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## SEVENTEENTH UNITED NATIONS SEMINAR ON THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE

Theme: "The inalienable rights of the Palestinian people"

United Nations Headquarters, New York  
22-23 June 1987

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### INTRODUCTION

1. The Seventeenth United Nations Seminar on the Question of Palestine, entitled "The inalienable rights of the Palestinian people", was held at United Nations Headquarters, New York, on 22 and 23 June 1987, in accordance with the terms of General Assembly resolution 40/96 B of 12 December 1985.
  2. Mr. Shah Mohammad Dost (Afghanistan), Acting Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, was Chairman of the Seminar and Mr. Saviour F. Borg (Malta), Rapporteur of the Seminar.
  3. Four meetings were held and seven panellists presented papers on selected aspects of the question of Palestine. In addition, representatives of 42 Governments, the PLO, three United Nations organs, four United Nations programmes and specialized agencies, three intergovernmental organizations, one national liberation organization as well as observers of 20 non-governmental organizations attended the Seminar.
- #### I. OPENING STATEMENTS
4. The opening session of the Seminar, on 22 June 1987, was addressed by Mr. William B. Buffum, Under-Secretary-General for Political and General Assembly Affairs and Secretariat Services, on behalf of the Secretary-General. In welcoming the participants, Mr. Buffum stated that the convening of the Seminar was testimony to the importance which the international community attached to solving the question of Palestine, the root-cause of the conflict in the Middle East. The extent of the involvement of the General Assembly, the Security Council and various other organs within the United Nations already reflected the importance that the world community attached to that issue.
  5. As a result of the continuing involvement and efforts by the United Nations over the years, a wide measure of agreement on the fundamental elements for a comprehensive settlement of the Middle East problem had emerged. Such a settlement had to be based on the three following considerations: withdrawal of Israeli forces from Arab territories occupied since 1967; acknowledgement of and respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every State in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries; and, finally, a satisfactory solution of the Palestinian problem based on the recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to self-determination. In that context, the question of Jerusalem also remained of primary importance.
  6. In its search for a solution to the question of Palestine, the International Conference on the Question of Palestine held in 1983 had called for

the convening of an International Peace Conference on the Middle East and that call had been endorsed by the General Assembly since its thirty-eighth session, when it had been first submitted.

7. In pursuance of General Assembly resolution 41/43 D of 2 December 1986, the Secretary-General had submitted his report (A/42/277-S/18849 of 7 May 1987) on the question of convening an International Peace Conference on the Middle East. He stated therein that all members of the Security Council were concerned about the situation in the Middle East and supported the continuation of his efforts for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. He was encouraged by the indications of greater flexibility on that issue amongst the parties. It was the Secretary-General's intention, in the months to come, to intensify his contacts with the parties, in order to try to find ways of bridging the gaps between them. In that regard, Mr. Marrack I. Goulding, Under-Secretary-General for Special Political Affairs, was at that moment in the Middle East region pursuing the efforts and endeavours of the United Nations.

8. Mr. Shah Mohammad Dost, welcoming the participants, recalled that although the overwhelming majority of the international community wished to see an end to the continuing tragedy of the Palestinian people and the pointless bloodshed in the Middle East, the efforts made to resolve this particularly complex problem had thus far remained unsuccessful, with potentially dangerous consequences for international peace and security.

9. Over the last three years the General Assembly had, by large majorities, requested the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East in accordance with the guidelines laid down by the International Conference on the Question of Palestine in 1983 and endorsed by resolution 38/58 C. The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People had given highest priority to the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East, as it was convinced that only the United Nations, in particular the Security Council, which had been asked to facilitate the organization of the Conference, could provide a legal and political framework acceptable to the great majority of the international community that would make it possible for negotiations to proceed with full respect for internationally recognized principles and on the basis of equality for all parties concerned.

10. The Committee was convinced that in order to arrive at a peaceful solution to the Palestinian question, it was essential to educate the public and to promote action at all levels in support of the struggle of the Palestinian people for the achievement of its inalienable rights, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the United Nations. The Committee had been greatly encouraged by the increased awareness of the facts relating to the question of Palestine and by the overwhelming consensus in support of its recommendations and those of the International Conference on the Question of Palestine which had emerged from the various meetings organized under its auspices.

11. The tragic events in the region in recent months showed clearly that it was more urgently necessary than ever that the United Nations discharged its moral and political responsibility towards the Palestinian people and that it increased its efforts to end their suffering and bring about a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the region. The Committee believed that, if no tangible progress was made towards such a solution in the near future, the situation would deteriorate even further with unforeseeable consequences for the peoples and countries concerned.

12. Mr. Nasser Al-Kidwa, Alternate Permanent Observer of the PLO to the United Nations, conveyed a message from Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the PLO.

13. In that message it was stressed that the Seminar was being held at a time when grave, sensitive and difficult conditions had beset the Palestinian people, both inside the occupied homeland and outside, in dispersal and exile with an intensification of a conspiracy against the Palestinian Arab people aimed at liquidating its identity and its national rights, effacing and eliminating its sole legitimate representative, the PLO, and imposing capitulation on it.

14. In Lebanon, in application of the policy of contentiousness and arrogance of power and with support from the United States Administration, Israel, through its air, naval and land forces, was launching almost daily raids against Palestinian camps, using the most modern weapons and military materiel. Israel was also backing and supporting certain client forces in Lebanon that had imposed a total blockade on the camps, which still continued, and had launched a war of genocide and starvation against them, aimed at liquidating the Palestinian presence in Lebanon and at dividing and fragmenting Lebanon into small factional states in preparation for the balkanization of the whole region.

