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Committee on the Inalienable Rights
of the Palestinian People
302nd Meeting (AM)

GREATER RADICALIZATION LOOMS OVER MIDDLE EAST IN ABSENCE OF BREAKTHROUGH

TOWARDS ENDING OCCUPATION, PALESTINIAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE TOLD

Priority of New Emergency Government Is Preventing Fragmentation, Permanent Observer of Palestine Stresses

The Middle East was passing through a historic moment, and without a serious political breakthrough to give the Palestinian people hope of an end to the occupation, the situation would deteriorate further, risking greater radicalization of the region, Riyad Mansour, Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, said today as the Palestinian Rights Committee met to consider the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

Addressing the first meeting of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People since 27 April, Mr. Mansour said it was convening amid "heavy hearts and tremendous pain", owing to the recent unfortunate and tragic events in the Gaza Strip. The "military coup d'etat", in which one faction had used unlawful militias to take over the institutions of the Palestinian Authority, had resulted in the deaths of 149 Palestinians and caused injury to more than 500.

He warned that the national unity and integrity of both the land and the people — the Occupied Palestinian Territory — and recognition of the Palestine Liberation Organization as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people in one geopolitical unit was in danger of fragmentation. A top priority of the emergency Government of President Mahmoud Abbas, therefore, was ensuring that fragmentation did not take hold and that the Palestinian people could continue to pursue their dream of an independent Palestinian State.

The Palestinian people had endured continued military incursions by Israel, both in Gaza and the West Bank, which were making the difficult situation even worse, he said. Instead of allowing the new emergency Government to put things in order and control the security situation, Israel had intensified its aggression, sabotaging the Government's efforts. The international community should stop Israel from committing those violations, so as to permit the Palestinian side to sort out its internal situation as quickly as possible.

Reporting on developments since the Committee's last meeting, Chairman Paul Badji of Senegal noted the intensification of factional violence that had culminated in the takeover of the Gaza Strip by the Hamas Executive Force and allied militias. As a consequence, President Abbas had dissolved the National Unity Government and declared a state of emergency.

The Chairman also drew attention to the 25 June summit meeting held at Sharm el-Sheikh, which had brought together Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and President Abbas. Also attended by President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt and King Abdullah of Jordan, the summit had been followed by several high-level diplomatic contacts by major stakeholders in the region and beyond.

Other recent activities relevant to the Committee's work included the United Nations African Meeting on the Question of Palestine, held in Pretoria 9-10 May, he noted. That had been followed by the United Nations Public Forum in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace on 11 May. Also on 10 May, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon had appointed three international experts to the Board of the Register of Damage caused by the construction of the wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. On 15 May, he had named Michael C. Williams of the United Kingdom as his Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative to the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority.

He recalled also that, on 30 May, the Quartet principals had met in Berlin and issued a statement calling on all Palestinians to immediately renounce all acts of violence and to respect the ceasefire in Gaza. On 7 June, the Committee had held a special meeting to mark 40 years of Israel's occupation of the Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. On 26 and 27 June, the International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East, organized by the Department of Public Information, had been held in Tokyo, while Quartet envoys had met in Jerusalem. In addition, former British Prime Minister Tony Blair had been appointed Quartet Representative.

The Committee also heard a briefing by Andrew Whitley, Director of the New York Liaison Office of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), who focused on the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip, noting that circumstances had calmed, but tensions

remained. While the reopening of the main commercial passages was welcome, it was still insufficient, as many essential items remained either in short supply or unavailable. In addition, the prices of basic goods had risen by nearly 30 per cent, affecting the already impoverished population.

He said that UNRWA and the World Food Programme (WFP) had distributed some 17,000 tons of food per month, but those rations were inadequate for the Palestinian diet. Israeli customs were stopping containers destined for Gaza in addition to having halted the entry of all construction materials. That blockage had eased slightly yesterday. The Israeli authorities had encouraged the use of small crossing points, but that had increased the cost of moving goods. Essential items, such as water purifying supplies and baby formula, must be allowed to enter the area, or there "really will be a disaster".

Thousands of Palestinians were trapped in Egypt, and many had run out of money, he continued. In summary, the humanitarian situation remained "highly precarious", and although it had stabilized in recent days, it had the potential to worsen again. UNRWA's main concern was to ensure a stable environment in which to function, as it continued its endeavours to bring normality to the lives of Gazans. However, there could be no substitute for full implementation of the 2005 agreement, signed by Israel, on access and movement, or Palestinian poverty and unemployment would worsen and the downward spiral continue.

Mr. Badji took the floor again to report on the United Nations African Meeting on the Question of Palestine. The theme had been "African solidarity with the Palestinian people for the achievement of their inalienable rights". The objective of the two Pretoria events had been to encourage broad international action, including on the part of African States and African civil society in support of a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine. (For detailed coverage of those meetings in May, see Press Releases [GAPAL/1047](#), [GAPAL/1048](#), [GAPAL/1050](#), [GAPAL/1051](#) and [GAPAL/1052](#)).

Dysane Dorani, Chief of the Palestine, Decolonization and Human Rights Section in the Department of Public Information, reported on the work and outcome of the International Media Seminar, saying it had opened against a backdrop of grave uncertainty and with an appeal for an end to the violence in Gaza and renewed dialogue at all levels, including at the grassroots. The Seminar's objective had been, not only to sensitize public opinion about the Middle East situation and the question of Palestine, but also to provide impetus and support for a dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians. (For detailed coverage of the Seminar, see Press Releases [PAL/2081](#), [PAL/2082](#) and [PAL/2084](#)).

Also speaking today was Jamal Nasser Al-Bader (Qatar), who suggested that perhaps the new Quartet Representative, Mr. Blair, could be asked to participate in some of the Committee's activities so that members might hear some of his ideas. Mr. Mansour agreed, adding that perhaps Quartet experts could also be invited to Committee meetings and events.

In other business, the Committee approved the provisional programme for the United Nations International Conference of Civil Society in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace, to be held in Geneva on 28 and 29 August.

The Committee will meet again at a date and time to be announced.

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