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UCLG
The Global Network of Cities,
Local and Regional Governments



INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS IN SUPPORT OF PALESTINIAN RIGHTS

Parliament of Andalusia, Seville, Spain
2 and 3 December 2014

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Summary

The International Conference of Local Governments and Civil Society Organizations in Support of Palestinian Rights, held in Seville, Spain on 2 and 3 December 2014, was co-organized by United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), the Andalusian Fund of Municipalities for International Solidarity (FAMSI), the Regional Government of Andalusia and the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. The conference was hosted by the Parliament of Andalusia.

The participants expressed their support for decentralized cooperation, fighting impunity and promoting peace and justice for the Palestinian people, political prisoners and detainees, and discussed the role of the media with regard to the question of Palestine. The Conference underscored the efforts made by local authorities and civil society organizations to support humanitarian and advocacy endeavours vis-à-vis Palestine.

Referring to the wave of recognitions of the State of Palestine throughout Europe, representatives of local authorities highlighted their activities to promote motions for such recognition. The first world forum of local governments for Palestine would be organized in 2015. Local governments' and civil society's efforts dovetailed with the Palestinian diplomatic strategy aimed at ending the occupation by achieving diplomatic recognition and ensuring accountability.

Efforts to strengthen and mobilize public opinion and civil society, including successful campaigns on college campuses, to promote the boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) movement were discussed. Local communities were also successfully challenging municipal contracts placed with occupation profiteers. Although evidence of the effects of BDS at the macro level was hard to come by, individual examples of the success of BDS campaigns were cited.

The plight of Palestinian political prisoners, including women and children, was discussed and a call to launch a global campaign of solidarity with all Palestinian political prisoners was made. The creation of interactive online tools to advance a factual, rights-based narrative of the Palestinian issue was discussed. Social media were highlighted as a means of providing access to alternative points of view, which proved useful for counter argumentation and reporting. A final Olive Declaration was adopted by the local governments and civil society organizations participating in the conference.

I. Introduction

1. The International Conference of Local Governments and Civil Society Organizations in Support of Palestinian Rights (the Conference), was held on 2 and 3 December 2014 in Seville, Spain, in accordance with provisions of General Assembly resolutions 68/12 and 68/13. It was co-organized by United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), the Andalusian Fund of Municipalities for International Solidarity (FAMSI), the Regional Government of Andalusia and the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (the Committee), with the support of the Parliament of Andalusia, which provided the venue.

2. The Committee was represented by María Rubiales de Chamorro (Nicaragua), Vice-Chair, and Zahir Tanin (Afghanistan), Vice-Chair. The conference consisted of an opening session, five plenary sessions and a closing session. The themes of the plenary sessions were: Decentralized cooperation: local cooperation for development, humanitarian assistance and political action; Breaking the cycle of impunity; Campaigning for peace and justice for the Palestinian people; The plight of Palestinian political prisoners and detainees, including women and children; and Palestine and the media.

3. Presentations were made by 19 experts. The conference was attended by 90 participants, including representatives of the State of Palestine, 10 local government representatives, and representatives of 1 governmental and 40 civil society organizations. The conference was highly interactive and benefitted greatly from the inputs made by the audience.

4. The papers of those experts who provided a copy for distribution were made available soon after the conclusion of the conference on the website of the Division for Palestinian Rights of the United Nations Secretariat. See www.un.org/depts/dpa/qpal/calendar.htm.

II. Opening session

5. **Manuel Gracia Navarro**, President of the Parliament of Andalusia, delivered a statement. He welcomed the participants to the timely conference and recalled the importance of the wave of recognitions of the State of Palestine spreading through Europe. He added that such a movement should be accompanied by pressure on Israel to ensure it complied with its international obligations.
6. **Zahir Tanin**, Vice-Chair of the Committee, expressed his sincere appreciation and gratitude to the co-organizers of the Conference and thanked the Parliament of Andalusia for providing such a spectacular venue. He commended the efforts of local authorities and civil society organizations, inviting them to strengthen their cooperation with the Committee so as to better support the humanitarian and advocacy endeavours in Palestine. The Middle East was unquestionably confronted with several major challenges, but achieving peace in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict should be seen as the first step towards the solution of a bigger regional equation.
7. While commending the recent expressions of international support for the State of Palestine, Mr. Tanin recalled the words of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Robert Serry, who had said at a conference of local authorities held in Ramallah from 21 to 23 November 2014 that Governments were becoming increasingly impatient at the continued lack of real progress in achieving a two-State solution, slowly paving the way towards a shift of paradigm to end that decades-long conflict once and for all.
8. **Diego Valderas Sosa**, Vice-President of the Regional Government of Andalusia, highlighted the role of Andalusian cooperation in assisting the Palestinian people to achieve their inalienable rights.
9. **Ignacio Caraballo**, President of FAMSI, announced that, among other activities, FAMSI would promote motions for recognition of the State of Palestine through its network of local authorities.
10. **Claude Nicolet**, Regional Councilor of Nord Pas de Calais, France, President of the Network for Decentralized Cooperation for Palestine and representative of UCLG at the conference, announced that the French chapter of UCLG, Cités Unies France, would organize the first world forum of local governments for Palestine in 2015, coinciding with a French diplomatic initiative that would last two years. He also highlighted the importance of recognition of the State of Palestine, as well as the current initiatives being undertaken by national Parliaments.
11. Mr. Nicolet stressed that the situation on the ground in Palestine was clearly worsening and warned the audience about Palestinian economic collapse. The recent aggression against the Gaza Strip had had an enormous cost and was a tactic used against the Palestinian population and the international community. The pattern of repeated aggression had to stop. Mr. Nicolet concluded by emphasizing the explosive situation in the region; the achievement of peace in Palestine would be a crucial first step towards lowering regional tensions.
12. **Musa Amer Odeh**, representative of the State of Palestine and Ambassador to Spain reminded the audience of the grim situation prevailing in Palestine. He also said that the international community needed to be creative and find new ways to bring peace to the region. He called on the European Union to take on its responsibility to ensure accountability in its relations with Israel.
13. **Majed Banya**, First Secretary with responsibility for prisoners' issues at the Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, delivered a keynote address on the diplomatic strategy of the State of Palestine. The launch of the peace offensive of the Palestinian people had started in 1988 through the Palestinian declaration of independence, in Algeria, which had triggered an international wave of recognitions by over 100 countries. That expression of solidarity, coupled with the Palestinian resistance, had allowed for peace negotiations to start. Unfortunately, the Israelis had used the negotiations to push Palestinians further away from peace. The approach of the two sides was clearly asymmetrical.
14. Bearing that in mind, Palestinians had adopted a new strategy, based on three pillars. The first pillar was aimed at ending the occupation, setting forth a clear timeline and putting the question before the international community. The second pillar was international recognition of the State of Palestine. It was a symbolic move, but it still allowed for the creation of a political momentum which seemed to be of concern to Israel. The third pillar, and the most important one, was accountability.
15. For too long Palestinians had been forced to choose between peace and accountability without results, whereas accountability embodied the only way to achieve a peaceful settlement. Mr. Banya invited Governments to rethink their attitude, respect international law and protect Palestinian rights. He said that Palestinians were told to be patient vis-à-vis the International Criminal Court, the United Nations Security Council and official recognition. That had led to an absurd situation, where Palestinian démarches were considered to be inimical to peace, while Israeli crimes were not qualified in the same way. More political pressure was needed, including civil society support. In 1999, the European Union had said that it would recognize Palestine in due time. However, Mr. Banya noted with regret, such recognition and the freedom of Palestinians were still long overdue.