15. On another level, a new chapter was opened in the aggressive plot against the Palestinian people and its legitimate representative, the PLO. That was reflected in the attempts to close the offices of the PLO in Washington and New York, in spite of the fact that one of these offices operated within United States law and the other was the Mission of the PLO to the United Nations. The escalation of these attempts was but a part of the United States policy of hostility to the Palestinian people, disregard for its national rights and refusal to recognize the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian Arab people.

16. The Palestinian people had stated its desire for the establishment of peace through the resolutions adopted by its National Council, convened at Algiers from 20 to 25 April 1987. Those resolutions supported the call for the convening of an International Peace Conference on the Middle East on the basis of United Nations General Assembly resolutions 38/58 C and 41/43 D, i.e. on the basis of international legitimacy as represented in all the United Nations resolutions concerning the question of Palestine and the question of the Middle East, including Security Council resolution 242 (1967), and on the basis of the right to self-determination of the Palestinian Arab people and its right to establish its free and independent State.

17. The opening session was also addressed by Mr. Isack Mudenge (Zimbabwe), on behalf of the Chairman of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries; Mr. Ahmad Farouk Arnouss (Syrian Arab Republic), Rapporteur of the Special Committee on the Situation with Regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples; Mr. Moussa Bocar Ly (Senegal), representing the United Nations Council for Namibia; Mr. Arif Shahid Khan (India), Rapporteur of the United Nations Special Committee against Apartheid; Mr. Samir Mansouri, Deputy Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States to the United Nations; Mrs. Salimatu T. Timbo, representing the Office of the Executive Secretary of the Organization of African Unity to the United Nations; and Mr. Nouredine Mezni, Deputy Director of the Permanent Observer Mission of the Organization of the Islamic Conference to the United Nations.

18. The Seminar adopted a message to Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the PLO (see annex I to the present document).

## II. PANEL DISCUSSION

19. Two panels were established. These panels and their panellists were as follows:

(a) Panel I: "The International Peace Conference on the Middle East, in accordance with United Nations General Assembly resolution 38/58 C, the need for such a conference and efforts and prospects to promote a successful outcome, and benefits thereof":

Mr. David CARROLL (United States of America)

Mr. Ramsey CLARK (United States of America)

Mr. Konstantjn GUEIVANDOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics)\*

Mr. Atif KUBURSI (Canada)

Mr. Pramathesh RATH (India)

Prof. Atif Kubursi also addressed the impact of the economic and social policies on the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territories as well as the role of the PLO.

\* The participants in the Seminar regretted that Mr. Gueivandov was not in a position to participate in the Seminar, because a visa was not issued. His paper was made available to all participants.

(b) Panel II: "The question of Palestine and North American public opinion":

Mr. Ibrahim ABU-LUGHOD (Palestinian)

Mr. Francis BOYLE (United States of America)

20. The expert members of the two panels agreed on summaries of the presentations and the discussions on both topics. The Seminar decided to include those summaries in the report.

Panel I: "The International Peace Conference on the Middle East, in accordance with United Nations General Assembly resolution 38/58 C, the need for such a conference and efforts and prospects to promote a successful outcome, and benefits thereof"

21. The year 1987 marked a whole series of commemorative dates of events which had exerted an influence on the genesis and the course of the Middle East conflict. It was the ninetieth anniversary of the birth of Zionism as an ideology; seventy years had gone by since the Balfour Declaration, twenty years had elapsed since the six-day war in the Middle East, and five years since Israel's invasion of Lebanon; it also marked the fortieth anniversary of General Assembly resolution 181 (II) on the partition of Palestine.

22. The critical situation in the Middle East continued to deteriorate. The lack of any real progress in the efforts to achieve peace made the situation in the Middle East a potential threat to international security. The situation in the Palestinian and other Arab territories occupied by Israel was tense. Jerusalem remained impaired. The effort to destroy Palestinian culture, to deny that it ever existed continued. Military strikes by Israel in Lebanon became almost a daily occurrence. And military violence of a greater dimension threatened the region.

23. At the heart of the problem was the question of Palestine, a just solution of which presupposed the restoration of the national rights of that people including its right of return, its right to self-determination without external interference and its right to establish its own independent State in Palestine. The restoration of justice and legality with regard to the Palestinian people and Israel's withdrawal from the occupied territories constituted the principal conditions for the normalization of the overall situation in the Middle East, the elimination of that extreme hot-bed of international tension and the establishment of peace and security in the region.

24. Reliance on force as a means of settling the conflict had been totally discredited. New flare-ups would have the most serious consequences both for the peoples of the region and for the world as a whole. For that reason responsible leaders had to make responsible decisions. There was a real opportunity to engage in serious efforts to achieve peace in the Middle East, and the international community should do its best to ensure that that opportunity was not missed.

25. The question of Palestine had been inseparably linked with the activities of the United Nations. On 29 November 1947, resolution 181 (II) had been adopted by the General Assembly, by which the British Mandate was to end, and two States, one Arab and one Jewish, were to be established. Jerusalem was to be a corpus separatum under a special international régime. Economic unity and safeguard of the fundamental rights were to be ensured. That resolution had been implemented only as far as the creation of the State of Israel was concerned.

26. On 10 November 1975, the General Assembly had established the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. In its recommendations, repeatedly approved by the General Assembly since 1976, the Committee had laid down a programme which would give effect to the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. As was known, the position of the United States had prevented the Security Council from following up these recommendations.

