

THE TENTH UNITED NATIONS SEMINAR ON THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE

Theme: "The inalienable rights of the Palestinian people"

BEIJING, 22-26 April 1985

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I. REPORT OF THE SEMINAR

- The Tenth United Nations Seminar on the Question of Palestine entitled "The inalienable rights of the Palestinian people" was held at the Fragrant Hill Hotel, West Beijing, China from 22 to 26 April 1985 in accordance with the terms of General Assembly resolution 38/58 B. Seven meetings were held and 16 panelists presented papers on selected aspects of the question of Palestine.
 - The United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People was represented by a delegation consisting of His Excellency Mr. Massamba Sarré (Senegal), Chairman of the Committee; His Excellency Mr. Victor J. Gauci (Malta), Rapporteur of the Committee; His Excellency Mr. Zain Azraai (Malaysia); Mr. Mohamed Lessir (Tunisia); Mr. Zehdi L. Terzi (Palestine Liberation Organization). Mr. Sarré was Chairman and Mr. Gauci Rapporteur of the Seminar.
- Opening statements
- The opening session of the Tenth United Nations Seminar on the Question of Palestine was addressed by His Excellency Mr. Geng Biao, Vice-Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress and Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee of the National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China, who had earlier received the representatives of the Committee and the Palestine Liberation Organization at a private meeting.
 - He stated that the purpose of the Seminar was to mobilize public opinion in the world, to support the just cause of the Palestinian people, and to explore ways and means for a just settlement of the Palestine question. Recognizing that this was an arduous task, he stressed that China remained prepared to work towards the achievement of this objective, and appealed to all peace-loving States and peoples to strive for positive results at an early date.
 - In tracing the course of events in the Middle East, he contrasted Israel's policy of aggression and expansion with the heroic resistance of the Palestinian people and the efforts made by the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Arab States to seek a just and reasonable solution to the question of Palestine.
 - The Fez Peace Plan, adopted in September 1982 had been welcomed and supported by the international community. The Palestine Liberation Organization and the Arab countries were sincere in their efforts to seek peace in the Middle East. Unfortunately, Israel and its supporters had so far refused to recognize the national rights of the Palestinian people; this constituted the basic obstacle to peace in the Middle East.
 - The Chinese Government firmly supported the just struggle of the Palestinians and other Arab people and the basic principles affirmed by the relevant United Nations resolutions. Any effort which was conducive to the restoration of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the recovery of the occupied Arab territories and was in conformity with an equitable solution to the Middle East question, would receive the backing of the Chinese Government and its people.
 - At the same opening session, Mr. Massamba Sarré, Chairman of the Committee, gave a brief account of the Committee's work to date. He stressed the particular importance that the Committee attached to the Seminars in the various regions. He indicated the Committee's conviction that objective information on the question of Palestine would help to ensure more comprehensive coverage of developments in the region and promote public support in favour of an equitable and peaceful solution. Once all the facts surrounding the question of Palestine were known, the resultant better understanding of the question would help to convince even those who so far have been somewhat indifferent to the just cause of the Palestinian people.
 - The widely attended International Conference on the Question of Palestine, held in 1983 in Geneva, had formulated a number of basic principles necessary for a solution, including the right of all States in the region to existence within secure and recognized boundaries and justice and security for all the people, including a future Palestinian State. That Conference had also recommended the convening of an International Peace Conference on the Middle East, under the auspices of the United Nations, with the participation on an equal footing of all the parties to the Arab-Israeli conflict, including the Palestine Liberation Organization - as the representative of the people directly concerned - together with the United States of America and the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics.
 - Strongly supported by the majority of the Member States of the United Nations, the Committee fully endorsed the importance of such a peace conference and had decided that this should be the main focus of its work programme in 1985. It had therefore decided that in all the seminars and symposia that it organized this year, there would be at least one panel which would deal exclusively with the question of the peace conference.
 - The Committee placed special emphasis on the development of public opinion on the question of Palestine. The views of several influential policy-makers who participated in the Seminar on the role of Asian public opinion, and wide dissemination of their views would assist the Committee and the entire membership of the United Nations in assessing what still needed to be done in that field.
 - Mr. Shafiq Al-Hout, member of the Palestine National Council and head of the delegation of the Palestine Liberation Organization, conveyed a message from His Excellency Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization and Commander-in-Chief of the Forces of the Palestine Revolution.
 - In his message, Chairman Arafat stated that the Palestinian cause had entered an even more dangerous phase as a result of the intensification of Israel's aggressive policies, supported by successive United States Administrations. These policies had as their sole aim the expulsion of the Palestinian people from their lands and homes. It was a part of Israel's declared policy not to withdraw from the occupied territories, not to return Jerusalem to Palestinian sovereignty, not to permit the establishment of a Palestinian State and not to recognize the Palestine Liberation Organization.
 - The economic, financial and military aid provided by the United States to Israel's aggression hindered the observance of international law and denied the Palestinian people the exercise of its inalienable rights.
 - Despite these enormous challenges, the Palestinian people continued their heroic struggle and resistance to the hostile Israeli policies abetted by the United States. The hardships they endured would not impair their resolve to maintain their struggle, which was gathering overwhelming support from all democratic and peace-loving forces.
 - The Palestine Liberation Organization had availed itself of every opportunity to search for peace, and continued its efforts to achieve a joint Arab political plan aimed at the attainment of a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Middle East conflict.
 - Chairman Arafat expressed his profound gratitude for the valuable efforts of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, which had contributed to the clarification of the facts surrounding the cause of the Palestinian people. He also expressed his gratitude to Mr. Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, Secretary-General of the United Nations, and to all those who had worked for justice for the Palestinian people.
 - In conclusion, he reiterated the Palestine National Council's gratitude to the People's Republic of China, its leadership, its Party and its people, who were the very first nation to extend diplomatic recognition to the PLO and have unfailingly extended full support to the Palestinian cause.
 - At the same meeting, a statement was made by His Excellency Mr. Abdul G. Koroma, Chairman of the United Nations Special Committee with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. He opined that the decision of the General Assembly to hold this Seminar was not only a measure of the international community's deep concern for the Palestinian people, but also a reflection of its recognition that a just solution of the Palestinian problem was of overriding importance in the search for a lasting settlement of the Middle East question. In this

decision, the General Assembly thus had reaffirmed its commitment to the Palestinian people for the realization of their inalienable rights, and sought to enlighten and mobilize international public opinion towards the attainment of the objectives of the United Nations on the question of Palestine.

20. The Special Committee attached particular significance to the mobilization of international opinion towards the attainment of self-determination for all people under alien and colonial domination. The General Assembly had repeatedly called for the full and speedy exercise by the Palestinian people of their right to self-determination without external interference and to national independence and sovereignty as well as their right to return to their homes and property from which they had been displaced and uprooted.

21. It was all the more important therefore for the international community to rededicate itself to the promotion of a genuine and lasting settlement of the Middle East conflict. Concerted action was necessary to persuade the supporters of Israel to induce it to respond to relevant United Nations resolutions and to the will of the international community on the question of Palestine. Recent events in the Middle East underlined the heavy responsibility incumbent upon the international community to do everything in its power to preserve peace and security in the region.

22. Mr. Nihat Akyol, speaking on behalf of the United Nations Council for Namibia, stated that the question of Palestine could be compared to the problem of Namibia, which had been controlled by South Africa in defiance of General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. In both instances, great suffering had been caused to many innocent people. The Palestinian people continued to be denied the fundamental and inalienable rights to live in liberty, peace and dignity in their own country. The international community could not remain indifferent while Israel persisted in its acts of aggression against the Palestinian people and annexed the territories of its neighbouring States.

23. The United Nations Council for Namibia reaffirmed its adherence to the resolutions of the General Assembly relating to the rights of the Palestinian people. The Council for Namibia was also convinced that the persistent denial by Israel of the right of the Palestinian people to return to their homeland was in violation of the fundamental principles of the Charter of the United Nations as well as United Nations resolutions on the question of the rights of people under colonial domination.

24. The Council for Namibia affirmed its solidarity with the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and condemned Israeli policies and plans aimed at driving the Palestinian people from its homeland.

25. The twin questions of Palestine and of Namibia haunted the conscience of the international community. Both questions had been on the agenda of the General Assembly of the United Nations for many years, and a solution had not yet been found.

26. This Seminar was an occasion to reaffirm the Council's solemn commitment and determination to be associated with the defence of a noble cause. South Africa and Israel should be compelled to conform to universally accepted norms and should be condemned for their defiance of world opinion.

27. Mr. Nabil Maarouf, Director of Holy Jerusalem and Palestine Department of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, speaking on behalf of His Excellency Mr. Sayed Sharifuddin Pirzada, Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, stated that the Organization had made it a point to participate in the series of regional seminars on the question of Palestine organized by the United Nations, since these seminars were a valuable contribution towards making the cause of the Palestinian people better known to the world public.

28. The Organization remained fully committed to all proposals and solutions that would ensure for the Palestinian people its inalienable historical rights, including its right to return, its right to self-determination and its right to establish its own independent State on its national soil with its capital of Al-Quds Al Sharif, and under the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization, its sole legitimate representative.

29. In spite of world public opinion, the Palestinian people had not regained its rights. Israel's intransigence was due to continued political, economic and military support by the United States of America. It was this support that enabled Israel to violate international law and to defy world public opinion.

30. The Palestine Liberation Organization had displayed its desire for peace by accepting the Fez Peace Plan and publicly expressed support for the proposed Middle East Peace Conference, which had however been rejected by Israel, whose negative attitude was encouraged by the United States. Ways and means should be found by which effective pressure could be brought to bear upon the United States Administration to recognize the rights of the Palestinian people. All States that supported the Palestinian people should join in this effort. It was very important that the European Community should be persuaded to exert its influence on the United States.

31. At the second meeting, Mr. Hans Teller, representative of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in China, outlined the assistance given to the Palestinian people by UNESCO, in accordance with resolutions adopted by its General Conference. UNESCO had renewed its agreement with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) for the period 1984-1985 whereby UNESCO assumed technical responsibilities for the educational programme for Palestinian refugees. UNESCO also continued its efforts to maintain the functioning of the cultural and educational institutions in the occupied Arab territories, including the projects concerning the Palestine Open University, on which a study had already been approved.

32. With regard to the preservation of cultural properties in the Holy City of Jerusalem, the Director-General of UNESCO had entrusted a personal representative to visit Jerusalem on many occasions for the protection of the cultural heritage of the Holy City.

33. Some 50 fellowships had been granted to Palestinian students and a consultant had been hired to advise the Palestine Literacy Council. A special account had been opened to finance scholarships for Palestinian students and contributions had already been received from some Arab States. Another special account had been opened for assistance to the Palestine Liberation Organization with the financial contributions from the Government of Iraq.

34. At the seventh meeting, Ms. Savitri Kunadi, speaking on behalf of the United Nations Special Committee against Apartheid, reaffirmed the Special Committee's support for the General Assembly resolutions relating to the question of Palestine and stressed its solidarity with the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People in the task of securing the practical attainment of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. The Special Committee against Apartheid attached great significance to the mobilization of international public opinion for the attainment and realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and viewed the early convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East as a contribution to the just solution of the Middle East problem, the core of which is the question of Palestine.