III. Plenary sessions

A. Plenary session I

Decentralized cooperation: local cooperation for development, humanitarian assistance and political actions

16. The speakers in plenary session I addressed the following sub-themes: Feedback from the International Conference of Local Authorities in Solidarity with the Palestinian People; Initiatives of local authorities in solidarity with Palestine; and Boycott and divestment initiatives by local governments. The session was chaired by Antonio Zurita, Director-General of FAMSI, Flavio Lotti, Director of Enti Locali Per la Pace, acted as discussant.
17. **Claude Nicolet**, representative of UCLG, said that politicians felt citizens' concerns. There was now a more precise understanding in France, and generally in Europe, about the situation on the ground in Palestine, coupled with growing sympathy towards the Palestinian people. Local politicians had responsibilities to be efficient within their constituencies and such expertise could prove valuable in the Israeli-Palestinian debate. It was time to go further and take measures of a different nature. The involvement of people was also indispensable in order to pull back from the precipice and shift perspectives.
18. Mr. Nicolet reiterated that UCLG, through its French chapter, Cités Unies France, intended to organize a world forum of local authorities in support of Palestine by the end of 2015 or the beginning of 2016. It was important to gather forces not only in Europe but also in, for example, Asia, North America and Latin America. He concluded that such a forum, setting forth local powers, could have a strong impact on the peace process.
19. **Othman Dawoud**, Mayor of Qalqilya, highlighted the specific situation of his city and the extent to which the living conditions of its residents had deteriorated because of the impact of the Israeli occupation and the separation wall. He added that the continued procrastination of the Israelis vis-à-vis the Oslo Accords and their full control of Area C had a significant impact on Palestinians, including deprivation of their natural resources, reduced household incomes and limited tax collection at the municipal level. The recurrent destruction of humanitarian projects also aggravated the living conditions of populations in urgent need of assistance.
20. Mr. Daoud stressed that Qalqilya was a victim of frequent raids by the Israeli military and indicated that the Israel Defense Forces had confiscated 63 per cent of its most fertile land, creating a territorial and demographic problem because of the high density of the population. The construction of the separation barrier in 2003 had paralysed the agricultural sector, which had traditionally been the most important source of revenue. Unemployment had skyrocketed, affecting 62 per cent of the working age population, one of the highest rates in Palestine. It was said that each family in Qalqilya was losing \$25 per day because of the Israeli occupation.
21. **Joseph Schechla**, Coordinator of the Housing and Land Rights Network within the Habitat International Coalition, stated that local authorities had similar responsibilities as States under international law. That included respect for the right to adequate food, the right to water, the right to housing, etc. Local authorities also had shared and complementary duties to respect, protect and fulfil human rights, and not to recognize or cooperate with internationally wrongful acts.
22. The old Roman law principle of *uti possidetis juri* set a prohibition against the partitioning of a territory subject to self-determination, including the inviolability of borders. The 1847 Congress of Lima had stated the principle of non-recognition of a situation where a State occupied another territory. That proclamation had been made at a time when the United States of America was occupying northern Mexico (Mexico had lost 55 per cent of its territory to the United States). It was also important to emphasize that victory did not confer any territorial rights to the victor. The inviolability of the territory of a State was also enshrined in several conventions, as was the prohibition of forced eviction and population transfer (see art. 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention).
23. The Charter of the United Nations had recognized the two human rights principles of self-determination and non-discrimination. The 1960 Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples had added that a colonial regime consisted of five elements: (a) territorial violation; (b) deprivation of self-governance; (c) integration of the economy; (d) breach of sovereignty over natural resources; and (e) deprivation of cultural rights. The illegality of a forcible transfer of population was further elaborated by the International Law Commission and in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. The International Court of Justice, in its 2004 Advisory Opinion on the Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory had found that erga omnes obligations of humanitarian law were fundamental to the respect of the human person and elementary considerations of humanity, as well as to the right to self-determination. That resulted in an obligation not to render aid or assistance in maintaining the situation created by the construction of the separation wall in Palestine.
24. Non-recognition and non-cooperation were self-executing obligations. There was a new generation of awareness at the local level, with social movements operationalizing human rights. At the European level, the 1992 European Declaration of Urban Rights and the European Urban Charter had acknowledged that local authorities had rights and that they should be encouraged to directly participate in the international relations of their communities. In that spirit, one of the good practices, among many, coming from local authorities themselves was particularly embodied in the 2012 Final Declaration of the Local Authorities Forum, agreed upon by Brazilian and Palestinian municipalities gathered in Canoas, Brazil, calling for Brazilian local governments to commit themselves to responsible investment in compliance with international law.
25. **Flavio Lotti**, Director of Enti Locale Per la Pace, said that the world could not continue to address the question of Palestine in the way it had in the past. The lack of peace between Israel and Palestine was one of the biggest failures of the international community. Twenty-five years had passed since the first round of negotiations and, unfortunately, hope had been seriously damaged. The region was heading towards a dangerous confrontation and entering a terrible phase. A new diplomatic approach was needed. It was also crucial to integrate neglected villages and empower them so that they could properly contribute to their future. However, the international community was not yet ready to do so, as intervening at that level meant accessing Area C and Jerusalem, and therefore challenging Israeli policies.
26. During the ensuing question and answer session, participants emphasized that coordination should be improved among the various decentralized cooperation actors, and insisted that the number of priorities be reduced to allow for more focused action. They also discussed the