27. The International Conference on the Question of Palestine, held at Geneva from 29 August to 7 September 1983, had adopted a declaration and a programme of action. The Geneva Declaration listed the major guiding principles which should govern any concerted international action for the purpose of resolving the question of Palestine. In order to give effect to those guidelines, it was essential for an International Peace Conference on the Middle East to be convened, with the aim of negotiating and finalizing a comprehensive, just and lasting solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. It had been agreed that the International Peace Conference on the Middle East had to be convened under the auspices of the United Nations, with the equal participation of all parties directly involved, including the PLO, as well as the United States, the USSR and other concerned States.

28. The General Assembly, at its thirty-eighth session in resolution 38/58 C, had endorsed the Declaration on Palestine as well as the call for the convening of an International Peace Conference on the Middle East. The Assembly had also requested the Secretary-General, in consultation with the Security Council, urgently to undertake preparatory measures to convene the Conference. In pursuance of that resolution and following consultations with the Security Council in 1984, the Secretary-General had noted in his initial report that the Governments of Israel and the United States were not prepared to participate in the proposed Conference.

29. In that regard, the Seminar heard an account of the position of the USSR as set out in its proposals of 29 July 1984. The view was expressed that the Soviet proposals were balanced and drawn up in a spirit of justice, taking fully into account all United Nations resolutions on that issue as well as the programme of action adopted at the Arab Summit Conference at Fez in 1982.

30. The successful outcome of such a Conference could be the signing of a treaty or a number of treaties embracing such organically linked components of a settlement as: the withdrawal of Israeli troops from all Arab territories occupied since 1967; the implementation of the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people, including its right to the establishment of its own State; the establishment of a state of peace and ensuring security and independent development of all States parties to the conflict. At the same time international guarantees of compliance with the terms of the treaty or treaties on a Middle East settlement should be drawn up and adopted.

31. The General Assembly, at its thirty-ninth, fortieth and forty-first sessions, had reaffirmed its endorsement of the call for the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East and reiterated its conviction that such a step would constitute a major contribution towards the achievement of a just, comprehensive and lasting solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict through the collective efforts of all parties concerned.

32. The International Peace Conference on the Middle East could include bilateral, trilateral and multilateral negotiations. All forms of contacts and interaction among the Conference participants were appropriate, but only within the framework of the Conference, as called for by the United Nations General Assembly, and not as a forum used as an umbrella to conceal attempts to provide for new separate deals.

33. The majority of States as well as major intergovernmental organizations, including the PLO, Arab States, the USSR and other socialist countries, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the European Community, the Scandinavian countries, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries' Committee of Nine on Palestine, the States parties to the Warsaw Treaty had expressed their strong support for, and endorsement of, the holding of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East and the establishment of a preparatory committee within the framework of the Security Council, with the participation of its permanent members. Support for the convening of the Conference had also been voiced by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) dedicated to peace and justice in the Middle East.

34. The eighteenth session of the Palestine National Council held at Algiers from 20 to 25 April 1987 had supported the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East within the framework of the United Nations and under its auspices with the participation of the permanent members of the Security Council and the concerned parties, including the PLO, on an equal footing with the other parties. The session had also supported the establishment of a preparatory committee within the Security Council.

35. The holding of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East could prove that reason and dialogue and democratic choice could establish peace in the region. The failure of the United Nations to come to grips with that issue, in spite of the overwhelming support for the

Conference, profoundly questioned its ability to perform its assigned tasks. The mere respect for democracy, for the will of the majority, ought to be sufficient to eliminate the remaining opposition to the convening of the Conference.

36. General Assembly resolution 41/43 D had again stressed the urgent need for additional concrete and constructive efforts by all Governments in order to convene the Conference without further delay and had endorsed the call for setting up a preparatory committee within the framework of the Security Council, with the participation of its permanent members, to take the necessary action to convene the Conference. The Assembly had also requested the Secretary-General, in consultation with the Security Council, to continue his efforts with a view to convening the Conference and to report thereon.

37. In accordance with that request, the Secretary-General had presented his report (A/42/277—S/18849) on 7 May 1987. In it he had stated that “in contrast with the experience of recent years, none of the Council members opposed in principle the idea of an international conference under the United Nations auspices. It was clear, however, that wide differences still existed regarding the form that a conference should take. It was also generally agreed that the positions of the parties themselves remained far apart on a number of issues of procedure and of substance but that in recent months there had been indications of greater flexibility in attitudes towards the negotiating process and that this should be encouraged. It was the intention of the Secretary-General in the months to come to intensify his contacts with the parties concerned, in order to try to find ways of bridging the gaps between them. He likewise intended to continue his consultations with the members of the Security Council. In this regard the Committee had expressed its determination to pursue its efforts to ensure that the International Peace Conference on the Middle East was convened, for it was convinced that the holding of the Conference would be an important step towards the settlement of the question of Palestine.

38. It was emphasized that the time had come to begin with the preparatory work for the Conference in accordance with United Nations General Assembly resolution 41/43 D. The permanent members of the Security Council were in a position to take the initiative in that regard.

39. Developments in the region, and particularly those affecting the fate of the Palestinians, had given special urgency to the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East under the auspices of the United Nations. Vital interests of the peoples of the Middle East, as well as the interests of international peace and security urgently dictated the need for the speediest settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. While the conflict embraced various dimensions, it was the suffering of, and injustice perpetrated against, the Palestinian people that were the core of that conflict. Lasting peace in the area was impossible without a just solution to the question of Palestine.

40. The Seminar was acquainted with the activities of the Catholic Near East Welfare Association. In working for the welfare of the Palestinians and others, the Association as well as the Pontifical Mission for Palestine were trying, through relief and development, to maintain the presence and the vitality of the local Palestinian communities, whether that occurred in the refugee camp, in the town or village, the school or the parish centre. They would continue their work until peace with justice was achieved.