35. On the occasion of the commemoration of the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Bandung Declaration by the Asian-African Conference in Bandung, Indonesia in April 1955, the Seminar decided at its 3rd meeting, on 23 April 1985, to send a message to His Excellency Dr. Mochtar Kusumaatmadja, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, extending felicitations and recalling that the Bandung Declaration had affirmed its full support for the cause of the Palestinian people.

36. The delegation of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People was officially received by His Excellency Mr. Zhao Ziyang, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of China, on Thursday, 25 April 1985.

37. The closing session on Friday, 26 April 1985, was attended by His Excellency Mr. Qian Qichen, Deputy Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of China. The meeting was addressed by the Deputy Foreign Minister, the Chairman of the Seminar and Mr. Shafiq Al-Hout, the representative of Chairman Arafat of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Panel discussion

38. Three panels were established to consider different aspects of the question of Palestine. These panels and their panelists were as follows:

(a) The role of the Palestine Liberation Organization:

Prof. Ibrahim ABU-LUGHOD (Palestinian), Mr. LIU Jing (China)

(b) The question of Palestine and Asian public opinion:

Prof. HARDI (Indonesia), Mr. Michiyuki ISURUGI (Japan), Dr. Ron MacINTYRE (New Zealand), Senator Gordon McINTOSH (Australia), Mr. Malik MEHERBAN (Pakistan), Mr. XU Shannan (China), Prof. Yilmaz ALTUG (Turkey),

(c) The International Peace Conference on the Middle East, the need for such a conference, efforts and prospects to promote a successful outcome, and benefits thereof:

Dr. Houssam AL-KHATIB (Syrian Arab Republic), Mr. Phan ANH (Viet Nam), Mr. Eduardo FALEIRO (India), Mr. Tajol Rosli Mohamed GHAZALI (Malaysia), Mr. Konstantin GUEIVANDOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), Mr. YU Chongjian (China), Mr. ZHENG Weizhi (China).

39. In view of the detailed argumentation and the depth of research contained in the papers presented by the panelists, the Seminar decided that the papers should be published in full by the United Nations, together with the report of the Seminar, as an important contribution towards a more objective appraisal of the question of Palestine. The subsequent paragraphs therefore only offer a brief insight into the open discussion that ensued and only convey the main trends of the discussion.

The role of the Palestine Liberation Organization

40. The Seminar heard an analysis of the role of the Palestine Liberation Organization. It was noted that more than 4.5 million Palestinians today neither enjoy nor exercise political rights as Palestinians anywhere in the world. Nevertheless they were imbued with a deep sense of obligation to normalize their political status. This was reflected in their struggle to retrieve their national rights, including their rights to independence and sovereignty in Palestine, to return, to national identity and representation by their own chosen representatives, namely, the Palestine Liberation Organization. Despite many adversities, the Palestinians currently demonstrated their absolute resolve to press for the attainment of those rights.

41. Their activities were essentially motivated by two broad considerations: to continue their struggle to retrieve their national rights, which therefore pushed them to engage in Palestinian national politics, and, secondly, to take advantage of existing political opportunities to improve their social, economic and educational conditions. Over time, the consciousness of the Palestinians as a distinct national community had become the justification of their consideration as a nation either dispersed or under foreign occupation.

42. The Palestine Liberation Organization currently represented the embryonic Palestinian State and Government. In that sense, its first role was that of a State and Government. The representation of this nation by the Palestine Liberation Organization was based on the right of this national community to determine its destiny.

43. The Palestine Liberation Organization viewed the struggle of the Palestinian people as a struggle of a colonial population against a form of colonialism described as settler colonialism. In that sense Israel was viewed as a colonial settler State that has been implanted on part of an Arab national homeland with the active support and sustenance of the European/American system of power. To attain justice, the Palestinians would have to obtain the support of States that reject colonialism ideologically, structurally and culturally.

44. The Palestine Liberation Organization had defined the nature of Palestinian rights. It had articulated these national rights in the broad terms of self-determination. It was this articulation of Palestinian national rights that was essentially affirmed by the United Nations when it supported the Palestinian rights to independence and of return.

45. The Palestine Liberation Organization had struggled since 1968 for a democratic non-sectarian State. While conceiving of coexistence with the Jewish people in peace within the framework of a unitary state, the Organization recognized the difficulties in the way of the acceptance of such a solution, not only by Israel but by other States as well. The Palestine Liberation Organization had therefore elaborated its provisional solution which conceived of the possibility of a de facto coexistence of two States in Palestine, one principally Jewish-Israeli and the other Palestinian Arab.

46. The Palestine Liberation Organization had also played an essentially political and diplomatic role. On the national level, it had mobilized the Palestinian people towards the goal of national liberation and towards retrieving from others the right of representation of the Palestinians and in maintaining its independent decision-making. On the international level, it had mobilized external support for the Palestinian people.

47. Having been successful in this objective, the Palestine Liberation Organization maintained its legitimacy in the eyes of the Palestinian people who stood firmly behind it as their sole legitimate representative.

48. In the 21 years since the establishment of the Palestine Liberation Organization, it had experienced various tests and hardships and become overwhelmingly recognized as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and as an active force to be reckoned with in the Middle Eastern political arena. In that regard, it had a decisive influence in the search for a solution of the Palestine question, as well as the problem of the Middle East as a whole.

Asian public opinion

49. In considering the role of Asian public opinion and the question of Palestine, it was noted that public opinion, though difficult to define, was nevertheless an important and fundamental element which could contribute to, and be utilized in the search for peace in the Middle East based on a just solution of the problem of Palestine. This element therefore should be mobilized to inject the voice of reason into world affairs and should be enhanced by a deeper understanding and awareness of all the aspects of the problem of Palestine.

50. It was explained and recalled that in Asian countries, especially among members of the non-aligned Movement, there had been support for the struggle of the Palestinian people from the earliest stages of the independence of the Asian countries themselves, and that specific attention had been paid to the question of Palestine at the Asian-African Conference in Bandung in April 1955; the communiqué had contained the following relevant paragraph:

"In view of the existing tension in the Middle East caused by the situation in Palestine and danger of that tension to world peace, the Asian-African Conference declared its support of the rights of the Arab people of Palestine and called for the implementation of the United Nations resolutions on Palestine and the achievement of the peaceful settlement of the Palestine question."

51. That support had been based on the fundamental and universal principles of peace, freedom, independence, justice and human rights upheld by the Bandung Conference.

52. The Seminar was informed of the efforts made to develop friendly relations between Japan and the Palestinian people which had led, in 1976, to the establishment of a Palestine Liberation Organization office in Tokyo. The efforts of that office had increased the Japanese people's understanding of and interest in the Palestinian problem. It was noted that the Parliamentarians' League for Japan-Palestine Friendship was active in furthering the Japanese people's understanding of the Palestinian problem.

53. The Seminar heard a detailed analysis of Australasian public opinion on the question of Palestine. It was noted that Australia and New Zealand, with their heritage as outposts of Western civilization, had a population whose views on some specific issues were not necessarily always identical to those of the populations of their South-East Asian neighbours.

54. A number of factors coupled with only a marginal interest in foreign affairs had led until relatively recently to preponderant weight being given to one side of the argument. This bias was accentuated by the dearth of information sympathetic to the Palestinians which prevailed in the mass media. Prior to the improvement of Arab/Palestinian information channels in the mid-to-late 1970s, current information on the Middle East tended to reflect the Israeli point of view. Distorted visions of the realities of the Palestine question were consequently prevalent and it was not surprising that public opinion polls in 1974 in Australia and New Zealand displayed marked preferences for the Israelis over the Arabs in the Middle East conflict. It was clear then that older biases and prejudices towards the Arabs, and in part towards Palestinians, coloured and distorted judgement in the mid-1970s.

55. Since the late 1970s, however, there had been noticeable signs of attitudinal change on the question of Palestine at both public and official levels in Australasia. The growing political voice of residents of Middle Eastern origin in Australia had had the effect of focusing the media on more specific and pragmatic issues relating to the Middle East. This had been enhanced since the mid-1970s by a network of Arab information services which had added to the general awareness about the region. Furthermore, the development of economic and political relations about the region. Furthermore, the development of economic and political relations with the States of the Middle East had tended to generate much more informed interest in schools, colleges and universities. It was important to note that public and official opinion was much more aware now of the exigencies of the question of Palestine, accentuated after the invasion of Lebanon though sympathy and understanding translated into political decision remained quite distinct entities.

56. The Seminar noted that Chinese public opinion had always given firm support to the Palestinian people's just struggle and to their sole legitimate representative, the Palestine Liberation Organization. This sympathy on the part of the Chinese people for the oppressed Palestinians and other Arab peoples was traced in part to the fact that the Chinese people shared a similar historical experience of imperialist aggression and oppression in their own past.

57. Chinese public opinion stood for a just and permanent settlement of the Middle East issue and expressed support for the Arab countries and the Palestine Liberation Organization in all their efforts, including peaceful negotiations and political solutions. It firmly denounced Israeli policies of aggression and expansion and its annexation of the Arab sector of Jerusalem and the Golan Heights. It called on world opinion to denounce any Israeli action which might change the legal status and the geographic and demographic nature of Arab territories including Jerusalem since 1967. Moreover, it criticized the United States for supporting Israeli aggression and establishing a strategic relationship with Israel.

58. It was noted that the media - in Asia as elsewhere - and particularly the more influential sections of the Asian press, had a special role and responsibility in moulding public opinion. The suggestion was made that the United Nations, through its information centres, as well as the Arab League, should ensure that more factual information reached the public at large. Special attention should be paid to academics and religious and other institutions devoted to the study of international affairs.

59. The point was also made that particular attention should henceforth be directed towards countries still not sufficiently supportive of the just cause of the Palestinian people, so as to correct the misperception and distortion on the question of Palestine and concerning the Palestine Liberation Organization conveyed by Israel. It was also stressed that, in the contemporary world, it was highly anomalous that the Palestinian people should be denied the exercise of their inalienable right to self-determination, enjoyed by other peoples. The fault for this situation lay squarely on Israel.

60. The gradual positive evolution in favour of even-handedness and more objective reporting of the real nature of the question of Palestine was noted with appreciation and the Seminar felt that the trend should be encouraged and strengthened by all available means. In that connection, the Seminar encouraged the idea of an Australasian Seminar on Palestine and the Middle East.

The International Peace Conference

61. The Seminar concluded its deliberations by discussing in depth the question of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East. It was noted that, although almost 40 years had passed since the United Nations General Assembly had adopted resolution 181 (II), which recommended the creation of two States - an Arab State and Jewish State - so far it had been implemented only to the extent of the creation of the State of Israel. One of the foremost commitments of the international community was to ensure the restoration of the rights of the Palestinian people, including its right to self-determination and creation of its own independent State in Palestine. It was felt that the principles enunciated by the United Nations commanded universal adherence, and should be supported accordingly, within the framework of a comprehensive solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

62. In this connection, it was strongly reaffirmed that the question of Palestine was at the core of that conflict, which itself was a multi-faceted problem. Over the years, a broad international consensus had been achieved on the necessity of a comprehensive, just and durable settlement of the problem. This consensus has been defined in the Geneva Declaration adopted by the International Conference on the Question of Palestine in 1983, and also stressed in United Nations General Assembly resolution 38/58 C, which called for the convening of an International Peace Conference on the Middle East. This consensus had also found reflection in the decisions of many other international organizations. It was important to stress that this approach had been favoured by the Palestinian National Council from the outset.