current situation in Jerusalem, referring to Israeli regulations and bills that were introducing collective punishment against Palestinian residents. The main issue in the conflict, it was proposed, was political and not religious. The participants were also asked to send a strong message to the European Union, calling on its institutions to take concrete action to end the conflict.

B. Plenary session II

Breaking the cycle of impunity

27. The speakers in plenary session II addressed the following sub-themes: International law, human rights and the effects of prolonged occupation, including the situation in the Gaza Strip; Follow-up to the Russell Tribunal on Palestine; European Union mechanisms to establish accountability and end impunity; and Corporate responsibility: the case of businesses and companies profiting from the Israeli occupation. The session was chaired by Frank Barat, President of the Palestine Legal Action Network. Zulaiha Ismail, Executive Director of the Perdana Global Peace Foundation, acted as discussant.

28. **John Reynolds**, lecturer in International Law at the National University of Ireland, described international law as reflecting the power balance and geopolitical dynamics. Because of its inherently political nature, international law offered limited protection to the Palestinians, he said. International law was primarily a top-down process, reproducing global hierarchical patterns. Fortunately, critical initiatives such as the Russell Tribunal on Palestine and the boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) movement did not start from a strict interpretation of the law and attempted to bridge the gaps left by international diplomacy to end the status quo.

29. The scale of the latest destruction in Gaza highlighted the collective responsibility of the international community and the fact that it remained aloof, avoiding taking initiatives. On the contrary, settler colonial States like the United States and Canada had even made strong efforts in the past to prevent certain initiatives favourable to Palestinians, such as the Goldstone report, from succeeding. The next Gaza inquiry would certainly produce an important but insufficient report, as it would not analyse the deeper settler colonial logic of Israel, including the analogy with apartheid.

30. From a legal point of view, Mr. Reynolds said, apartheid was a legalized system institutionalizing the domination of one group over another. Its signs were very present in Palestine. There were many driving forces worldwide pushing the analogy with apartheid to challenge the occupation regime. A conference held at Birzeit University in 2013 had stated that international law was not sufficient to describe the situation in Palestine. Mr. Reynolds did not fully share that position, although he understood critics of the limitation of international law, of its subjectivity and of the fact that it was created to civilize the battlefield in Europe and not to protect the inhabitants of the third world.

31. **Pierre Galand**, President of the European Coordination of Committees and Associations for Palestine (ECCCP), talked about the follow-up to the Russell Tribunal on Palestine. He said that, unfortunately, the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People would be remembered because of its criminal colonial war against the people of Gaza, a war waged on the pretext of self-defence, with the complicity of the international community. He also strongly criticized the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism, which granted Israel too much control over what could or could not be rebuilt.

32. Mr. Galand went on to say that the objective of the Russell Tribunal on Palestine was not to go over again the types of violations of rights, but rather to denounce international failures and complicity with Israel. The Palestinian struggle was not only aimed at Israel but also at the international community, which allowed for the occupation of Palestine. He recalled that, although all the members of the European Union had agreed with the 2004 International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion, they had never put an accountability mechanism in place regarding the implementation of its provisions and those of the many resolutions supporting the right of Palestinians to self-determination.

33. The idea behind the Russell Tribunal came from the understanding that third parties, such as the United Nations, the United States, the European Union and international corporations, had failed to comply with their international obligations vis-à-vis the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Russell Tribunal was therefore aimed at strengthening and mobilizing public opinion and civil society, and at providing them with legal tools to take action against third parties.