41. Cardinal O'Connor, Catholic Near East's President, on his return from Lebanon in June 1986, had echoed the Vatican's call for a homeland for the Palestinians. The position of the Catholic Church was recalled as expressed by Pope John Paul II in his address to the United Nations on 2 October 1979 regarding a solution to the Middle East crisis, a just settlement of the Palestinian question, the situation in Lebanon and the status of the Holy City of Jerusalem. Repeatedly the Holy See's Mission to the United Nations had called for dialogue, representing a necessary condition for peace, as well as for constructive efforts of the international community to restore peace in the Middle East.

42. The Seminar was also provided with an account of the economic situation in the occupied Palestinian territories. Israel's economic domination and exploitation of the occupied territories was deliberate, calculated and systematic. It rested on a small set of mechanisms that were well co-ordinated and synchronized. Water use was controlled with the expressed objective of limiting agricultural production and economic life in the occupied territories. Israel compounded the problem of industrial development in a systematic manner. Traditional markets had been severed and the cost of labour had increased substantially. Most of the industries in the occupied territories were confined to small household operations with limited capacities and capital. All outside sources of funding had to be declared to the occupying authorities and that practice was used to eliminate practically all external sources of investment. Research centers were harassed or closed. Universities were often arbitrarily closed and faculty and student had been arrested and detained haphazardly.

43. The lack of synchronization between the labour market and the educational system was symptomatic of some fundamental problems. Manpower and educational planning in the occupied territories was difficult and pointless unless it was geared to and promoted economic and political independence. The proposal was made to develop an integrated model which connected manpower requirements, educational operations, economic development and policy priorities into a coherent and smoothly functioning system.

44. The Palestinians in the occupied territories were encumbered in their efforts to synchronize the manpower and the educational system by their inability to form their own Government and to mobilize and re-allocate resources. Without a central Government the chances of reforming education and stemming unemployment had been limited. What it took to stimulate the economy and the educational system was clear and modest. The exports needed to be increased substantially and immediately and investment had to flow in immediately and generously. Vocational and technical education had to absorb higher proportions of secondary school's students. Arab markets had to be opened to absorb additional outputs of industry and agriculture from the occupied territories.

#### Panel II: “The question of Palestine and North American public opinion”

45. The precise role that public opinion played in the formation of foreign policy, the constraints it could impose on policy-makers in choosing a particular policy or whether the public could, through the normal political processes, promote the pursuit of a particular policy over which it had reached a consensus were subjects constantly debated. The view was expressed that there was some relationship between public opinion and foreign policy, particularly in a political system that was assumed to be democratic and pluralistic. It was axiomatic that any policy to be accorded a high degree of legitimacy had to be consistent with a public consensus; lacking a national consensus a Government's policy — domestic or foreign — would face serious difficulties and might entail serious political costs to the Government.

46. The understanding of the question of Palestine referred to the historic and contemporary conflict between Palestinian Arabs and Israeli Jews essentially over the political destiny of Palestine. While the definition of the question had differed over time, in its contemporary usage it generally referred to the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination.

47. The United Nations resolutions endorsed the Palestinians' right to return to their historic soil in Palestine and/or compensation, their independence and sovereignty without external interference in Palestine generally delimited to the so-called West Bank and Gaza and their right to be represented by their sole legitimate representative, the PLO. And to achieve the implementation of the right to self-determination, Israel had to terminate its military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza and to reach a settlement, particularly with the PLO, that would resolve the issues of compensation/return and the modality of the political relationship to prevail between the independent Palestinian State and Israel. Finally, such a settlement should be arrived at in the context of an International Peace Conference on the Middle East convened by the United Nations that would be attended by all relevant parties to the conflict on an equal footing.

48. It was fair to suggest that the public had promoted or supported whatever the policy of the United States had been at any particular point in time. In view of the fact that American policy on the question of Palestine had been subject to minimal change since 1946, in that it had consistently opposed the Palestinian right to self-determination and correspondingly had supported Israel in its pursuit of policies detrimental to the attainment of that right, it had been assumed that it was either fully or implicitly conscious of the various dimensions of the question of Palestine.

49. The United States Government's consistent policy on the question of Palestine either had public support or, minimally, public acquiescence.

The fact that Palestine had not been a “debatable” issue in the American political system at large, despite some attempts to introduce it as an “issue”, might suggest that a public consensus did exist or, alternately, that the public at large was sufficiently unconcerned with the fact that a strongly held view on the part of a specified sector of the public provided the anchor for the policy of the Government.

50. The view was held that the media — print or electronic — did not reflect the views of the public; on the contrary, the evidence was conclusive as to the critical role which the media played in forming or critically influencing public opinion. Any discussion of public opinion and the question of Palestine was therefore dependent on two kinds of phenomena: on the one hand there was a constant policy on the issue that dated back to 1946, if not earlier, and, on the other hand, there were periodic results of public opinion polls and analyses. The dearth of serious studies of public opinion on the question of Palestine in North America was a matter of considerable significance.

51. Although the question of Palestine then and now was essentially a foreign policy issue that revolved around the destiny of a foreign land and foreign peoples, in terms of the American political process it had acquired a significant domestic salience. Evidence for the sectoral significance of the question of Palestine at that time was to be found in the surveys of public opinion. All such surveys indicated quite clearly that the majority of the American public had been minimally informed on the question. But the small minority that had expressed a firm opinion tended to support Jewish claims to Palestine and the majority of such informed supporters had been Jewish.

52. Israel's success in projecting the conflict as one between Israel and the Arabs was evident in the kind of questions which the polls had asked. Not a single public opinion poll had referred to Palestinians almost from 1948 to the mid-seventies. It was of some significance to note that whereas there had been higher sympathy and support for Israel in the fifties and sixties than there was for the “Arabs”, the same had not translated for the specific destiny of Jerusalem.

