) held in The Hague from 20 to 22 May, said discussions there focused on available mechanisms to ensure accountability for violations of international law. The theme had been chosen in view of the recent accession of the State of Palestine to a host of international conventions and agreements, and particularly, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, to which it had become a State party on 1 April. The delegation included international legal scholars and experts, as well as 25 Palestinian participants.

He said the round table reviewed legal mechanisms to ensure accountability for violations of international law — in particular with regard to the Geneva Conventions, the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court — in relation to the question of Palestine.

Of the three very important interrelated rights of the Palestinian people, that to self-determination had been covered by the International Court of Justice's 2004 advisory opinion.

However, the refugees' rights to return and compensation had not been fully addressed. It was important that emphasis on collective national rights went hand in hand with the promotion of individual refugee rights, Mr. Tanin said.

Responding to a question from the representative of Namibia, Mr. Mansour said the round table had emerged with mixed views on the advisability of seeking another advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice on Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory. The Palestinians, however, had in the International Criminal Court a tool that anti-apartheid fighters in South Africa and freedomfighters in Namibia did not. Having acceded to the Rome Statute, the State of Palestine intended to explore the possibility of bringing enforcement mechanisms against Israelis who had participated in war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The Committee also adopted the provisional programme for the United Nations International Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace, to be held in Moscow on 1 and 2 July.

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