34. The first session of the Tribunal (Barcelona, March 2010) had focused on the role of the European Union. The second session (London, November 2010) had focused on international companies profiting from the occupation. The third session (Cape Town, November 2011) had examined whether Israeli practices in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and in Israel could be framed as apartheid. The fourth session of the Tribunal (New York, October 2012) had focused on United States complicity with Israel and the failure of the United Nations to hold Israel accountable for its violations of international law. The fifth and final session (Brussels, September 2014) had focused on the crimes committed during Operation Protective Edge.

35. **Katarzyna Lemanska**, a researcher on European Union-Israeli relations, stressed that despite the fact that the impunity of Israel was widely documented, several obstacles impeded European Union action to establish accountability, such as member States' "domestic drivers", the complex European Union institutional set-up, lack of knowledge of international law, and the fact that the peace process had historically been led by the United States.

36. The European Union had at its disposal several tools to promote accountability: the European Union Strategic Framework on Human

Rights and Democracy and the associated Action Plan (2012) committed it to encourage third countries to comply with international humanitarian law obligations and to ratify and implement the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. The Action Plan also foresaw the adoption of country strategies for human rights. However the strategy on Israel had still not been adopted and its draft failed to address important issues. The Guidelines on the promotion of compliance with international humanitarian law were another such tool, although their implementation was hindered by a lack of continuity due to the rotating European Union Presidency. Also, vis-à-vis Israel, the European Union had always maintained that engagement was preferable to sanctions.

37. The European Neighbourhood Policy provided the framework for European Union-Israeli bilateral relations. It contained a human rights clause that could be used to exert pressure. However, the legal conditions to justify negative conditionality were hard to meet and, on the political front, European Union officials had clearly stated that the suspension of the Association Agreement with Israel was not conceivable. The European Union had decided in 2009 to freeze the upgrading of bilateral relations with Israel and refuse to adopt a new Action Plan until progress was made in the peace process. However, in 2012 the European Union had adopted a list of 60 activities in 15 specific fields where cooperation could be deepened with Israel, which was sometimes referred to as a “silent upgrade”. Experience had shown that accountability tools were used in other contexts, such as the Syrian Arab Republic, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Belarus and Russia. However, the European Union was largely disregarding them vis-à-vis Israel, demonstrating double standards, Ms. Lemanska said. Citizens of member States of the European Union should exercise their right to hold the European institutions accountable.

38. **Lou Pingeot**, Policy Advisor with the Global Policy Forum and doctoral candidate at McGill University, said companies were profiting from the Israeli occupation on various levels through: settlement business (Alstom); exploitation of a captive workforce and market (Veolia); or control of the Palestinian population (G4S). Some companies also profited indirectly through, for instance, financial investments (TIAA CREF).

39. In the Occupied Palestine Territory, G4S provided: equipment to the Ofer prison in Israel, which housed Palestinian political prisoners, including children; security systems for the Kishon and Jerusalem interrogation and detention centres; as well as equipment and maintenance services to Israeli military checkpoints. With the international mobilization against G4S (the BDS movement, War on Want, the Russell Tribunal, etc.), many businesses and foundations had distanced themselves from the security firm. Trade unions, universities and civil society organizations had played a crucial role in that process, which had led to losses of contracts and divestments from the company. However, concerning the recent announcement by G4S that it would end its contract in the Occupied Palestine Territory within three years, G4S had made similar statements in the past that had not been followed by action. Lastly, G4S still had many contracts, including with the United Nations (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the United Nations Children’s Fund, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Development Programme, etc.).

40. In conclusion, Ms. Pingeot noted the possibility of crosscutting campaigns around companies profiting from the occupation, as they were likely to be committing crimes in other locations. However, such an approach would only work with companies that were concerned about their image. She also reiterated that campaigning should not replace legal and judicial remedies for human rights abuses.

41. **Zulaiha Ismail**, Executive Director of the Perdana Global Peace Foundation and discussant for the Conference, said it was clear that Israel had succeeded in institutionalizing a cycle of impunity, transforming it into a norm to oppress the Palestinian population. She added that those who committed crimes should be prosecuted. She regretted that the international community was ready to disburse millions of dollars without doing anything to prevent another Gaza massacre. It was time, she concluded, to hold Israel accountable, to finally ensure respect for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

42. In the ensuing discussion, participants highlighted the double standards of the European Union vis-à-vis Israel, stressed the disconnection of the European Commission on Palestinian issues and called for a greater involvement of European Union parliamentarians. Taking those remarks into consideration, **John Reynolds** said that the double standards of the European Union could be explained by the European legacy of guilt over the Holocaust, combined with the fear of being associated with anti-Semitic discourse. In addition, the connections of Israel with key European Union centres of power, the current instability in the Middle East, the traditional role of Israel as an ally of the West and a general lack of knowledge of international humanitarian law were also creating obstacles to accountability. **Katarzyna Lemanska** stated that the European External Action Service and national parliaments were important targets. She also specified that Germany was the main blocker at the European Union level, attempting to water down any resolution or text deemed too harsh on Israel. **Joseph Schechla** underscored the appropriateness of using the proper language for crimes such as apartheid or ethnic cleansing. That was something civil society organizations should correct and which should also be addressed by Palestinians.

C. Plenary session III

Campaigning for peace and justice for the Palestinian people

43. The speakers in plenary session III addressed the following sub-themes: The BDS movement and its economic impact; Advancing the question of Palestine on campuses; and Palestinian solidarity in Spain, including Andalusia. The session was chaired by Felicia Eaves, a member of the Steering Committee of the US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation. Pedro Ferraracio Charbel, a member of the Brazilian Front in Defence of the Palestinian People, acted as discussant.