53. The change in the consciousness of the Palestinian issue in North America had occurred largely in the latter part of the sixties and seventies. Several factors accounted for the altered perception of the public, the pollsters and the Government as well, among them Israel's success in the 1967 war and the defeat of the Arab States and the occupation of their national territory by Israel which helped in projecting the Palestinian resistance spearheaded by the PLO.

54. Three significant instruments had assisted in reshaping public consciousness of Palestine and the Palestinians. The first was the mass media — print and electronic. The media had to transmit information and data and provided analysis that pertained specifically to the Palestinians or Israel's occupation policies in the West Bank and Gaza. And as Palestinian resistance to Israel increasingly was identified with the PLO, the media had begun to pay considerable attention to the PLO, to its leadership, to its political and other activities. Thereby the media had contributed significantly to the projection of the Palestinian dimension of the Middle East conflict so that it became an issue of concern in the American political process.

55. The second was the role of the United Nations. The adoption of an Arab Peace Policy at the Khartoum Summit (1967) that committed the Arab States to resolve their conflict with Israel on the basis of total Israeli withdrawal and the implementation of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people” enabled the Arab States to press the latter issue in the United Nations. In 1969 the General Assembly had adopted its first resolution supporting the Palestinian right to self-determination and endorsing the right to “struggle by all legitimate means, including armed struggle”, to attain that right.

56. The third was the transformed American context of the discussion of the question of Palestine. For the first time in the recent history of the United States significant Palestine support groups had emerged whose agenda entailed the projection of the Palestinian right to self-determination, support for Palestinian resistance to Israeli occupation and support for a resolution of the conflict on the basis of the legitimacy of the Palestinian aspirations. The emergence of such organizations as well the mushrooming of local groups in various American cities contributed significantly to the dissemination of information and data on and analysis of the Middle East conflict that brought about greater understanding of the Palestinian issue.

57. Lastly, perhaps the most decisive factor was the changed domestic context of the seventies in the United States. The increasingly critical attitude of the public towards American foreign policy in the Third World, the increasing strength of the peace movement, and the emergence of an alternative system of information helped considerably in situating the question of Palestine in the overall context of the struggle against colonialism and for national liberation.

58. A careful analysis of the polls that had been conducted in the seventies and the eighties revealed the emergence of public opinion on the question of Palestine and the resolution of the conflict that was at variance with a previous “consensus”. The polls of the eighties clearly suggested that the “opinion” supported the solution of the question of Palestine by means of establishing an independent Palestinian State or homeland in the West Bank and Gaza, a reality to be brought about largely through a peace-making process that was premised on an International Peace Conference to be attended by the relevant parties. The public, according to the polls, believed that such a peace-making process had to include the PLO.

59. It was evident that a much larger part of the public was more conscious today of the Palestinians as a distinct element in the overall Arab-Israeli conflict. The public was also much more conscious of distinct issues in the confrontation between Israel and the Palestinians and that those issues revolved around specific territorial domains, political modalities of existence, conflicting rights and contending leaderships. Regardless of how the public evaluated the character and performance of the PLO, there was little doubt about its representativeness of the Palestinian people and correspondingly the necessity of involving it in the peace-making process.

60. The public support of the Palestinian quest for self-determination did not necessarily entail diminution of public support for Israel; the polls suggested that it was possible to realize Palestinian self-determination and to support an Israel that did not maintain its security by either military occupation or suppression of the Palestinians.

61. The available evidence supported the contention that there were two consensus in the United States: the official consensus espoused by the Government and its supporters which denied the legitimacy of Palestinian aspirations and claims and contested the Palestinian right to self-determination; on the other hand, an alternative public consensus that accepted the Palestinian right to self-determination.

62. The creation of peace in the Middle East demanded vigorous American leadership acting in strict accordance with the rules of international law and in full co-operation with the relevant international institutions, in particular the United Nations. As a party to the four Geneva Conventions of 1949, the United States Government had an affirmative obligation under common article 1 to respect and to ensure respect for their observance in all circumstances by other contracting powers. The United States had a duty to employ the leverage over Israel afforded by its relationship with it in order to secure strict obedience to the humanitarian laws of armed conflict by Israel.

63. A long-term solution to the question of Palestine could only be achieved when Israel was willing to recognize the international legal right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. Both the United Nations General Assembly and the League of Arab States had determined that the PLO was the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. That determination had to be respected by Israel and the United States for the purpose of negotiating an overall settlement of the dispute.

64. It was suggested that the United States could undertake an important step to open the way to a negotiated peace between Israel and the Palestinians. The United States could sponsor an amendment to United Nations Security Council resolution 242 (1967) along the following lines. First, that amendment would affirm explicitly the international legal right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, including an independent State of their own if so desire. Second, in regard to ensuring Israel's existence, a revised resolution 242 (1967) would continue to affirm the necessity for “termination of all claims or states of belligerency and respect for and acknowledgement of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every State in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force.” In addition, the resolution should be amended specifically to protect the state of Israel by name, which it currently did not. Such a revised resolution

should then be proposed for acceptance to Israel and the PLO to serve as a prelude to opening formal negotiations.

65. The self-determination of peoples had been a fundamental principle of American foreign policy and of international law and politics since President Woodrow Wilson's famous Fourteen Points Address of 8 January 1918. The fundamental interdependence of universal peace among nations and the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples had been explicitly recognized and reaffirmed in Article 1(2) of the Charter of the United Nations. That principle had been the motivating force behind the General Assembly's adoption of resolution 181(II) of 29 November 1947.