63. In this same connection, the Seminar appreciated the initiative of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics of 29 July 1984 entitled "The proposals of the Soviet Union on the Middle East settlement" which took into account the basic interests of all sides involved in the conflict, including the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, and suggested the convocation of an International Conference on the Middle East as an instrument for such a settlement.

64. The Seminar also expressed its appreciation for the favourable response of China - another permanent member of the Security Council - to the call for the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East under the auspices of the United Nations. In China's view two key issues in regard to the Middle East issue stood out. First, the right of the Palestinian to self-determination and, secondly, the qualification of the Palestine Liberation Organization as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. This was one more token of China's consistent support of the just cause of the Palestinian people.

65. The Seminar also recalled the strong support extended by the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries to the proposed conference.

66. Developments in the Middle East in recent years had given special urgency and timeliness to the need for the holding of an International Peace Conference on the Middle East, under the auspices of the United Nations. However, obstacles still remained which prevented the holding of the Conference. Every effort should be made to overcome those obstacles, especially since international peace and security were involved.

67. The Seminar also noted that more initiatives had been taken recently and suggestions made for breaking the present stalemate and to overcome those obstacles. Public opinion, both within and outside the region, was increasingly aware of the need for peace and security in the Middle East. It was felt that this favourable momentum should be strengthened and, in the future, stress laid on the fact that recommendations of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, as endorsed by the International Conference on the Question of Palestine held at Geneva in August 1983, are not - as is erroneously claimed by Israel - directed against its security, but essentially seek to implement the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination, consistent with previous resolutions of the United Nations on the Middle East, and that this position had been accepted by the Arab States in the Fez summit. Israel, relying on the support of the United States, was clearly obstructing the progress desired overwhelmingly by the international community.

68. The Seminar therefore considered that it was of paramount importance that the international community should intensify and unite its efforts to ensure the convening without delay of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East, as an instrument to ensure the establishment of a just and comprehensive peace, of security and stability in the Middle East, while at the same time ensuring the attainment and exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, long overdue.

69. The Seminar conveyed to Chairman Arafat of the Palestine Liberation Organization an expression of its continuing support for and solidarity with the just cause of the Palestinian people and expressed strong support for the convening of an International Peace Conference on the Middle East, under the auspices of the United Nations, in conformity with the Geneva Declaration of 7 September 1983 and current resolutions on the Question of Palestine, at the earliest practical moment.

70. It also adopted by consensus a motion of thanks proposed by the panelists, which reads as follows:

"The Tenth United Nations Seminar on the Question of Palestine, meeting in Beijing, People's Republic of China, from 22-26 April 1985, expresses its profound gratitude to the people and Government of the People's Republic of China for hosting the Seminar and for the excellent arrangements made for it, which have greatly contributed to the success of the Seminar. It also expresses its sincere thanks for the generous hospitality extended to the participants of the Seminar.

"The Seminar wishes to express its particular appreciation to His Excellency Mr. Zhao Ziyang, the Prime Minister of the People's Republic of China, for his personal concern and guidance.

"It also thanks His Excellency Mr. Geng Biao, Vice-Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress and Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress and to His Excellency Mr. Ho Ying, Member of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress for their contribution to the Seminar.

"The Seminar expresses its appreciation to His Excellency Mr. Qian Qichen, Deputy Foreign Minister and His Excellency Mr. Zhou Jue, Assistant Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of China for their courtesy and guidance.

"The Seminar also expresses its appreciation to the people and the Government of the People's Republic of China, a permanent member of the Security Council, for their support of the struggle of the Palestinian people under the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization, its sole legitimate representative, for the exercise of its inalienable rights in Palestine."

II. OPENING STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY MR. MASSAMBA SARRE, AMBASSADOR, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF SENEGAL TO THE UNITED NATIONS, CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

Minister, Ambassadors, distinguished delegates,

It is my pleasant duty on behalf of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to welcome you to the Tenth United Nations Seminar on the Question of Palestine. At the same time I should like to extend our heartfelt thanks to His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, who is with us today and graciously opened this Seminar, and through him to the Government of the People's Republic of China for its kind co-operation and assistance in enabling us to hold this Seminar in this great country. Your presence here is additional affirmation of the importance that China attaches to the question of Palestine and to the urgent need for a just and lasting solution. The fact that a permanent member of the Security Council has so graciously extended such co-operation to us will undoubtedly provide additional inspiration and encouragement to us in our work.

The convening of this Seminar marks a new stage in the fulfilment of the mandate entrusted to us by the General Assembly. The result of our previous seminars have convinced us both of the usefulness of the exchange of views such as we are about to embark on as well as of the importance of the contribution our deliberations will make to a better understanding of the problem of Palestine.

The dialogue that we commence today with parliamentarians, academics, journalists and policy-makers from all parts of the Asian region will afford us a unique opportunity to evaluate the possible contribution that Asian public opinion can make to a solution of the problem of Palestine, at the same time, it will influence the formulation of policies calculated to enable the Palestinian people to exercise its inalienable rights to self-determination and independence, rights which it has been unjustly denied for so long.

The history of mankind is replete with tragedies that have befallen peoples in all parts of the world. What brings us together here today is one of those tragedies - man's iniquity towards his fellow man.

The tragedy of the Palestinian people is one that has engaged the attention of the United Nations almost since its inception. A struggle for self-determination and independence unjustly denied a people has not only led to conflict in the region but constitutes a constant danger for international peace and security. Because of this danger, all nations in every region of the world today feel concerned by the implications of this complex question of Palestine. Indeed its basic elements are so closely interwoven that any partial solution or unbalanced settlement could only place greater obstacles in the way of a solution. There is a further element in this tragic situation: whilst strenuous attempts continue to be made to break the deadlock, the complex situation is further complicated by actions taken in the region - repressive measures taken by the occupying Power against the inhabitants of the occupied West Bank and Gaza, the illegal establishment by Israel of settlements in those areas, and the implementation of other policies which are also in direct contravention of United Nations resolutions and international law - actions which by exacerbating tension in the region can only hinder the attempt to find a peaceful solution. Those actions by the Government of Israel and its persistent refusal to abide by international law and international conventions bring about a daily deterioration in the situation, and highlight the increasing urgency of a just solution of the problem of Palestine, which is now recognized by the international community as the core of the conflict in the Middle East.

It was as a result of this recognition that the question of Palestine was at the core of the conflict of the Middle East as well as the realization by the international community that no solution to that problem was possible until the Palestinian people had achieved its inalienable rights that the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People was established in 1975.

The Committee was given the mandate of studying and recommending to the United Nations General Assembly a programme of action to enable the Palestinian people to exercise its inalienable rights, previously defined by the General Assembly itself as:

- (a) The right to self-determination without external interference;
- (b) The right to national independence and sovereignty;
- (c) The right of Palestinians to return to their homeland.

A programme of action, drawn up in 1976, was immediately confirmed by the General Assembly, which has reaffirmed its validity and relevance at each of its subsequent sessions.

However, the implementation of this programme has so far come up against the intransigent opposition of the State of Israel, which persists in denying the Palestinians their inalienable national rights, encouraged in its action, it must be said, by the situation in the Security Council, the organ charged with maintaining international peace and security which, owing to the veto of one of its permanent members, has still not approved the Committee's recommendations. The Security Council's position is hindering the quest for a solution.

It should be noted that the implementation of other solutions put forward outside the United Nations and containing constructive proposals for a settlement of the question of Palestine is also being hampered.

Despite these obstacles, which arise for various reasons, the Committee feels that all possible approaches should continue to be explored, in particular by stressing objective information on the question of Palestine so as to increase public awareness and to publicize, free of preconceptions, what is taking place in the region. We are convinced that it is essential to present all facts, because there is no doubt that once these are known, the resultant understanding of the question will convince those in the international community who have not yet been convinced of the justice of the Palestinian cause.

It is for this reason that the Committee has taken the initiative in organizing seminars such as we have here today, as well as symposia for non-governmental organizations and journalists' encounters: indeed, this was the reason behind the Committee's recommendation to the General Assembly for the convening of the International Conference on the Question of Palestine, which held two years ago at Geneva, from 29 August to 7 September 1983.

That Conference, attended by 137 nations, formulated a number of basic principles, including the right of all States in the region to existence within secure and recognized boundaries, with justice and security for all the people, including, of course, a future Palestinian State. It went on to recommend the convening of an international peace conference on the Middle East under United Nations auspices, with the participation, on an equal footing, of all the parties to the Arab-Israeli conflict, including the Palestine Liberation Organization, the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The Conference did this in the conviction that the best way out of the impasse was to bring the parties concerned together around the same table and that the United Nations was the most appropriate means for that purpose. The General Assembly, at its thirty-eighth session, endorsed the idea of an international peace conference on the Middle East. It went further, inviting the Security Council and the Secretary-General to undertake all preparatory measures to convene the Conference.

Our Committee fully endorses, along with the majority of the States Members of the United Nations, the importance of such a peace conference. Accordingly, it has decided that, this year, it should make the International Peace Conference on the Middle East the focal point of its work programme.

It is encouraging to note that, despite some reservations, the members of the Security Council as a whole approve of the holding of such a conference.

It is for this reason that we have in this Seminar, and in fact in all our other seminars and symposia scheduled for this year, a panel which will deal exclusively with the question of the Peace Conference. We have also attempted to mobilize all non-governmental organizations throughout the world that are interested in the question of Palestine in an effort which, we hope, will have the effect of bringing about the convening of the Conference.

In our dealings with the non-governmental organizations we have repeatedly stressed the importance of this Conference, and the non-governmental organizations themselves took the initiative of launching, on 29 November last year, a signature campaign throughout the world appealing for the convening of this Peace Conference. Already several thousand signatures have been collected. It is our hope that those present here today will participate actively in that campaign in their respective countries and will help to make it a success.

I have referred already to the emphasis that the Committee places on efforts to arouse public opinion on this question. We shall hear the views of several influential policy-makers on the role which Asian public opinion can play. Their views and the discussions that take place on this aspect will be of great value to us in assessing what still needs to be done in this field.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, the work we are about to embark on is undoubtedly of the greatest importance. The General Assembly solemnly entrusted us with helping to ensure that the rights of the Palestinians are respected. The Charter of the United Nations, both in spirit and in letter, enjoins not only its signatories but also all those who are gathered here to work, without respite, for the attainment of this noble objective.

The Committee is convinced that this Seminar will stimulate, throughout the world, an awareness of the facts relating to the question of Palestine and contribute towards ensuring that the Palestinians will one day be able to exercise their civil and political rights on their own soil. As we commence our work, we can be confident in the knowledge that ours is a noble task and one of which we can be justifiably proud.

On behalf of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, I should like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to all of you who have found time to be with us here today and to those of you who have devoted valuable time in preparing papers which will contribute to the success of this Seminar.

Thank you.

III. STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY MR. GENG BIAO, VICE CHAIRMAN OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE OF THE NATIONAL PEOPLE'S CONGRESS AND CHAIRMAN OF THE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE OF THE NATIONAL PEOPLE'S CONGRESS OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

The United Nations-sponsored Seminar on the Question of Palestine begins in Beijing today. The Seminar is devoted to the discussion of the Palestinian question, which is of universal concern. Please allow me, first of all, on behalf of the Chinese Government and people, to express our warm welcome to His Excellency Ambassador Sarré, Chairman of the United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, Mr. Yogasundram, Chief of the Division for Palestinian Rights and representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Brother Shafiq Al-Hout, representative of Chairman Arafat, other Palestinian brothers and friends.

The purpose of this Seminar is to mobilize public opinion in the world to support the just cause of the Palestinian people and to explore ways and means for a just settlement of the Palestinian question. This is a lofty and arduous task. We are prepared to work with all of you to achieve this objective.

The question of Palestine is, in the essence, the struggle of a nation for the right to self-determination. For nearly 40 years, the Israeli Government has persisted in its policy of aggression and expansion, denying the Palestinian people their right to establish a State of their own and even their right to existence. As a result, millions of Palestinian people have been expelled from their long-established homeland and deprived of their land for survival, thus becoming displaced refugees and living an intolerable life. This is a great tragedy in the contemporary history of mankind. The heroic Palestinian people have waged a sustained and indomitable struggle to safeguard their national rights. Especially, the birth of the Palestine Liberation Organization gave expression to the Palestinian people's will and determination to fight

in unity. The Palestinian people, under the leadership of the PLO and with the support of the Arab States and other countries in the world, have persisted in armed struggle, frustrating many times Israeli attempts to eliminate the Palestinian resistance forces. In the meantime, they have actively carried out a political and diplomatic struggle to win sympathy and support from the international community. As the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, the PLO has been broadly recognized by the League of Arab States, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and other organizations and has been invited to participate in conferences of the United Nations and its work in the capacity of observer. All this shows that the cause of the Palestinian people is a just one and that the PLO enjoys high international prestige.

The question of Palestine is closely linked to the peace in the entire Middle East region. For nearly 40 years, four major wars broke out in the Middle East due to the failure to settle the Palestinian question, and in these wars Israel occupied large tracts of Arab territories. In 1982, it invaded Lebanon once again and has dragged out its stay in Southern Lebanon till this day, repeatedly creating bloodshed there. The Israeli authorities' policy of aggression and expansion has brought untold sufferings not only to the Palestinian people and the Arab countries which have been invaded, but also to the Israeli people. It constitutes a serious threat to peace and stability in the Middle East. In recent years, the desire and demand of the Palestinian people and the people of all the countries in the Middle East, including the Israeli people, for a peaceful settlement of the Middle East question have become ever stronger. The PLO and Arab States have made tremendous efforts and taken many initiatives to seek a just and reasonable solution to the Palestinian question so as to bring about peace in the Middle East. The Fez Peace Plan, which was adopted at the Twelfth Arab Summit Conference, held in September 1982, ^{1/} has received a general welcome and support from the international community. Since then the PLO and Arab States have also made many appeals for peace and put forward quite a number of fair and reasonable proposals for a peaceful solution to the Palestinian and Middle East questions. Innumerable facts have proved that the PLO and Arab countries are sincere in their efforts to seek peace in the Middle East. Regrettably, however, Israel and its supporters have to date refused to recognize the national rights of the Palestinian people, which constitutes the basic obstacle to peace in the Middle East.

In order to put an end to the sufferings of the Palestinian and other Arab peoples and uphold international justice, in order to avoid further bloodshed and sufferings among the peoples in the region and to maintain peace, the settlement of the question of Palestine, which is a matter of great urgency, brooks no delay.

The purposes of the United Nations include maintenance of peace and respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples. The United Nations bears great responsibility for restoring to the Palestinian people their legitimate rights and maintaining peace in the Middle East. With the efforts of the third world countries, the United Nations has adopted a series of important resolutions such as General Assembly resolutions 3236 (XXIX) and 3375 (XXX), stressing the restoration of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, and has invited the PLO to participate in the conferences of the United Nations and its work in the capacity of observer. Since its establishment in 1975, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, guided by His Excellency Ambassador Sarré, has done a great deal to seek a settlement of the Palestinian question in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions. We highly appraise what has been done.

The Chinese Government and people have all along cherished deep sympathy for the Palestinian people in their plight, firmly supported the just struggle of the Palestinian and other Arab peoples and strongly condemned the Israeli policy of aggression and expansion. We support the universally accepted basic principles affirmed by the relevant United Nations resolutions, i.e., Israel must withdraw from all the Arab territories occupied since 1967, the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to self-determination, the right to return to their homeland and to establish their own State, must be restored; the PLO, as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, is entitled to participate on an equal footing with other parties in the settlement of the Middle East question, and all the countries in the region have the right to peace and existence. Here I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate that as long as the Israeli authorities cling to their policy of aggression and expansion and refuse to recognize the rights of the Palestinian people, we will, as always, support the Palestinian people in their just struggle until their final victory. I would also like to reaffirm here that any proposition or effort conducive to the restoration of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and the recovery of the lost Arab territories, and in conformity with a reasonable and fair solution to the Middle East question on this basis, will enjoy the support of the Chinese Government and people. We call upon the Palestinian and other Arab peoples to strengthen their unity in the fight against the common enemy. We also appeal to all peace-loving countries and people to make concerted efforts to support the just struggle of the Palestinian people and Arab countries, to mobilize just public opinion in the world and to exert effective pressure on Israel so as to secure a fair and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian and Middle East questions at the earliest possible date.

In conclusion, I wish this Seminar every success.

Notes

1/ See A/37/696-S/15510, annex.

IV. MESSAGE FROM HIS EXCELLENCY MR. YASSER ARAFAT, CHAIRMAN OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION, COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE FORCES OF THE PALESTINIAN REVOLUTION, DELIVERED BY SHAFIQ AL-HOUT, MEMBER OF THE PALESTINE NATIONAL COUNCIL, HEAD OF THE DELEGATION OF THE PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION

Brothers

Members of the Seminar

Revolutionary Greetings,

It gives me great pleasure, on this day of the convening of your Seminar on the rights of the Palestinian people, to express to you, in the name of our Palestinian Arab people, in the name of my brothers, members of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization and in my own personal name, our heartiest greetings.

We express to you our high esteem and profound gratitude for your efforts to promote the legitimate struggle of our people and for your infallible support to the national inalienable rights of our people, including their right to return, to self-determination and to the establishment of their independent Palestinian State and to the attainment of those rights.

Dear Brothers,

It gives me also great pleasure to express to you the tremendous pride that we feel for your continuous efforts in defence of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and for the fulfilment of peace in one of the most dangerous, tense and explosive regions of the world.

You are fully aware that our Palestinian cause is presently witnessing a dangerous phase as a result of the intensification of the Israeli aggressive policies which receive the support of successive American administrations.

The Government of the Zionist Israeli enemy is intensifying its repression, oppression and terror against our Palestinian people inside and outside our occupied homeland and persistently exercises illegitimate racial practices by dispossessing them of their basic human rights, paralysing civilian life, destroying the Palestinian economy, expropriating land and water sources, establishing armed colonial settlements in the occupied territories, encouraging, supporting and financing the terrorist Zionist gangs whose aim is to perpetrate criminal actions against our people.

All these acts are being perpetrated with the sole aim of expulsion and forced deportation of our people from their lands and homes, for the implementation of the Israeli plan of judaization of the occupied Palestinian areas and achievement of their ultimate annexation to the Zionist enemy entity.

The Zionist parties compete in the expression of their hostility and racial extremism against our Palestinian people by granting protection and by preserving rules and regulations based on the Zionist racist ideology.

Additionally, there is the declared policy of Israel of non-withdrawal from the occupied territories, the non-return of Jerusalem to Palestinian sovereignty and the non-establishment of the Palestinian State and the rejection of the PLO.

On the other hand, the American Administration is intensifying its hostile policies and stands against our Palestinian people, and continues to increase its support to the Israeli enemy entity and to its aggressive expansionist policies, by establishing with the said enemy a strategic military alliance aimed against our Palestinian people and the peoples of our Arab nation.

The American Administration also establishes with the Israeli entity a free-trade zone to support its deteriorated economy which is basically devoted to war, to expansionism and to the establishment of colonial settlements. This is in addition to the financial and military aid provided to Israel in the form of non-refundable grants and the moral, political and diplomatic support granted by the United States Administration on all international levels to the extent that it hinders the implementation of the international laws of the international community and impedes the condemnation of the crimes and aggressive measures against the Palestinian people under occupation.

The American Administration similarly denies our people their inalienable right as agreed upon by the resolutions of the entire international community and permanently attempts to bypass the PLO, the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, and attempts to distort its image by all possible means. In the face of these enormous challenges imposed on our people, they nevertheless continue their struggle and resistance to these oppressive and aggressive Israeli policies and to the hostile United States policies.

The ordeals and hardships will never dissuade nor impair our people's resolve in their struggle, which meets with the support of the peoples of the world and of their democratic peace- and justice-loving forces.

Similarly, the PLO has availed itself of every opportunity in the search for peace. This emanates from its firm belief in the need to achieve justice, peace, stability and development in our explosive area, in the interest of international peace and security.

This feeling of responsibility has prevailed among our people and their representatives in the consecutive Palestine National Councils, which have repeatedly reaffirmed the determination of our Palestinian people to attain a just peace based on the fulfilment of the national inalienable rights of our people, including their right to return, to self-determination and to the establishment of their independent Palestinian State.

Based on the resolutions of our consecutive Palestine National Council sessions, and in particular the sixteenth and seventeenth sessions, and also based on the principles of the Fez summit, which reflect the peaceful will of our Arab nation, and in accordance with international resolutions, the PLO continues its efforts to achieve a joint Arab political plan which aims to contribute to the attainment of a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Middle East conflict.

Honourable Brothers,

In the name of our people who are suffering the immense ordeals of war, oppression and occupation and who strive to achieve peace, in the name of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization and in my own personal name, I wish to express to you our profound gratitude for the valuable efforts deployed by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and by holding symposia and international conferences which have greatly contributed to clarifying and unveiling the justice of the Palestinian cause and in informing the peoples of the world of the legitimacy of the Palestinian struggle for liberation as well as in acquiring the respect and esteem of the peoples of the world to the struggle of our people.

I wish to express here my profound gratitude to Mr. Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, to Ambassador Massamba Sarré, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and to all those who have contributed to the success of these seminars in the service of the justice of the Palestinian cause.

Allow me in conclusion to reiterate the Palestinian National Council's profound gratitude, expressed at the seventeenth session, to the People's Republic of China, its leadership, its Party and its people in the name of our Arab Palestinian people, in the name of my brothers, members of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization as well as in my own personal name.

Allow me to express also our high appreciation for their hosting of this seminar and for their principled firm stands of solidarity with the just struggle of our people, for the regaining of their national inalienable rights.

I extend to you my sincerest wishes for the full success of the work of this Seminar.

Revolution until Victory.

V. MESSAGE FROM HIS EXCELLENCY SYED SHARIFUDDIN PIRZADA, SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE ORGANIZATION OF THE ISLAMIC CONFERENCE
Mr. Chairman, Their Excellencies, heads and members of delegation, ladies and gentlemen, it is my pleasure to convey to you, at the very beginning of my speech, the greetings of His Excellency Syed Sharifuddin Pirzada, Secretary General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, who charged me with the task of representing him and of delivering this speech on his behalf.