44. **Mahmoud Nawajaa**, General Coordinator of the Palestinian Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions National Committee (BNC) announced that the government of Rio Grande do Sul in Brazil had just declared “void of meaning” its memorandum of understanding signed with the Israeli

military company Elbit Systems, known for its participation in the construction of the separation wall. That victory demonstrated the importance of local government involvement in the struggle for justice in Palestine.

45. Mr. Nawajaa went on to say that for decades Palestinian fundamental rights had been denied by Israel, despite an abundant condemnation of its policies by the United Nations and other international bodies. However, the failure of the international community to hold Israel to account had led Palestinian organizations to call for various forms of boycott against Israel until it met its obligations under international law, including (a) ending the occupation and dismantling the separation wall; (b) ensuring equality to all citizens of Israel; and (c) respecting United Nations General Assembly resolution 194 (III) with regard to the right of return. The call for BDS had been signed by 170 Palestinian political parties, organizations, trade unions and movements and represented Palestinians from all over the world.

46. Boycott meant targeting products and companies, Israeli and international, that were profiting from the violation of Palestinian rights, as well as Israeli sport, cultural and academic institutions. Divestment meant targeting corporations complicit in the violation of Palestinian rights and ensuring that the likes of university investment portfolios and pension funds were not used to finance such companies. An essential aim of sanctions was to seek justice and educate the public on international law.

47. BNC, which coordinated the BDS movement, had been set up in 2007. It had recently condemned the United Nations-brokered Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism, which further entrenched the illegal blockade of the Gaza Strip, allowing Israel to reap financial benefits from its war crimes and, therefore, encouraging their repetition. BNC called for a clear and ethically responsible policy of transparency and zero complicity in aid delivery, and reiterated its call for the imposition of a military embargo on Israel and for United Nations Member States to support the Independent Commission of Inquiry on the 2014 Gaza Conflict. It was time for the United Nations and aid agencies to stop operating within the confines of the Israeli policy of separation and to take concrete action to lift the blockade.

48. **Anna Baltzer**, National Organizer of the US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation, said that the deterioration of the situation in Palestine, including the deadlock in the peace process, showed that the world could not wait for Israel to change its ways or for the United States to end its support. In that context, the BDS movement was aimed at creating an incentive to end a status quo favourable to Israel and made possible by the passivity of the international community.

49. The BDS movement embodied a call from the oppressed and was a non-violent tool to address the violence of the Israeli occupation and Israeli apartheid policies, placing Palestinian voices at the centre of its leadership and advocacy efforts. It had shown its ability to grow over the years, with great successes, to reach a variety of groups and platforms, and to become a solid awareness-raising tool.

50. The Knesset had recently passed an anti-boycott law fining Israeli citizens who promoted the academic and cultural boycott. Pro-Israeli groups had also started to sabotage and attack BDS initiatives. The BDS movement had a growing list of victories, including the SodaStream campaign, divestments by the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the United Methodist Church, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's divestment from G4S. Local communities were successfully challenging municipal contracts, such as in St. Louis, Missouri with the French multinational Veolia.

51. Ms. Baltzer also mentioned the growing trend of connecting struggles at the local level, where Palestine activists were increasingly placing their efforts within the larger context of fighting global racism and colonialism. In Ferguson, Missouri, people referred to their protest as their "Intifada". She invited the Palestinian Rights Committee to issue a statement of solidarity with the Ferguson protesters. She also called for an end to United Nations contracts with G4S.

52. **Shir Hever**, an economic researcher for the Alternative Information Center, said that BDS groups had been formed in every major city in Europe, the United States, Canada and Australia, and in most capitals cities in the world. Regarding the economic impact, it was extremely hard to measure and certainly not the right question to ask if one wished to know how successful the BDS movement was. Israeli companies were the only groups who could make such assessments, but they would very rarely attribute economic effects to political pressure, but rather would blame the financial crisis.

53. The Israeli media were cooperating with that attempt to silence BDS successes. For example, in 2008, following an effective divestment campaign against the real estate company Africa Israel, that company had publicly admitted that it was unable to keep up with the payments on its debts. None of the Israeli economic newspapers and magazines had mentioned the divestment campaign as a possible cause contributing to the company's financial troubles.

54. The Israeli public had become aware of the BDS movement in 2010, following the killing of nine activists on the Mavi Marmara and the subsequent round of cancellations by international artists billed to perform in Israel. A great impact had been felt with the recent adoption of European Union guidelines discouraging the funding of Israeli projects in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Additional moves by the European Union had also had far-reaching impacts, such as the non-recognition of the veterinary services for products made in settlements, thus blocking the export of eggs, chicken, etc. To avoid falling under the guidelines' provisions, some Israeli companies were now lying about the origin of their products, using fake labels. The Government of Israel was investing a lot of money in diplomatic propaganda against the BDS movement.

55. **Rahim Kurwa**, a member of Students for Justice in Palestine and a doctoral candidate in the Department of Sociology, University of California, talked about the advance of solidarity with Palestine on campuses. Three trends were identified as contributing to the growing solidarity with Palestine in the United States. The first trend was the increasing change in public opinion, including a greater willingness to consider the Palestinian narrative. The second trend was the building of links of solidarity with other communities struggling for justice inside the United States. The third trend was the growing heterogeneity in Jewish attitudes towards Israel and its Government's policies. Organizations ranging from

J Street to “IfNot Now” to Open Hillel to Jewish Voice for Peace had dramatically changed the landscape of Jewish relations with Israel since roughly 2008. Each of those trends had accelerated on college campuses.