66. There would be no peace in the Middle East until the Palestinian people was given the opportunity to exercise its international legal right to self-determination in whatever manner it chose, not in accordance with a limited set of alternatives preselected for it by any State.

67. Israel continued its de facto annexation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and had already illegally annexed the Golan Heights and East Jerusalem. The international community could prevent or at least impede these lawless developments in the hope of preserving a situation that was conducive to the conclusion of an ultimate peace settlement.

68. The treatment of the Namibian issue by the United Nations General Assembly, the Security Council and the International Court of Justice provided a useful example for the implementation of the international legal right to self-determination. The suggestion was made that a similar procedure be followed with respect to the Palestine Mandate, in the expectation that the international community could agree to the proposition that the Palestinian people should have the opportunity to exercise its international legal right to self-determination. The application of the Namibian precedent to the question of Palestine provided a non-violent alternative for all those interested in peace in the Middle East.

### III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

69. Despite intensive efforts by the United Nations a peaceful settlement of the Middle East conflict remained elusive and the situation in the region continued to be unstable. Recent events in the Middle East highlighted the increasing urgency of finding a solution to this most complex problem. Such delays not only prolonged the plight of the Palestinian people but also continued to pose a threat to regional peace. In that age, it was necessary that international relations be restructured so that confrontation was replaced by co-operation, and conflict situations, such as the Arab-Israeli conflict, resolved through peaceful political means, not through military force.

70. The Seminar, concerned over the dangerous situation in the Middle East, was profoundly convinced that the vital interests of the peoples of that region, as well as interests of international peace and security as a whole, urgently dictate the need for the speediest attainment of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict, with its core, the question of Palestine. The full exercise by the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights, including the right of return, the right to self-determination without external interference and the right to create its own independent State in Palestine, as well as the complete withdrawal of Israeli forces from all the Arab territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem, remained the basis to solve the Palestinian problem.

71. The situation relating to the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people continued to deteriorate. Whilst strenuous attempts had been made to find a solution, the situation in the region was further complicated by Israel's actions in the occupied territories. Israeli policies of illegally establishing and maintaining Jewish settlements and confiscating Arab-owned lands in the occupied Palestinian territories continued. These "iron-fist policies" were accompanied by measures designed to stifle all forms of political, cultural, social and economic expression of the Palestinian people. The Israeli authorities had continued to strengthen control over most aspects of life, with the objective of obstructing the self-generating development of the occupied territories and turning them into a dependent entity, aiming at its final absorption and annexation. Those policies were in direct contravention of United Nations resolutions and international law and led only to the exacerbation of tension in the area, further hindering attempts to find a peaceful solution.

72. The Seminar noted with grave concern the continued Israeli economic subjugation of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories by confiscating their land, denying them the exploitation of their own water resources, preventing them to engage in trade with the parties of their choice, and treating the people of the occupied territories as a hostage pool of cheap labour, using them as a buffer to cool an overheated Israeli economy and as the first to lose their jobs at the slightest slowdown of the Israeli economy. The Seminar expressed appreciation for the endeavours and efforts of the PLO, the United Nations and its organs and agencies, as well as of intergovernmental organizations and NGOs in the fields of social and economic development of the Palestinian people under occupation. The Seminar called on the United Nations and its organs and agencies to render and co-ordinate all forms of social and economic assistance to the Palestinian people in consultation and co-operation with the PLO.

73. The Seminar affirmed that the problem of the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people remained the core of the conflict in the Middle East and that no comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the region could be achieved without the full exercise of those rights, including the right of return, to self-determination and to create its own independent State in Palestine, and without the complete withdrawal of Israel from Arab territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem. It further reaffirmed that the PLO is the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

74. The Seminar considered the question of the status of Jerusalem and reiterated the position of the Security Council as contained in its resolution 478 (1980) of 20 August 1980, by which it affirmed "that the enactment of the "basic law" by Israel constitutes a violation of international law and does not affect the continued application of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, in the Palestinian and other Arab territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem;" and determined "that all legislative and administrative measures and actions taken by Israel, the occupying Power, which have altered or purported to alter the character and the status of the Holy City of Jerusalem, and in particular the recent "basic law" on Jerusalem, are null and void and must be rescinded forthwith".

75. The Seminar unanimously concluded that the best way to establish a just and lasting peace in the Middle East was by convening the International Peace Conference on the Middle East under the auspices of the United Nations and with the participation of all parties to the conflict including the PLO, as well as the United States and the USSR and other concerned States, in accordance with United Nations General Assembly resolution 38/58 C. The Seminar supported the establishment of a preparatory committee within the framework of the Security Council, with the participation of its permanent members, as called for by General Assembly resolution 41/43 D, as a means to undertake practical steps towards the convening of the Conference. The Seminar believed that the members of the Security Council should immediately proceed to establish the said preparatory committee.

76. The Seminar further recalled the unyielding and firm support by the PLO, Arab States, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the socialist countries, the European Community and other groups of countries for the proposed International Peace Conference on the Middle East. The Seminar was convinced that partial and piecemeal agreements would ignore the core of the Arab-Israeli problem and were not conducive to a comprehensive peaceful solution. The Seminar was of the view that the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People had a major role to play in promoting the convening of such a Conference and encouraged its effort in that regard.

77. The Conference should be convened without preconditions and its proceedings should be conducted in a constructive spirit. The aim of the Conference should be a comprehensive settlement encompassing all aspects of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Seminar appealed to all members of the Security Council, and in particular to its permanent members, to fulfill their responsibilities for the maintenance of international peace and security, and to exercise the necessary political will and to undertake vigorous efforts to bring about the convening of the Conference.