First of all, allow me to address profuse thanks and gratitude to the State and government of the People's Republic of China for its generous hosting of this Conference and for the facilities offered to it so as to contribute to its successful conclusion.

I avail myself of this opportunity to congratulate Your Excellency on your election to chair the deliberations of this Conference. I am confident that your wise direction and useful interventions will achieve positive results for our work.

I must also address thanks and gratitude to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for the valuable efforts that it has and still continues to exert in order to prove the historical rights of the Palestinian people.

Gentlemen,

The Organization of the Islamic Conference has made it a point to participate in the series of regional seminars organized by the United Nations on the cause of Palestine, and it is happy today to participate in this important Seminar too so as to embody the close ties and strong co-operative relations that bind our Organization and the United Nations Organization, which covers various fields the forefront of which is, of course, the cause of Palestine.

I would not fail to commend the contributions made by such seminar to making the cause of Palestine better known by world public opinion. Perhaps the most prominent achievement of such seminar is the absolute conviction that we today observe throughout the entire world as to the legality of this cause and to the right of the Palestinian people to sovereignty over their own territories.

Mr. Chairman,

The topic under discussion at this international seminar is the very subject for which our Organization was established in the first place. The Organization of Islamic Conference considers the cause of Palestine and Al-Quds Al-Sharif as the prime cause of the Muslims because justice is on the side of this cause and because of the existence of the Islamic Holy Shrines there under occupation. This is what makes the States Members of the Organization as well as the entire Muslim Ummah stand firmly by this cause and by the Palestinian people without any reservation, and place at its disposal all potentials available to the Muslim world. We have declared, in previous conferences of our Organization, our full commitment to all proposals and solutions that would ensure, for the Palestinian people, its inalienable, historical rights, including its right to return and its right to self-determination on its national soil, with its capital of Al-Quds Al-Sharif and under the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization, its sole legitimate representative.

Mr. Chairman, we understand that the task of your esteemed Committee (The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People) is of two complementary parts and that its work will not be complete nor its objectives achieved without taking both parts of the task into account:

First: To clearly define and state the historical inalienable rights of the Palestinian people in their own territory, to support these with legal and historical proofs and to convey them to world public opinion.

Second: To enable the Palestinian people to exercise these rights. This makes it incumbent upon the Committee to devise the practical ways and means that would actually enable this people to fully exercise its rights.

We have, through our participation in some of this Committee's work and through our observation of its activities at the international level, come to value the great success achieved by this Committee in implementing the first part of its task. The second part of the task however remains to be done. We have, therefore, to define the real forces that prevent us from achieving our objectives and stand in the way of enabling the Palestinian people to exercise its rights, so that our efforts may not be dissipated and so that time may not pass in vain while the Palestinian people continues to face, daily, all sorts of oppression and to pay the toll by blood.

Mr. Chairman,

The international community and world public opinion have approved the rights of the Palestinian people. But neither the conviction of this international community nor its resolutions have regained, for the Palestinian people, its rights. Neither of them has been able to make the State of the Zionist entity desist from its pursuit of acts of aggression against the Palestinian and other peoples in the area.

What does this mean? Does that mean "Israel" has all components of the potentialities that would enable it to face the entire world? Or is this reality caused by the lack of seriousness and effectiveness in the ways in which the world has chosen to confront Israel's challenges and intransigence?

The entire world fully knows that "Israel" is an entity that does not by itself possess the potentials and means that would enable it to face the international community. Everybody also knows too well that this entity basically draws its strength from the continued American support in the political, economic and military fields. It is on this support that Israel depends. It is also this support that makes it an entity that is outside the confines of international law and is indifferent to world public opinion. Indeed, it is this support that enables it to perpetuate, on a daily basis, the crime of extermination against the Palestinian and Lebanese peoples. When the United Nations Security Council tries to condemn these massacres, we see the one super-Power in the world, which was established on the basis of the right of all peoples to self-determination, use its right of "veto" against such condemnation, in support of this entity and with a view to further encouraging it to continue its practice of terrorism and suppression.

Mr. Chairman,

In spite of all massacres being committed by Israel, the present state of affairs in the Middle East has shown the entire world the serious desire of the Arab party for finding a lasting, overall and just peace in the area on the basis of the facts that were approved by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. The Palestinian party, represented by the Palestine Liberation Organization, has shown enough of flexibility in its approach towards peace.

Recently it accepted the Fez Peace Plan that was approved by both the League of Arab States and by the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

But neither the United States of America nor Israel has so far paid any attention to this. On the contrary, what these two States are practising in the land further complicates the situation. Consequently, this position of theirs threatens international peace and security.

This being the case, we are of the opinion that efforts must be intensified and directed against those who impede the peace process. Only by so doing can we save this area from imminent catastrophes and enable the Palestinian people to regain its inalienable rights.

It is very clear that the American Administration has not so far taken a decision in response to the peace process, and unless the kind of pressure that would force this Administration to change its views is exercised, peace cannot be realized. On the contrary, Israeli acts of aggression in the area will increase.

This truth makes it incumbent upon this august Committee to direct its thinking and work towards finding the means by which actual and effective pressure can be exercised upon the American Administration so as to make it respond to the historical and humanitarian requirements of the area.

There must be an action that would push the United States of America towards recognition of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and towards respect for the will of this people in its choice of the Palestine Liberation Organization as its sole and legitimate representative.

Should this take place, then the United States would exercise pressure on Israel and would make it accept the establishment of peace in the area.

It is very important that we turn our eyes also towards the European Community because of its possible influence on the United States of America.

It is also very important to turn to the other States of the world that support the rights of the Palestinian people so as to call upon them to support the struggle and rights of the Palestinian people which may be in conformity with their political stance in such manner that will balance the support of the United States towards Israel.

Mr. Chairman,

By participating in this Seminar, the Organization of the Islamic Conference reiterates its full commitment to the Palestinian cause and to the right of the Palestinian people to exercise its rights fully, on its territory. We also call upon you to find the practical means that would exercise effective influence upon the United States by making it respond favourably to the opportunities available for the establishment of peace in the area and thereby abandon its current stand and abide by the resolutions of the United Nations, particularly those which relate to the International Conference on Peace in the Middle East. The peace process in the area cannot succeed without the full participation of the Palestine Liberation Organization as a major party in any dialogue or negotiation. There will be no peace without the full recognition of the historical and inalienable rights of the Palestinian people including its rights to return, to self-determination and to the establishment of its own independent State.

Mr. Chairman, while I extend my thanks for having given me this opportunity of addressing this Seminar, I also wish success for the deliberations of this important gathering.

VI. PAPERS PRESENTED AT THE SEMINAR

1. The role of the Palestine Liberation Organization

Ibrahim Abu-Lughod

There are slightly more than four and a half million Palestinians today, constituting those who were born in Palestine and their offspring who were born there or in other areas of their dispersion; they neither enjoy nor exercise any political rights as Palestinians anywhere in the world today. Yet they have a deep sense of political obligation to normalize their political status which is reflected in their struggle to retrieve their national rights to self-determination, including their right to independence and sovereignty in Palestine, their return to national identity and representation by their own representative. Over the past three decades, the Palestinians largely succeeded in maintaining that identity despite the forcible measures carried out to obliterate it and in designating their own representative, namely, the Palestine Liberation Organization. By maintaining their identity and having succeeded in designating and sustaining their own representative, they have been endeavouring, by various means, to realize the other components of the right to self-determination. Thus far their endeavour has met with partial political success. Despite many adversities the Palestinians today demonstrate their absolute resolve to press for the attainment of those rights.

The existential reality of the Palestinians today is rooted in a concrete historical event, namely, the dismemberment of Palestine in May 1948. Israel's emergence then on a portion of Palestine had two consequences. First there was the expulsion of Palestinians from areas that came under Israel's control and jurisdiction, who henceforth became known to the world community as the Palestine refugees. Then they numbered about 800,000 and now are slightly more than 2 million. The social, educational and economic development of the refugees became a shared responsibility between the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), created by the United Nations in 1950, the "host" Arab States and later on the Palestine Liberation Organization. Second was the incorporation, juridical or administrative, of the remaining areas of Palestine by Jordan and Egypt. That part of Palestine which came under Jordan's control eventually was legitimated by an act of the Jordanian Parliament in 1950 and became known to posterity as the West Bank; whereas the southern part of Palestine came under Egypt's control and administration and is referred to as the Gaza Strip. Both parts were to come under Israel's occupation in 1967. Thus the entire area of Mandate Palestine is now exclusively controlled by Israel.

In the period between 1948 and 1967, Palestine as a political and administrative entity ceased to exist. Only in the Gaza Strip was the term Palestine used without incurring political opprobrium or punishment. Israel displaced its portion of Palestine; Jordan gradually ceased to refer to Palestine and substituted for it the term West Bank. Only in the Gaza Strip, with the approval of the Egyptian Administration, did the term Palestine live on and was used for political and cultural discourse. The cessation of the use of the term Palestine had a corresponding political, juridical and social designation. Palestinians who continued to reside and live in Mandate Palestine acquired, by decrees, a new legal designation. Israel, by its nationality and naturalization law, made it possible for Palestinians who were physically present in their normal residence when the first Israeli census was conducted in 1949 to be given Israeli national status. They are today's Israeli Arabs. Quite a number of Palestinians who were physically present on the territory which was incorporated by Israel but were not physically present in their own normal residence at the time of the census became known to Israeli law and politics as the "absentee-present" persons. The Palestinians living on the West Bank, irrespective of place of origin, were naturalized in accordance with Jordanian law—similarly, Palestinians who found refuge on the east bank of the river Jordan were given the same privilege. Those that remained in the Gaza Strip, who found refuge in Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and Egypt, became stateless but under the control and subject to the rules of the countries in which they resided. A limited number of individuals in the latter category succeeded eventually in acquiring the nationality of the country in which they lived. But today the vast majority of this category of Palestinians remain stateless. Clearly these numbers over a million persons today. The following table summarizes the national status of Palestinians today:

National status of Palestinians, 1985

Arab nationalities	106900
Israelis	578000
Foreign nationalities	158620
Stateless	1182060
Total	4677580

The fragmentation of the Palestinian people and their separate and distinct political status and type of political and juridical control exercised on them had practical effects on their lives. As a people they ceased to possess a national authority to guide, direct and sustain their national life. Their cultural, social and economic institutions were no longer under their own control or volition. In terms of work and individual social, economic and political rights these were, when exercised, acquired as a result of their new status.