56. The main problem for any campus activist was the habitual reluctance of students who had no knowledge of the issue at stake. The BDS movement was an effective way of getting around that problem because it operated through the mainstream institutions of the university, “forcing” the “student government” to address Palestinian issues and thus pushing the students to educate themselves before the decision-making process.

57. The University of California, Los Angeles had proposed a divestment resolution in February 2014 and had gone through a process of mass education and outreach. Over the past two years, 23 campuses had launched a divestment campaign. According to Mr. Kurwa, it was clear that there was fertile ground for reaching and educating large segments of students on United States campuses and that the crucial question now was to capitalize on that potential and effect mass change among the student body.

58. **Magali Thill**, Coordinator of the Spanish Network of Solidarity against the Occupation of Palestine (RESCOP), said that RESCOP represented 42 civil society organizations all over Spain. RESCOP put strong emphasis on BDS activities and condemned Israeli apartheid. Considering the recent controversial Jewish nation-State bill, it was, according to Ms. Thill, extremely timely to draw a parallel with the apartheid system and promote BDS action.

59. Israel was a privileged trade partner in the Mediterranean. A recent campaign organized at the European Union level under the impetus of ECCP involved sending letters to European institutions asking for the suspension of the European Union-Israel Association Agreement. Adapting the campaign to the Spanish context, RESCOP had added the issue of weapon sales, since Spain was an important exporter of armaments to Israel. Along those lines, a campaign on the theme “complicity that kills” had been launched with great success in Catalonia.

60. During Operation Protective Edge, more than 40 cities had taken action all over Spain to show their solidarity with the Palestinian people and ask for the lifting of the Gaza blockade. Moreover, several campaigns targeting a large variety of products sold in Spain had started to yield a certain effect. Recently, the video “I don’t buy apartheid” had gone viral on the Internet. In addition, there had been a focus on transnational companies complicit with the Israeli occupation, such as Veolia. The cultural boycott had been followed by hundreds of Spanish artists, singers and writers, and the academic boycott had benefited from the support of more than 1,300 teachers and researchers.

61. Ms. Thill ended her intervention with a presentation of the most recent RESCOP campaign, entitled “Space free from Israeli apartheid”, to highlight companies or local governments that were not cooperating with Israel, which had been launched a few days previously at a BDS conference in Malaga, Spain.

62. **Suleiman Rashid**, Coordinator of the European Association for Cooperation with Palestine, said that the Association was an Andalusian organization focusing on vulnerable groups in Palestine and working from various angles, including education, culture and youth, whose ultimate goal was to achieve the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. In his presentation, Mr. Rashid focused on four elements deemed fundamental for the interventions of the international community in Palestine.

63. Territory was a central component for the liberation of Palestine, Mr. Rashid said. That was the reason why international cooperation should first and foremost concentrate its work on the conservation of Palestinian land in order to prevent the expropriation, theft and destruction of properties. Second, it was essential that Jerusalem be put on top of the international community’s agenda. In the third place, it was important to properly include the economic element. Micro credit schemes could help Palestinians overcome humiliating situations, such as working in Israeli settlements. Last, but not least, another important theme was the issue of prisoners. The international community had to be more active to defend their dignity and the dignity of their families. In conclusion, Mr. Rashid said that a proper assessment of Palestinian priorities should always come as a starting point, in order to ensure more efficient assistance and more sustainable cooperation.

64. **Pedro Ferraracio Charbel**, a member of the Brazilian Front for the Defence of the Palestinian People and a discussant for the Conference, stressed the importance for education and awareness-raising purposes of connecting other solidarity struggles with the Palestinian quest for freedom. The issue of racial profiling, for instance, could be encountered in many countries. Concerning the BDS movement, Mr. Charbel said that all victories were important; however, he highlighted that some companies targeted by the movement were now migrating to new markets in Latin America, and to Brazil in particular. It was crucial to follow that up properly and strengthen work with local activists. Lastly, for the BDS movement to take off in Latin America, it needed to make the connection with historical social battles and use a social justice perspective.

65. In the ensuing discussion, participants asked for clarification on the “Free from Israeli apartheid” campaign. They were also interested in hearing more about types of advocacy work to support the reconstruction efforts in the Gaza Strip. It was also pointed out that the forthcoming Israeli elections (March 2015) would represent a turning point and were likely to bring strengthened apartheid policies.

66. Plenary session IV addressed the theme of Palestinian political prisoners and detainees and was chaired by Simone Giovetti, Project Officer at Cités Unies France.

67. **Majed Banya**, Coordinator of the Free Marwan Barghouti and All Palestinian Political Prisoners Campaign and First Secretary in-charge of the Palestinian prisoners' portfolio at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Palestine, declared that for a very long time the leadership's understanding had been that once Palestinian people were free, all Palestinian prisoners would be free. That mind-set had contributed to marginalizing the issue of prisoners which, at the time of the Oslo Accords, had been merely seen as part of confidence-building measures. Twenty years later, pre-Oslo Accord prisoners were still in jail. Mr. Banya referred to that approach as "their original sin".

68. Since 1967, more than 800,000 Palestinians had been incarcerated in Israeli prisons, which corresponded to 20 per cent of the entire Palestinian population living in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The original strategy of Israel, when dealing with the issue, had been to adopt a security approach, asking first what the crimes were, no matter the prisoner's age or her/his status (e.g., children, parliamentarians, human rights defenders). That had forced the Palestinian leadership to find all kinds of justifications in reaction to the Israeli approach, slowly realizing that it was getting trapped into a counterproductive defensive mode.