78. The Seminar greatly appreciated the efforts of the Secretary-General of the United Nations with a view to convening the International Peace Conference on the Middle East. In this regard the Seminar took note of his report (A/42/277-S/18849) and expressed support for his intention to

intensify his contacts with the parties in order to try to find ways of bridging the gaps between them.

79. The Seminar viewed the results of the eighteenth session of the Palestine National Council, held in April 1987 at Algiers, as of great importance. It welcomed in particular the unequivocal support of the PLO for the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East and the establishment of a preparatory committee within the framework of the Security Council, with the participation of its permanent members.

80. The Seminar recalled that the year 1987 marked a number of important anniversaries in the history of the struggle of the Palestinian people, including the seventieth anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, the fortieth anniversary of the adoption of General Assembly resolution 181 (II), the twentieth anniversary of the 1967 war and the fifth anniversary of the Israeli invasion and occupation of Lebanese territory, and the massacre at Sabra and Shatila.

81. Intensified efforts should be made to mobilize public opinion in North America and throughout the world through the use of the media. In that connection, the United Nations should make additional efforts to disseminate more factual and up-to-date information on the question of Palestine, as one of the contributions to the achievement of a just solution to the problem of Palestine on the basis of the attainment by the Palestinian people of its inalienable national rights.

82. The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the Division for Palestinian Rights of the United Nations Secretariat had an important role in the preparation and dissemination of information. Furthermore, the Department of Public Information of the United Nations in co-operation with the Division for Palestinian Rights should ensure that accurate information on the question of Palestine received the widest possible dissemination.

83. It was important that the media should play a more responsive role in providing more balanced reporting on the Middle East and, in particular, on the plight of the Palestinians in and outside the occupied territories. Institutions such as universities, colleges, research institutes, churches and other religious establishments, as well as national and international NGOs, had a crucial role to play in the formation of public opinion, particularly in the United States and Canada. Those institutions should be urged to give wider coverage and more balanced treatment to the question of Palestine.

84. The Seminar encouraged the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to take a strong position against the proposed enactment of legislation by the United States Congress to close the Permanent Observer Office of the PLO to the United Nations in New York or to make association with the PLO a crime. It was the view of the Seminar that such proposed legislation went against the United Nations Host Country Agreement with the United States. The Committee should examine and explore with the United Nations Legal Counsel the implications as to the compatibility or not of the proposed pieces of legislation with basic principles of international law, including the Host Country Agreement. The Seminar also urged the committee to request the Committee on Relations with the Host Country to take a position against this proposed legislation.

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#### Annex I

#### MESSAGE FROM THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE SEMINAR TO THE CHAIRMAN THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION

The participants in the Seventeenth United Nations Seminar on the Question of Palestine, meeting at United Nations Headquarters in New York on 22 and 23 June 1987, wish to express their sincere appreciation for your kind message conveyed to the Seminar at its opening session. This Seminar considered ways and means to promote the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East in accordance with United Nations General Assembly resolution 38/58 C to achieve a just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict and its core, the question of Palestine. The Seminar also considered how to mobilize further North American public opinion in support of the exercise of the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people to return, to self-determination and to the establishment of its own State in Palestine. The participants viewed the results of the eighteenth session of the Palestine National Council as a significant contribution in achieving a just solution to the question of Palestine and welcomed the unequivocal support of the PLO for the United Nations efforts to convene the International Peace Conference on the Middle East and for the establishment of a preparatory committee within the framework of the Security Council, with the participation of its permanent members.

We convey to you and to the Palestinian people under the leadership of the PLO, its sole and legitimate representative, our greetings of support and solidarity.

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#### Annex II

#### LIST OF PARTICIPANTS AND OBSERVERS

##### Panelists

Mr. Ibrahim ABU-LUGHOD (Palestinian)  
Mr. Francis BOYLE (United States of America)  
Mr. David CARROLL (United States of America)  
Mr. Ramsey CLARK (United States of America)  
Mr. Konstantin GUEIVANDOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics)  
Mr. Atif KUBURSI (Canada)  
Mr. Pramathesh RATH (India)

##### Member States

Afghanistan  
H.E. Mr. Shah Mohammad Dost  
Ambassador  
Permanent Representative