Thus, in political terms, Palestinians residing anywhere except in the Gaza Strip until 1967 were proscribed from organizing themselves into political parties, were prevented from campaigning on a Palestinian political platform and were unable to project a Palestinian political leadership that would speak for or represent the entirety of the Palestinian political community. Even today, with the assumption by the Palestine Liberation Organization of the leadership of the Palestinian people, specifically Palestinian political activity designed to enhance their social, economic or cultural rights is proscribed in most States where Palestinians reside. As a result of such externally placed constraints, Palestinians tend to, when wishing to organize themselves for national Palestinian endeavour, to do so in semi-legal or illegal fashion. Today, the Palestinian movements comprehended by the Palestine National Council and generally identified as the constituting elements of the Palestine Liberation Organization are essentially organized for the specific purpose of liberating Palestine and for the most part exist on the margin of legality of the States where they function. In Israeli-occupied Palestine any association with a specifically Palestinian organization or national goal conforming to the Palestine National Charter is contrary to Israeli law or the decrees of the Israeli military occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

The disabilities described above have not prevented the Palestinians from engaging actively in politics. Their activity was essentially motivated by two broad considerations: on the one hand, to continue their struggle to retrieve their national rights which therefore pushed them to engage in Palestinian national politics; second, to take advantage of existing political opportunities to improve their social, economic and educational conditions. As a consequence of these two considerations, Palestinians pressed for a national Palestinian authority that would address itself to their national rights.

The eventually materialized when the Palestine Liberation Organization emerged. That came about in 1964 in the wake of the Palestinian National Congress that was held in May in Jerusalem. The Congress, convened largely as a result of the initiative of a previously active Palestinian national leader, Mr. Ahmad Shukairi, blessed by the Government of Egypt, then led by the late President Jamāl Abd al-Nasser, resolved to establish the Palestine Liberation Organization and mandated that organization to mobilize the Palestinian people for the task of liberating Palestine (then simply Israel). From a very simple and controversial beginning, the Palestine Liberation Organization in due course acquired its legitimacy from the Palestinian consensus which made it possible for the Arab States collectively at the Rabat Summit Conference in 1974 to recognize it as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. It was eventually to obtain similar recognition from the majority of the States of the world. Once that was accomplished, its acceptance by the United Nations as the representative of the Palestinian people followed. That took place also in 1974, when the General Assembly adopted a resolution (3210 (XXIX)) inviting the Palestine Liberation Organization to participate in the United Nations as an observer. The PLO acquired similar status in all specialized agencies of the United Nations. At present, the PLO maintains diplomatic/informational missions in all United Nations agencies and in the capitals of some 90 countries.

The Palestine National Charter adopted in 1964 by the Palestine National Congress outlined the general principles and ideas which should guide Palestinian action. In addition, it defined with considerable ambiguity the path to the realization of the formulated goal of liberating Palestine (which then meant only Israel). The National Council of 1968 and its later amplifications projected a solution to the question of Palestine that was consistent with Palestinian self-determination as well as the reality of an Israeli Jewish presence in Palestine/Israel. Similarly, the projected solution dealt forthrightly with the anomalous status of both the West Bank and Gaza. Under the guidance of the highly organized militant group of which the PLO was composed, the vision of a democratic secular polity for Palestine was projected. That vision in essence rejected any sectarian or national basis for the future Palestinian polity. Underlying that vision was the concrete existence of two peoples on the same land, one Palestinian Arab –the other Israeli Jewish. The national affiliation of the Palestinians with the Arab people was of no consequence to the political organization of the projected Palestine; similarly, the religious affinity of Israelis with Jews elsewhere was to entail no special political right or obligation. Instead of accepting the two people as separate and hostile communities, the vision of the democratic secular polity was predicated on the assumption that Palestine was to be constituted of persons whose individual rights were primary and equal. The democratic secular concept challenged both Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs to accept coexistence in the same polity on the basis of full equality.

The Palestinian movement of national liberation, in its organizational form, was fully aware that this goal conflicts with Zionism and its embodiment in Israel. Additionally, the movement viewed Israel as an extension of European/American imperialism which would therefore marshal its resources to resist the new formulation. Thus the Palestine Liberation Organization adhered to the second principle: that the democratic secular polity in Palestine will not be realized except by engaging in armed struggle by Palestinian masses. Towards that end, the PLO undertook more effective measures to mobilize the Palestinians and organize them, recruited military cadres and obtained material and political support for that programme. Its process of doing so, the Palestine Liberation Organization succeeded in reorganizing the Palestinian people, in refocusing the loyalty of the Palestinians as well as in challenging the legitimacy of the Arab States' exercise of control over Palestinians within their domain. The PLO additionally undertook that Israel's control of the West Bank and Gaza must be challenged by all means, including militant action, and it rendered material, political and economic support to Palestinians there to resist Israel's occupation. Finally, as an organization that spoke for and represented the Palestinian people everywhere, the PLO viewed its functions as including its duty to organize the Palestinian communities everywhere and to provide them with support, security and welfare.

To translate these visions and goals into reality, the PLO had to create a viable organizational structure to enable it to carry them out programmatically and concretely; hence the emergence of the bureaucratic structures of the Palestine Liberation Organization to serve the manifold needs of its constituency. It is now possible to specify the principal roles which the Palestine Liberation Organization has played nationally, regionally and internationally. For it should be clear, on the basis of a careful reading of the Palestine National Charter, that the PLO, conceived of as the principal national authority of the Palestinian people, was to carry out the tasks assigned to it in three different arenas: among the Palestinian community regardless of its locale; within the region of the Arab States among which a majority of the Palestinians now live and whose connection with the Palestinians is national and political, and internationally. The international dimension of the question of Palestine was long recognized by the Palestinians since it was all too evident that the success of the Zionist movement was made possible by its affiliation with the Euro/American system of power; in the wake of the transformation of the world system and the emergence of both the socialist system and the non-aligned States, Palestinians perceived among these a critical potential for support for their struggle for self-determination, for independence and sovereignty in Palestine. Hence today, as it has been since its emergence in 1964, the PLO has been active and perceives its roles in these three arenas.

Today the Palestine Liberation Organization represents the embryonic Palestinian State and Government. In that sense its first role is that of a State and government. As a State, its constituency is the entirety of the Palestinian people, who, as a consequence of their historic development and encounter with Israeli control and their dispersion, have solidified their national identity and specificity. Over time, their consciousness of themselves as a distinct national community has become the justification of their consideration as a nation, either subjugated or displaced. The PLO, a representative of this nation, is predicated on the right of this national community to determine its destiny. Accordingly, this is translated in a formal sense in the Palestinian National Council, which is the highest policy-making body of the Palestine Liberation Organization. At present, the Council is composed of approximately 400 members presumed to represent all sectors of the Palestinian people, geographically and functionally. The Council has allotted certain seats to Palestinians in the occupied areas, but Israel's control has prevented those members from attending regularly the sessions of the Council. The membership of the Council is drawn from three separate categories: the militant organizations (Fath, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Popular Democratic Front, etc.) in proportion to their actual or presumed strength; popular associations such as teachers' unions, women's unions, students' union, writers, workers, etc.; and independents, that is, individuals who are not affiliated with any of the above or designated by the above. While representation is not solely premised on geographic principles of distribution, geography does play an important role in designating members of the Council. Thus members drawn from the three categories mentioned usually are drawn from the geographic spread of the Palestinian people. In short, function, geography and politics play an important role in the designation of the membership of the Council. Looked at in a different way, the Council, as a representative of the Palestinian people, reflects Palestinian pluralism. It is a multi-party Council and reflects all political tendencies present in the Palestinian political community. The Council debates all Palestinian issues at its annual meetings. Usually these meetings last about one week, at the end of which two sets of actions are adopted: one is the complex set of Policies that the Executive is to pursue in the coming period. Such policies relate to finance, to military activities, to political strategy or to

programmatic functions such as the creation of functional departments -- education, social welfare, culture, etc. In this regard it is perhaps appropriate to point out that major political programmes become binding on the Executive only when so mandated by the Council. For example, the modification of the Palestinian programme aiming at the creation of a democratic secular State took place within the Council at three separate sessions: first, at its meeting in 1974, the Council adopted a Provisional Programme that accepted de facto Palestinian authority over the West Bank and Gaza should Israel withdraw; this was subsequently amended in 1977 to demand an independent Palestinian State under the control of the Palestine Liberation Organization. It was in the pursuit of that modified programme that the Executive Committee made its appeal to the United Nations in 1981 to support the establishment of an independent Palestine specifically in the West Bank and Gaza. The second action of the Council is the election of the Executive Committee and its Chairman. Thus far the practice has been to elect, by secret ballot, 15 persons who for all practical purposes act as the Palestinian cabinet. The Committee is responsible for implementing administratively, politically and militarily the policies which the Council has adopted. The Committee elects its Chairman; for the past 16 years,

Mr. Yasser Arafat has been its Chairman. Essentially he assumes the functions of president and prime minister, each member of the Executive Committee is responsible for a particular functional department. These departments perform functions that advance the social, economic, cultural, educational and military interests of the Palestinian people. Over the years, a distinct Palestinian bureaucracy to man the various tasks and functions of these departments emerged and it is subjected to rules and regulations of service approved by the Palestine National Council. Excluding the military cadres of the Palestine Liberation Organization, the Palestinian bureaucracy comprises approximately 5,000 persons whose jobs and livelihood are directly connected with their functions as Palestinian civil servants in the PLO. The Council has also created additional authorities to facilitate Palestinian national retrieval. It has created higher councils for education, for culture, for literacy, for economic development, a Palestine National Fund (combining treasury and commerce), a Palestine Red Crescent Society (public health) and so forth. It has granted recognition to syndicalist and professional associations. In that sense it plays the role of a government. As a government, it supervises the Palestine Liberation Army and other militant groups; it has taxing powers; it maintains the Palestinian civil service; it sends and receives ambassadors; it has a legal system and so forth. And as a government, it is accountable to its Parliament -- the Palestine National Council. The following organizational chart illustrates the structure and component units of the PLO (see end of text of statement).

Perhaps the second most important role, implicit in our earlier discussion, is the ideological one. By that it should be understood that the PLO put forth a number of ideas which are intended to clarify the goals for which it was striving on behalf of the Palestinian people. Ideologically the PLO conceptualized the nature of the question of Palestine. Adhering to the principles of the National Charter, the PLO views the Palestinian people as an indivisible national community -- therefore rejecting its current forced dispersion and national fragmentation -- rooted in a specific land, namely, Palestine. Additionally, it views the Palestinian people as constituting a part of the Arab national community and at the same time conceives Palestine to be (1) the national homeland of the Palestinian Arab people and (2) part of the Arab national homeland. In that sense, then, the PLO will strive to maintain Palestinian Arab culture, sustain it and contribute to its growth and development by various institutional means. At the same time, it will strive to maintain the cultural basis of Palestine itself as a part of the Arab national homeland. Therefore Israel's actual policies of erasing the Arab cultural basis of Palestine, or transforming its character, will be opposed; similarly, Israel's efforts to undermine the cultural basis of Palestinian life will be resisted by all means.

Second, the PLO views Israel as being the outcome of the colonial effort of Europe to colonize part of the Afro-Asian world and therefore has identified the question of Palestine as a question of national liberation. Put in the simplest terms, the PLO views the struggle of the Palestinian people as a struggle of a colonized population against a form of colonialism known as settler colonialism. In that sense Israel is viewed as a colonial settler State that was implanted on a part of the Arab national homeland with the active support and sustenance of the European/American system of power. To resolve the question, the Palestinians will have to obtain the support of States that reject colonialism, ideologically, structurally and culturally.