69. Subsequently, for the past 10 years, Palestinians had adopted a human rights approach. On the one hand, it allowed them to bring forward the fact that prisoners had rights, and to contest Israeli practices. On the other hand, however, it had also meant that they were not focusing on the prisoners' release. Besides, it had tended to narrow down the advocacy work to administrative detention. A radical change of strategy had clearly been needed. As a result, the Palestinian leadership had taken a bold diplomatic stance and decided to call for the release of all prisoners.

70. Mr. Banya said that that new strategy was more offensive, based on the considerations that the entire Israeli legal system (including military courts) used against Palestinians was unlawful, that it did not uphold international law requirements and that it was a mere instrument aimed at sustaining the occupation and not at rendering justice. That new approach was also more opportune to highlight how imprisonment was utilized as a tool of oppression, and to make connections with other relevant contexts. The issue of prisoners was a unifying cause; it went beyond political, geographical and religious divides, crystallizing support for the liberation movement.

71. The results under the new strategy umbrella were still not sufficient. Therefore, under the impetus of Marwan Barghouti, who was the focus of a solidarity campaign for his release, a request had been made to launch a global campaign that would show solidarity with all Palestinian prisoners, based on the South African experience. The Free Marwan Barghouti and All Palestinian Political Prisoners Campaign had been launched on 27 October 2013 on Robben Island, in the cell where Nelson Mandela had been incarcerated. It allowed for the internationalization of the issue of Palestinian prisoners. A declaration had been adopted and had become the most supported text on the matter, with expression of support from leading international peace figures, including several Nobel Peace Prize recipients. Mr. Banya ended his presentation by calling on civil society organizations to endorse the declaration and take part in the campaign's month of action in April 2015.

E. Plenary session V Palestine and the media

72. The speakers in plenary session V addressed the following sub-themes: The social media battle in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: the use of infographics and creative visuals; Dealing with traditional media: challenges and opportunities; and Influencing Israeli and Palestinian public opinion. The session was chaired by Simone Giovetti, Project Officer at Cités Unies France.

73. **Ramzi Jaber**, co-founder of Visualizing Palestine (VP), said that VP created data-driven tools to advance a factual, rights-based narrative of the Israeli-Palestinian issue. VP, which had been launched in 2012, undertook its work in partnership with civil society organizations, to amplify their impact and promote justice and equality. During his interactive presentation, Mr. Jaber went through several VP infographics dealing with issues such as access to water, hunger strikes, Palestinian prisoners, land dispossession and the peace process.

74. He explained the creative process behind each infographic, as well as the release strategy. More than 50 per cent of VP staff were dedicated to graphic design. Governments and politicians appeared to be gradually becoming more interested in using VP material. An important element of the success of VP was its strong presence on social media, including a large community of users sharing its work and volunteers (translating its material into other languages). For a greater understanding of the work of VP, Mr. Jaber referred the audience to the website www.visualizingpalestine.org.

75. **Carmen Rengel**, a freelance journalist, said that the Israeli media "war machine" was extremely powerful and had managed during Operation Protective Edge to shift discussion towards rocket attacks. She pointed out that the media were largely adopting Israeli talking points on self-defence, and underscored the urgent need for the Palestinian leadership to appoint clear spokespersons to address media queries. When confronted with a single line of discourse, it was also crucial to provide different and consistent approaches. Nowadays, thanks to social media, there was greater access to local points of view, which proved extremely useful for counter argumentation and reporting.

76. To mobilize and appeal to decision-makers, Ms. Rengel said, it was important to make linkages with the national context, although that

was sometimes difficult, especially when addressing settlement issues, which tended to monopolize media attention. Finally, she said that it was, in general, extremely difficult for journalists to remain objective, particularly considering the Palestinian context and its injustice.

77. **Mohammad Barakeh**, a member of the Knesset, said that the establishment of the State of Israel had been accompanied by many crimes. The issue of persecution and fear of genocide had been used to create solidarity among a society of immigrants. Talking about an official visit to the Auschwitz concentration camp, Mr. Barakeh said that, on his way back, when asked by the Israeli media about his trip, he had stated that he saw the horror of the camp, as well as trading on that fear by the Zionist movement, which used past horrors to justify the tragedy that had befallen the Palestinian people. It was impossible to address Israeli society without an understanding of those elements.

78. In conclusion, Mr. Barakeh said that fear was a central piece of the puzzle and a very useful one, as when the danger disappeared, it could be fabricated. The Israeli army was also playing a crucial role in creating a common narrative and establishing a common tradition of defence of the *res publica*.

79. **Daoud Talhami**, an author, talked about a meeting that had taken place in 1988 between Henry Kissinger and Jewish community leaders in New York. Kissinger had been advising them on the best means to retaliate against the ongoing Palestinian uprising, known as the first Intifada. In short, it was said that Kissinger had proposed having journalists expelled from places where clashes were taking place, to eventually allow for a ferocious repression. A participant in that meeting had leaked what was discussed to The New York Times. Mr. Talhami explained that that showed how Americans and Israelis had wanted to treat the Palestinian movement, which at that time had been popular and pacifist.

80. Israel had tried the best it could to minimize media coverage of the Intifada, but had not really succeeded. That had created empathy with the Palestinian people, who had been seen fighting with stones against Israeli tanks. At that time, Palestinians had been convinced that such struggles would bring about their own State. Mr. Talhami added that it was important not to forget about Palestine. The regional dynamics tended to divert attention to other issues; however, the Government of Israel was as much an enemy of humanity as extremist groups operating in the Middle East.

