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Press Release

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Committee on Rights of
Palestinian People
1st Meeting (AM)

GA/PAL/2
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COMMITTEE ON INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF PALESTINIAN PEOPLE HOLDS FIRST MEETING, ELECTS CHAIRMAN

The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People held its first meeting this morning, electing Medoune Fall (Senegal) as its Chairman.

Following an exchange of views, the Committee decided to hold an informal meeting at 10 a.m. tomorrow, 27 February, to discuss the organization of its work and the remaining officers to be elected, with the possibility of an open meeting later in the day for action on any decisions taken in the morning.

Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim opened the first meeting of the 20-nation Committee, which was established by the General Assembly under resolution 3376 (XXX), adopted on 10 November 1975.

Under the Assembly resolution, the Committee is to consider and recommend a programme of implementation designed to enable the Palestinian people to exercise their rights, including the right to self-determination without external interference, and the right to national independence and sovereignty.

The Committee was asked by the Assembly to submit its report and recommendations by 1 June 1976, with the Security Council requested to consider the matter as soon as possible thereafter.

(For background information, see Press Release GA/PAL/2)

The Secretary-General, in opening the meeting, reviewed the mandate given to the Committee by the Assembly, and said the Committee had a complex and difficult task to perform.

The Chairman, in a statement after his election, said that the Committee's task would not be easy, but it would work in a responsible way and he felt that it would be able to overcome the difficulties and to achieve its objectives in the time allotted to it.

He remarked that some doubts and criticisms had been voiced at the time of the Committee's establishment. "Some nasty things" had been said. The most effective rebuff the Committee could give to its detractors, he asserted, would be "to come up with something positive to get the Palestine question out of its present deadlock".

Injustice had been done to the Palestinian people, who had been stripped of their lands and expelled from their homeland, he said. But now the problem was being dealt with as it should have been over the past 30 years. The new approach gave reason to hope, in his view, that, despite the errors of the past, the Palestine problem "might be solved sooner than expected".

Views of Delegations

RACHID DRISS (Tunisia) said that the Committee's task would not be easy but he believed that it could work out concrete proposals for a programme of implementation of the rights of the Palestinian people.

He suggested that the Committee meet on a continuing basis during all of March and April, starting with a series of informal meetings and then resuming open meetings, at which the Committee would put into final form the decisions reached at the closed meetings. He proposed that the Committee hold an informal meeting tomorrow morning for discussions on the remaining officers and the organization of the Committee's work. He also proposed that, pending the discussions tomorrow, the Committee defer the adoption of its agenda (document

JAKSA PETRIC (Yugoslavia), in preliminary remarks, said his delegation was convinced that the General Assembly's decision to establish the Committee was a significant step towards the solution of the Palestinian problem.

The international community, he said, now recognized that the question of Palestine was central to a settlement of the Middle East conflict, and it recognized the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the right of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), as their representative, to participate on an equal footing in all discussions on a Middle East settlement.

The "stubborn persistence" of Israel in holding onto the occupied Arab territories, in refusing to recognize the rights of the Palestinians and in refusing to implement United Nations resolutions on this subject, he stated, was the greatest obstacle to a solution in the Middle East.

In discussing the Committee's work, he said that it should make contact with the parties concerned, such as the PLO and the Governments of Syria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Israel, and also hold consultations, as appropriate, with the members of the Security Council, particularly the permanent members. As a first step, the Committee could invite them to submit their views and suggestions either in writing or orally.

He felt certain that the non-aligned countries would play an active role in the Committee's work.

ION DATCU (Romania) supported the proposal that the Committee hold an informal meeting tomorrow morning to decide on the remaining officers and on its working methods. The working methods should be flexible, he said.

BERNHARD NEUGEBAUER (German Democratic Republic) also supported the proposal for an informal meeting tomorrow morning.

In preliminary remarks on the Committee's work, he said the debate in the Security Council had proved that it was impossible to resolve the Middle East conflict without recognition of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. It was necessary to apply the Charter fully in ensuring the exercise of the rights of the Palestinians.

Mr. Neugebauer recalled that the idea had been put forward for a time-table for the exercise of the rights of the Palestinian people.

He said the Committee should mobilize international public opinion in favour of the exercise of Palestinian rights. For instance, it could organize hearings and seminars.

It was necessary, he said, to "confront the fact that the governing circles in Israel" refused to recognize Palestinian rights and opposed a just and lasting settlement in the Middle East. "Don't the governing circles in Israel understand", he asked, "that their policy, based on the Zionist concept of aggression, is doomed to failure?"

The representative of the German Democratic Republic said the PLO should participate in the work of the Committee. He also called for equal participation of the PLO, from the outset, in the resumed Geneva Peace Conference on the Middle East.

RICARDO ALARCON QUESADA (Cuba) said the very fact that the Committee had been established showed the marked change in the international community on how the Palestinian problem should be dealt with.

A campaign was being waged against the Committee by "hostile elements", he said, and it was important for the Committee, surrounded as it was by "an atmosphere of animosity", to act carefully in its work, taking into account "the adverse factors".

He supported the proposal for an informal meeting tomorrow morning and agreed with the representative of Tunisia that the Committee should work on a continuing basis next month, making intensive use of the time available. He also favoured participation of the PLO in its meetings.

RIKHI JAIPAL (India) said the Committee could play a constructive role in the fulfilment of the rights of the Palestinian people.

He suggested that basic documentation be prepared for the Committee by the Secretariat on the history of the problem of Palestine, its genesis and evolution, and the reactions of the Palestinian people to the United Nations resolutions and decisions on this subject.

He supported the proposal that informal meetings of the Committee be held as and when necessary, and also the proposal for participation of the PLO in its meetings.

The CHAIRMAN said the Committee, at its informal meeting tomorrow morning, would discuss its working methods and the election of the other officers, as well as the proposals for participation of the PLO, the

preparation of documentation, and other matters.

Membership of Committee

The following 20 States were appointed by the General Assembly on 17 December 1975 as members of the Committee:

Afghanistan, Cuba, Cyprus, German Democratic Republic, Guinea, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Madagascar, Malaysia, Malta, Pakistan, Romania, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine and Yugoslavia.

(Biographical notes on the Chairman, Mr. Fall (Senegal), appear in Press Release GA/PAL/3-BIO/1282 .)

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