Third, the PLO was able to define the nature of Palestinian rights. Put in the simplest terms, the PLO articulated these national rights in terms of self-determination. As it articulated this concept, what is meant by the Palestinian right to self-determination became clear: that means, as accepted by the Palestinian people and ratified by the international community, the Palestinians are entitled to their right to national identity, to an independent sovereign State in Palestine, to the right of representation by their sole legitimate representative, the Palestine Liberation Organization, and to return to their historic soil. It was this articulation of Palestinian national rights -- first articulated by the National Charter of 1964 and elaborated upon later -- that was essentially affirmed by the United Nations when it affirmed the Palestinian right to independence and return.

The fourth, and perhaps the most difficult of the ideological roles, is that of a solution to the conflict between Palestinian Arab and Israeli Jews. While affirming that Palestine is the natural homeland of the Palestinian people, that it is part of the Arab national homeland and that the European Jewish settlers were colonial intruders, the PLO recognized the need to address itself to Palestine's Jewish community now constituted as Israel. While as a State based on Zionism it is therefore an apartheid State, engaging in violence, oppression and aggression against Palestinians and Arabs, and it must therefore be combated, it is possible for the Jewish people of Palestine to coexist with the Palestinian Arabs peacefully and productively; that coexistence is possible within the framework of a unitary State that is non-confessional, non-ethnic and is premised on full equality of individual rights. That conceptualization became the basis for the democratic non-sectarian State for which the Palestine Liberation Organization struggled from 1968 onwards. Having elaborated that solution, the Organization recognized the difficulties of its acceptance not only by Israel but by other States as well. Without fully renouncing it as an ideal solution, the PLO elaborated its provisional solution that became the basis for its diplomatic and political initiatives. It articulated the possibility of de facto coexistence of two States on the historic soil of Palestine, one principally Jewish and the other Palestinian Arab. That formulation made it possible to accept General Assembly resolution 3236 (XXIX) of 1974 affirming the right of the Palestinians to independence and sovereignty in Palestine. While the Palestine National Councils of 1977 and 1981 went further in their explicit acceptance of the principle of statehood in the West Bank and Gaza, the PLO in fact never abandoned the principle of a democratic non-sectarian State in Palestine as the basis for an enduring and just peace between Palestinian Arabs and Israeli Jews.

The third important historic role which the PLO played is essentially political/diplomatic. On the national (Palestinian) level, the PLO mobilized the Palestinian people themselves towards the goal of national liberation, encouraged the political functioning of Palestinians regardless of local and assisted in articulating the political struggle of the Palestinians under Israel's control. Furthermore, the PLO's principal political struggle, particularly between 1967 and 1974, was to assume the primacy not only in identifying Palestinian national goals but additionally in wresting the right of representing the Palestinians from others and in maintaining its independent decision making. It should be obvious by now that the PLO largely succeeded in accomplishing both, although its primacy and independence are occasionally challenged by a hostile power. Thus when the Arab States extended recognition to the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinians, they signified that the PLO had become the sole national authority of the Palestinians and the authoritative allocator of values. It was subsequent to the Rabat summit recognition that the international system -- excepting the United States and a number of West European Powers -- recognized the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people.

It was this national, regional and international consensus that was ratified by the United Nations when it extended its observer status to the PLO and when it accepted the principle of PLO participation in all United Nations conferences on the question of Palestine on a footing of complete equality with all other States involved in that question. Thus then international initiatives for peace are launched by the United Nations, it is usual for the United Nations to call for the participation of the PLO as the legitimate representative of the Palestinians. Through its diplomatic/informational missions abroad and through special missions and conferences, the PLO has utilized its political legitimacy to mobilize diplomatic support for its policy of national liberation and peace. Thus, beginning in 1969 when the United Nations defined the struggle of the Palestinian people as a struggle of a colonized people -- like the struggle of the African people in South Africa -- and through its efforts in the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the socialist system, the PLO has been reasonably successful in obtaining the sympathy and support of the majority of States and peoples of the world. An important index of this support is the repeated affirmative votes of the majority of Member States in the United Nations for Palestinian rights, of the extension of political, economic, military, educational and cultural support which many States -- Arab, Asian and socialist -- extend to the Palestinian people through the PLO. In short, it would be inconceivable for the vast Afro-Asian and socialist support for the Palestinians to be extended without the crucial political/diplomatic role which the PLO has played over the past two decades.

It is precisely because the PLO has played these comprehensive state/government, ideological and political/diplomatic roles that it maintains its legitimacy with its constituency -- the Palestinians -- who stand firmly with it as their sole legitimate representative. The fact that the Palestinians reject any idea of associating any other authority with the PLO as the interlocutor for their policy of peace through national liberation testifies to the long-standing drive of the Palestinians for independence, national identity and representation. The eventual realization of these goals necessitates the variety of roles which the PLO will continue to play nationally, regionally and internationally.

[illegible]

Liu Jing

On 14 May 1948, the Jews proclaimed the founding of the State of Israel in Palestine and the next day, the first war between the Arab countries and Israel broke out. As a result of the war, Israel annexed large tracts of Palestinian territory and more than 1 million Palestinian Arabs were driven out of their homeland where they had lived for centuries. They were deprived of their national rights and lived miserably as refugees. For the restoration of their national rights and to return to their homeland, the Palestinian people have waged a protracted and unyielding struggle.

The main achievement of this session was the election of the Chairman of the PLO Executive Committee. The Executive Committee then adopted the Palestinian National Charter, the principal points of which are: Palestine is the homeland of the Palestinian Arab people, the Balfour Declaration adopted in 1917 and the United Nations General Assembly partition resolution of 1947 are null and void, and the Palestinians should continue their struggle against Israel until they obtain the right to return to their homeland. The session also decided to create the Palestine Liberation Army. Thus the PLO was officially established.

At that time, in addition to the PLO, many other resistance organizations, including al Fatah, the "Revenging Youths", the Palestine Liberation Front and the "Returning Heroes" were active, and more organizations emerged after the third Middle East war.

In April 1969, the Palestinian guerillas set up the Palestinian Armed Struggle Command. This constituted the first step taken by the PLO towards military unification.

Joining the command successively were al Fatah, al Sa'eqa, the Palestine People's Liberation Forces, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Arab Liberation Front, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (General Command) and the Popular Struggle Front of Palestine.

In September of the same year, the sixth session of the Palestine National Council was convened and attended by six resistance organizations. In a statement issued at that session, the Council for the first time set the ultimate goal of the Palestinian revolution, which is the liberation of the whole of Palestine from Israeli occupation and the establishment of a democratic Palestinian State free of religious and racial discrimination. The statement also stipulated the engagement of armed struggles as the means of the Palestinian revolution to recover their motherland which was under occupation.

From 30 May to 4 June 1970, the PLO called the historic seventh session of the Palestine National Council, which was attended by representatives of the Popular Front and all the other Palestinian resistance organizations. The session decided to set up the PLO Central Committee, which is also called the Central Committee of the Palestine Resistance Organizations. All the resistance organizations participated in the leadership of the Central Committee – the policy maker of the Palestinian Resistance Movement, pushing the unification and unity of the resistance organizations to a new phase.

The PLO's unity and unification brought about a new surge in the armed struggle. In 1969, Palestinian guerillas launched more than 3,900 military operations, killing or wounding more than 1,300 Israeli aggressive troops. In the 14 months from the first half of 1970 to May of 1971, the guerillas launched more than 6,000 attacks, almost doubling the 1969 figure. Not only was the number of guerilla attacks on the increase, but the scope of their operations was expanding as well, spreading to the whole area under Israeli occupation. Even Tel Aviv, the center of Israeli rule, came under frequent guerilla attacks. Meanwhile, the regular troops of the PLO totaled more than 50,000, becoming an important military force in the Middle East. At that time, the guerillas were based in the neighbouring Arab countries, namely Jordan, Syria and Lebanon.

Here I should point out that Israel and certain other people have their ulterior motives when they slander the Palestinian people's armed forces as terrorists and the PLO as a terrorist organization. We all know a simple truth: where there is oppression and aggression, there is bound to be resistance. The Palestinian people are fully justified in fighting against Israeli aggression by military means. Of course in any struggle for liberation, the greatest possible caution must be taken to avoid harming innocent people.

Since the fourth Middle East war, some new changes have been made as regards the goals and strategies of the PLO's struggle. In February 1974, the PLO called for the realization of its strategic objectives by stages. It agreed to the establishment of an independent Palestinian State in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip as the first step to the realization of its ultimate strategic goal. At the same time, it stressed that it would not give up its ultimate strategic goal of establishing a secular and democratic State in the whole of Palestine. In his political report to the twelfth session of the Palestine National Council in June 1974, Arafat formally submitted the idea of "establishing a Palestinian State in the West Bank of the Jordan River and Gaza Strip" to the Council for discussion. A 10-point programme adopted by the Council further reaffirmed the changes in the goals of the PLO's struggle.

Later, at the thirteenth session of the Palestine National Council in March 1977, the Popular Front reconciled its long-standing differences with al Fatah and other organizations over the goals of their struggle and agreed to the proposal for "establishing a Palestinian State on the liberated West Bank and Gaza Strip as the first step towards the realization of the ultimate strategic goal". At the fifteenth session of the Council, held in April 1981, the Popular Front returned to the PLO Executive Committee after a seven-year absence. As a result, the various Palestinian organizations again became united.

After the fourth Middle East war, the PLO changed its tactics besides making changes in the goals of its struggle. Al Fatah adopted more flexible strategies and varied forms of struggle. While persisting in the armed struggle, the PLO actively engaged in political and diplomatic activities, and agreed that when the conditions are ripe, its goal of setting up a Palestinian State can be achieved through a political solution.

The PLO has had great success in its political and diplomatic activities. At the Arab Summit Conference held at Rabat in September 1974, the Arab countries (including Jordan) unanimously recognized the PLO as "the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people". In November of the same year, Chairman Arafat of the PLO Executive Committee made his first long speech at the United Nations General Assembly and was warmly welcomed. On 22 November 1974, the General Assembly adopted a resolution acknowledging and reaffirming the PLO position. On the same day, the PLO was granted a permanent observer status to participate in conferences and work of the General Assembly. In September 1976, the Arab League admitted the PLO as an official member. In June 1980, the European Economic Community gave recognition to the Palestinian people's legitimate rights and in July of the same year, the General Assembly called an emergency special session on the question of Palestine and adopted a resolution (ES-7/2) reaffirming the Palestinian people's rights to exercise self-determination and to establish its own independent sovereign State.

In June 1982, Israel committed a large-scale aggression against Lebanon. The Palestinian resistance forces and the Lebanese people fought their common enemy shoulder to shoulder and dealt a heavy blow to the aggressors. When Beirut was surrounded by Israeli aggressors, some 12,000 Palestinian guerillas were trapped there. But in face of the powerful enemy, they fought valiantly for more than two months. Although the PLO fighters finally withdrew from the city, they foiled Israel's attempt to eliminate the PLO and preserved the PLO's armed forces. Now PLO fighters are scattered in Syria, Algeria, Jordan, Iraq, Tunisia, the Sudan, the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen and the Yemen Arab Republic, and the PLO headquarters has moved to Tunisia. But there are still some 7,000 armed personnel in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley.