IV. Closing session

81. During the closing session, **Antonio Zurita** of FAMSÍ thanked the organizers and the speakers for their cooperation, as well as the participants for their interventions. **Majed Banya** of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Palestine read a message from imprisoned Palestinian leader Marwan Barghouti to Conference participants. In addition, **Musa Amer Odeh**, Ambassador of Palestine to Spain, invited European Union member States to follow Sweden and recognize the State of Palestine. **Zahir Tanin**, Vice-Chair of the Committee thanked the participants for their lively discussions and assured them of the solid support of the Committee. He also expressed his gratitude to FAMSÍ, the Regional Government of Andalusia, UCLG, the Parliament of Andalusia and the steering committee of the Conference for their support and dedication.

82. A final declaration, the Olive Declaration, was adopted by the representatives of local governments and civil society organizations participating in the Conference (see annex I).

Annex I

Olive Declaration

The representatives of city and local governments, as well as of civil society organizations who gathered in Seville during the International Conference of Local Governments and Civil Society Organizations in Support of Palestinian Rights, organized by the Andalusian Fund of Municipalities for International Solidarity (FAMSÍ), the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) and the Regional Government of Andalusia, with the collaboration of the Parliament of Andalusia, where the event took place, declare:

Sixty-seven years after the adoption by the United Nations General Assembly of resolution 181 (II), and the Palestinian Nakba; 21 years after the signing of the Oslo Accords; and on the tenth anniversary of the International Court of Justice advisory opinion on the Wall, coinciding with the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People (2014);

Reaffirming our unconditional support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, namely, their right to self-determination, their right to national independence and sovereignty, and the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties, and to compensation for their property for those choosing not to return, and for loss or damage to property, in accordance with United Nations resolutions and international law;

Reaffirming the customary law and norms enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, which prohibits the acquisition of territory by force, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and our own national Constitutions;

Alarmed by the ongoing deterioration of the situation in Jerusalem, the ongoing displacement and violations of Palestinian fundamental rights, and by the increase of settlers' violence and provocations against holy sites, particularly around the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound;

Calling for greater effectiveness of international diplomacy and of the institutions that should have put an end to that tragedy;

Condemning the recent attack against the Gaza Strip, which resulted in the death of some 2,205 people, a quarter of them children, the displacement of 500,000 Palestinians and the destruction of crucial civilian infrastructure;

Condemning the continuous expansion of illegal Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, despite the repeated calls of the international community to put an end to that practice;

Recalling the concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination relating to Israel, of 9 March 2007 (CERD/C/ISR/CO/13), paras. 22, 23 and 33 to 35; and of 9 March 2012 (CERD/C/ISR/CO/14–16), paras. 11, 15 and 24–27, calling on Israel to end all policies and practices which violate the provisions of article 3 of the Convention, which prohibits racial segregation and apartheid;

Recalling the conclusions of the Russell Tribunal on Palestine concerning the European Union, the United States of America, the Security Council and international companies complicit in violations by Israel of international law;

Recalling and celebrating good practices by local governments, such as steps taken by over 16 municipalities in Andalusia and Catalonia endorsing the BDS campaign, by the council of Leicester to boycott all settlement products and by the Rio Grande Do Sul government to suspend the memorandum of understanding with Elbit System, and many other initiatives all over the world;

Recognizing the growing impact of civil society movements to end the Israeli occupation, such as the BDS campaign;

Welcoming the growing international recognition of the State of Palestine and the ongoing Palestinian efforts, supported by an increasing majority of countries, to engage the Security Council and other United Nations bodies;

Taking into consideration the long and passionate exchange of views during these two days, we call for:

- The European Union and its member States to fulfil their obligations under international law, as stated in the 2004 Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the Wall, not to help to maintain or to render aid or assistance to the illegal situation coming from the breach of international law, and to play a greater role in ensuring accountability and to take concrete steps to implement the human rights provisions of the association agreements;
- All Member States of the United Nations to live up to the principles of the Charter by ending their political and economic support for violations by Israel of international law, and by holding it juridically accountable for its crimes through their own and international mechanisms;
- The international community, at all levels, including local governments and civil society, to gather support and exert pressure to end the siege of the Gaza Strip, demand the end of the abusive illegal use of administrative detention and the granting of freedom to all Palestinian political prisoners, and support the Free Marwan Barghouti and All Palestinian Prisoners international campaign, among others;
- Local governments to develop and reinforce relations between them and Palestinian municipalities through educational, economic, social, political, cultural, youth, media and expert exchanges, in a sustainable way, and the signing of more twinning agreements, focusing on Area C and Jerusalem;
- International, European and national institutions to reinforce the diplomacy of the cities and eliminate the obstacles that complicate the development of decentralized cooperation;
- Local governments to commit themselves to responsible investment by not contracting with parties and not twinning with cities that support or benefit from occupation or violate related prohibitions under international law;
- Civil society to pressure their local and national governments to hold to account Israel and companies that are complicit with its violations of international humanitarian and human rights law;
- The United Nations to adopt a principled, ethically responsible and transparent procurement policy and mechanism for contracting with companies, for instance in the reconstruction of Gaza, that exclude from all tenders any parties, Israeli and other, that are complicit with the Israeli occupation, human rights abuses and violations of international law.

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**Non-member States having received a standing invitation to participate as observers
in the sessions and the work of the General Assembly and maintaining
permanent observer missions at United Nations Headquarters**

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