Mr. Mohammad E. Roshan-Rawaan  
Minister-Counsellor

Algeria  
Mr. Abdallah Baali  
Counsellor

Bhutan  
Mr. Ogyen T. Doje  
First Secretary

Brazil  
Mr. Anvar Nahes  
Second Secretary

China  
Mr. Shibing Yuan,  
Counsellor

Comoros  
H.E. Mr. Amini Ali Moumin  
Ambassador  
Permanent Representative

Cyprus  
Mr. James C. Droushiotis  
First Secretary

Czechoslovakia  
Mr. Martin Walter  
Third Secretary

German Democratic Republic  
Mr. Siegfried Schlicke  
First Secretary

Guinea  
Mr. Mamadou Saïdou Dillao  
Attaché

Guyana  
H.E. Mr. David D. Karran  
Ambassador  
Deputy Permanent Representative

Hungary  
Mr. Miklos Endreffy  
Deputy Permanent Representative

India  
Mr. Pramathesh Rath  
Counsellor

Indonesia  
Mr. Kria Fahmi Pasaribu  
Third Secretary

Iraq  
Mr. Abdul Karim Al-Sudani  
First Secretary

Jordan  
Mr. Klaib El-Fawwaz  
First Secretary

Lao People's Democratic Republic  
Mr. Theuambounmy Bounkahm  
Second Secretary

Libyan Arab Jamahiriya  
Mr. Rajab A. Azzarouk  
Minister Plenipotentiary



Mali  
H.E. Mr. Seydou Niare  
Ambassador  
Permanent Representative

Malta  
Mr. Saviour F. Borg  
Acting Permanent Representative

Mr. Joseph Costantino  
First Secretary

Mexico  
Mr. Teodoro Maus  
First Secretary

Morocco  
Mr. El Hassane Zahid  
Counsellor

Nigeria  
Mr. T. O. Aje  
Third Secretary

Pakistan  
Mrs. Naela Chohan  
Third Secretary

Panama  
Mr. Luis M. Martinez  
Counsellor

Romania  
Mr. Stefan Aurel Constantinescu  
First Secretary

Sao Tome and Principe  
Mr. Adérito Ramos  
Third Secretary

Saudi Arabia  
Mr. Soud Mohamed Zedan  
First Secretary

Senegal  
Mr. Paul Badji  
Chargé d'affaires

Sudan  
Mr. Babikir Elamin Abdel-Hameed  
Counsellor

Syrian Arab Republic  
Mr. Abdul Mou'men Al-Atassi  
Deputy Permanent Representative

Togo  
Mr. Latevi Modem Lawson-Betum  
Second Counsellor

Tunisia  
Mr. Mohamed Salah Tekaya  
First Secretary

Turkey  
Mr. Mehmet A Irtemcelik  
Counsellor

Ukrainian Soviet Socialist

Mr. Yuri Zybanov  
Director of Department  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Mr. Vladimir Y. Eltchenko  
Second Secretary

Union of Soviet Socialist Republics  
H.E. Mr. Arnold. K. Gren  
Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Estonian SSR

Mr. A. F. Chistyakov  
Head of Section  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Viet Nam  
Mr. Nguyen Si Xung  
Third Secretary

Mr. Pham Quang Vinh  
Attaché

Yugoslavia  
Mr. Milisav Paic  
Counsellor

Zimbabwe  
H.E. Dr. Isack S. G. Mudenge  
Ambassador  
Permanent Representative

Non-member States represented by observers

Democratic People's Republic of Korea  
Mr. Hong Song 0  
Counsellor

Mr. Kim Jae Hon  
First Secretary

Holy See  
Archbishop Renato R. Martino  
Apostolic Nuncio  
Permanent Observer

Mrs. Edna McCallion  
Adviser

Republic of Korea  
Mr. Joo Seok Kim  
First Secretary

United Nations organs

Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

Mr. Ahmad Farouk Arnouss (Syrian Arab Republic)

United Nations Council for Namibia

Mr. Moussa Bocar Ly (Senegal)

Special Committee against Apartheid

Mr. Arif Shahid Khan (India)

#### United Nations specialized agencies

UNESCO  
Mr. Mehan, Director a.i.

UNIDO  
Mr. Hassan H. Bahlouli

WHO  
Mr. Jerry Kilker

#### United Nations bodies

UNHCR - Mr. Antoine Noël  
Regional Representative

#### Intergovernmental Organizations

League of Arab States

Mr. Samir Mansouri  
Deputy Permanent Observer

Mrs. Rihab H. Kanawati  
Counsellor

Mr. Mohamed Morsi  
Attaché

Organization of African Unity

Mrs. Salimatu Khan-Timbo  
Adviser

Organization of the Islamic Conference  
Mr. Nouredine Mezni  
Deputy Director  
Permanent Observer Mission

#### National Liberation Movements

Palestine Liberation Organization  
Mr. Zehdi L. Terzi  
Permanent Observer

Mr. Nasser Al-Kidwa  
Alternate Permanent Observer

Mr. Riyadh Mansour  
Deputy Permanent Observer

South West Africa People's Organization  
Mr. Pius H. Asheeke  
Deputy Permanent Observer

#### Non-governmental organizations

American-Israeli Council for Israeli-Palestinian Peace  
Ms. Mary Appelman

American Middle East Peace Research Institute  
Mr. Nubar Hovsepian

Association of Arab-American University Graduates

Ms. Leila Haddad

Baptist World Alliance  
Ms. Eleanore Schnurr

Board of Global Ministries  
Ms. Ethel Born

United Methodist Church  
Ms. Nadine Meyer

Canadian Arab Federation  
Mr. Suleiman Hady

Church Women United  
Ms. Joyce Yu  
Mr. Alan Goodrow  
Mr. E. Prenovost  
Ms. Marjorie Songstad  
Mr. Peter Young  
Ms. Marilyn Bannon  
Ms. Sylvia Setz  
Ms. Florence Horby  
Ms. Winnie Zaragoza

Commission of the Churches on International Affairs  
World Council of Churches  
Ms. Gail Lerner

Finnish-Arab Friendship Society  
Mr. Mikko Lohikoski

General Union of Palestinian Students in the United States  
Mr. Sameh Atiyeh

International Co-ordinating Committee for NGO's  
Mr. Jean-Marie Lambert

Israeli Council for Israeli-Palestinian Peace  
Mr. Adam Keller

Middle East Fellowship of Southern California  
Mr. Fred Brauer

NAJDA  
Ms. Nadine Ghammache  
Ms. Audrey Shabbas

Near East Cultural and Educational Foundation  
Mr. James Graff

November 29th Committee for Palestine  
Ms. Rabab Hadi

Palestine Arab Fund  
Mr. Abdellatif Rayan

The Church of Humanism  
Rev. Joseph Ben-David  
Ms. Elizabeth Barnsley

United Holy Land Fund  
Mr. Suhail Miari  
Mr. Anis Barghouti  
Mr. A. Wajeih

World Muslim Congress  
Mr. Vigar Hamdani  
Mr. Issa Nakhleh

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