Since Israel's invasion of Lebanon, the PLO, while putting up armed resistance, has further stepped up its political and diplomatic efforts. On 25 July 1982, PLO leader Arafat expressed his readiness to "accept all United Nations resolutions on Palestine". At the sixteenth session of the Palestine National Council, held in Algiers from 14 to 22 February 1983, a political declaration was adopted. It once again emphasized the need to further strengthen Palestinian national unity and unification of the Palestinian revolutionary forces and intensify the armed struggle against Israeli aggressors. It also declared its refusal to consider the Middle East peace plan of President Ronald Reagan of the United States as the basis for a just and permanent settlement to the Palestinian question and pointed out that the resolutions adopted by the Arab Summit Conference in Fez on the Middle East question make up the minimum programme for Arab political action.

From 22 to 29 November 1984, the seventeenth session of the Palestine National Council was convened in Amman under a grave situation. The Council elected a new leading body with Sheikh Abdel Hamid el Sayeh, who had made great effort for the reconciliation of various PLO factions, as its President. The Council also elected 11 new leading members of the PLO Executive Committee and retained seats for the Popular Front, the Democratic Front and al Sa'eqa in the Committee. Arafat was re-elected Chairman of the Committee. The Council drew up a new programme for the PLO's struggle, which will have great bearing on the PLO's future. An important political resolution was adopted, in which the Council once again stressed unity and called for improvement of relations among various PLO factions. The resolution included a decision to set up a special committee to conduct a dialogue with the factions. It emphasized the unity between Palestine and other Arab countries and reaffirmed Palestine's right to make decisions independently.

While waging military and political struggles, the PLO has also been engaged in many social, cultural, educational and economic activities.

The PLO attaches great importance to information and education. Within the PLO, there is a unified information bureau which is in charge of the Palestine News Agency, newspapers and radio broadcasts.

To enable the Palestinian people to protect their own interests and to meet the needs of the future Palestinian State, the PLO has organized the Palestinian people into 12 professional federations (for women, workers, students, teachers, judges, doctors, pharmacists, engineers, writers, journalists, artists and farmers). The teachers' federation takes care of the interests of the 75,000 Palestinian teachers in various Arab countries, while the engineers' federation represents more than 25,000 engineers and the doctors' federation looks after 12,000 Palestinian doctors. These federations not only show concern for the wages and salaries of their members, but they also find jobs for them by signing contracts with Arab and African countries. Expenditures of the federations are met by their members' contributions and support from the PLO.

In the occupied area, Israeli authorities put the Palestinian people under strict control both economically and culturally. Before the Arab summit in 1979, the PLO had used some of the donations it could get to support economic and cultural activities and medical care in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. At the 1979 Arab summit, it pushed the conference to adopt a resolution granting 150 million United States dollars in aid to the Palestinians living in the occupied area. With support from Arab countries, four universities have been built and some medical and educational facilities set up.

To co-operate with the Palestine Red Crescent and social insurance agencies, the PLO has set up a health service which provides free medical care to Palestinians living in tents. The Palestinians can get free treatment in the many hospitals run by the PLO. Most of such Palestinian organizations have signed contracts with their counterparts in many countries, especially socialist countries, under which the latter supply them with medical equipment or perform surgery when necessary.

The PLO shows even greater concern for martyrs' families. In addition to giving monthly subsidies to orphans and widows, it offers them opportunities to work in the farms and factories it runs.

To lay a foundation for the industry of the future Palestinian State, the PLO set up some enterprises in Arab countries. For example, it set up the SAMED company in Jordan in 1969 and moved it to Lebanon in 1971. Now, SAMED has four main branches: industry, handicrafts, agriculture and film production. The socialist countries had provided the PLO with large quantities of sewing machines and agricultural machinery, which were installed in its production centres in Lebanon. Those centres

were later destroyed in the Israeli aggression.

In short, the PLO has traversed a difficult and tortuous road in the past 21 years, but it has made remarkable achievements in various fields, particularly in the military and political domains. On its way to victory, the PLO is still encountering many obstacles and difficulties. But we believe that it will find good solutions to its problems of unity among its members, correctly handle its relations with Arab countries and expand the revolutionary forces through its own efforts while seeking external assistance. We are convinced that final victory belongs to the Palestinian people.

2. The question of Palestine and Asian public opinion

Mr. Hardi

First of all, allow me to express our gratitude to the United Nations, especially to Mr. William B. Buffum, Under-Secretary-General for Political and General Assembly Affairs, for the provision of the tenth Asian regional seminar in Beijing in which we can participate. We also want to tender our appreciation to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for its untiring work from its establishment in 1975 up until now and for making this Seminar possible. Starting from today, we will discuss "The question of Palestine and Asian public opinion", being one aspect of the "Question of Palestine" which has been fixed by resolution 38/58 B, adopted by the General Assembly on 13 December 1983.

Some doubts may arise with regard to the effectiveness of seminars since the Palestinian problem still exists, although it has been discussed many times, either in seminars and symposia of non-governmental organizations or even in the General Assembly of the United Nations. But such an impression must not give rise to discouragement, because we still believe that this Seminar might open the hearts and conscience of the leaders, so that they will still have the spirit to work for a just solution of the Palestinian question. Referring to the earlier statement of Mr. Ibrahim Abu-Lughod during the United Nations North American Symposium in 1984, I just want to draw the Seminar's attention to his opinion saying that the terminology, viz. "the inalienable rights of the Palestinians", is rather ironic and confusing. The reason for such an opinion is as follows.

Notwithstanding the existence of General Assembly resolution 181 (II) of 29 November 1947, in which were reaffirmed the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people in Palestine, including the right to self-determination etc., all those political - and human - rights of the Palestinians have been alienated already. It was so much the worse when President Truman, on 14 May 1948, only 16 minutes after the announcement of the proclamation of Israel, recognized the new State. On the other hand, up until now, that means 38 years after the recognition by the United Nations, the Palestinians have not been allowed to establish their own independent State. With a view to contradicting the Zionist assumption which denies the existence of the Palestinian people, and also along the line of opinion put forward during the above-mentioned symposium, I do suggest that henceforth one should lay stress on "the right of the Palestinian people to return to its homeland, the right of self-determination and to establish its own independent State with Jerusalem as its capital and under the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization".

THE PURPOSE OF THE SEMINAR

In view of the purpose of this Seminar, it goes without saying that we should observe the line of the United Nations. To meet the expectations of the General Assembly expressed at its thirty-eighth session, this Seminar should, again and again, undertake efforts in order to find a just and lasting solution to the very complicated Palestinian problem.

Because we have to confine our discussion to "The question of Palestine and Asian public opinion", so the concrete problem is: how to promote support for and sympathy towards the Palestinian struggle by the Asian people through public opinion.

In other words, this Seminar deals with the concrete problem, how can we stimulate the Asian people to form conceptions which can make clear to society all the complex aspects of the problem, to ensure their broader dissemination and to take an unbiased look at the facts, with a view to finding a just solution.

FOR A FIGHTING NATION THERE IS NO JOURNEY'S END

We are all aware of the formidable difficulties which form obstructions in the search for peace in the Middle East.

Up to now the prospect of peace in the Middle East gives reason for pessimism, although some peace proposals have been submitted by some influential leaders after the failure of the Camp David agreement between Egypt and Israel.

As examples of efforts recently made to create peace in the Middle East, the following facts can be mentioned.

In February 1985 Jordan's King Hussein and the PLO leader Yasser Arafat agreed on a framework for common action in resolving the Middle East situation.

Although the pact left vague whether or not the Palestinian group formally accepts Israel's right to exist, which the United States requires before entering talks with the PLO, such accord as a search for peace by means of an international conference is a positive development that should not be discounted or discarded.

In March 1985, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak called for a higher United States profile in seeking peace between Israel and its Arab neighbours, in order to fulfil its sacred mission in the search for Middle East peace. The same message was also brought by Saudi Arabia's King Fahd.

Although President Reagan did not endorse the meeting between the United States and a Jordan-Palestinian group as mentioned above, still Mubarak's peace suggestions should be considered as a positive contribution.

Although we ascertain positive developments, we still do estimate that within the coming years, the situation in the Middle East will not change. All peace proposals will run aground because of the attitude of Israel to maintain its present position. In other words, the situation of conflict will continue as long as support is still given by the United States of America to the Israeli entity in all fields, especially the military and the political field, which, in fact, should be considered as a strategic alliance. In that connection, I am sorry to say that the Arab countries are not able yet to establish a united front amongst themselves. In other words, their position is not strong enough to meet the challenge.

With regard to the United Nations, we are aware that the General Assembly, and the Security Council, in resumed emergency special sessions have held virtually continuous deliberations in their efforts to prevent new outbreaks of Israeli aggression and expansion.

The past 40 years have seen a long series of efforts to resolve the conflict by peaceful means, many undertaken under United Nations auspices.

However, the resolutions of the United Nations were defied by Israel in its utter disregard of the will of the international community and the authority of the United Nations.

In brief, based on the foregoing assumption, it can be estimated that within the next few years the ideals of the Palestinians cannot be realized yet.

Nevertheless, those facts should not give rise to discouragement since we still uphold the phrase: "For a fighting nation there is no journey's end".

ASIAN PUBLIC OPINION AS A COMPLEMENTARY MEANS

TO SOLVE THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM

In connection with the role which could be played by the Asian people, we are all aware that Asia does not possess the necessary power to give military support in the struggle of the Palestinian people.

Nowadays, namely on 24 April, representatives of the Asian and African nations come together in Bandung to commemorate the Asian-African Conference, which took place 30 years ago. I mention this event to recall to my colleagues in this Seminar that the first support and sympathy of the Asian and African nations towards the struggle of the Palestinians was engraved in the Final Communiqué of the Asian-African Conference in Bandung in 1955, which contained the following paragraph:

"In view of the existing tension in the Middle East, caused by the question of Palestine and danger of that tension to world peace, the Asian-African Conference declared its support of the rights of the Arab people of Palestine and called for the implementation of the United Nations resolution on Palestine and achievement of the peaceful settlement of the Palestinian question."

Since the content of the above-mentioned Communiqué is still relevant in connection with the topic of discussion, the Seminar should again pay special attention to the Final Communiqué of the Bandung Conference.

The same support of the Asian nations, realized in their political standpoint, has also been manifested and recorded many times in the various resolutions of the General Assembly, and in the various resolutions of the Conference of Non-Aligned Countries concerning the Palestinian question.

The main motivation of the mentioned support of Asia is based on historical experience in connection with the same struggle against colonialism and racism and also based on the common desire to bring about peace.

Moreover, Asia is closely linked with the Middle East, so that solidarity between Asia and Palestine, based on geopolitical considerations, is a "conditio sine qua non".

With regard to Indonesia, may I inform my colleagues that, based on the Pancha Sila or the five basic principles of the Republic of Indonesia, the Indonesian nation considers it a mission to uphold the fundamental principles of human rights and the principles of self-determination of nations and to support the cause of freedom and independence for all people, since colonialism in all its manifestations is considered as an evil which speedily should be brought to an end.

Since the Israeli aggressive, expansionist, colonialist and terroristic policies in the region are contradictory to the above-mentioned fundamental and universal principles, so Indonesian support to the struggle of the Palestinians against those Israeli policies is self-evident.

The other factor which causes the sympathy and support tendered by the Asian nations, particularly those people who embrace the Islamic religion, originates from a holy belief which considers Jerusalem - where the Masjid (mosque) Al Aksha is located - as the third holy place, beside Mecca and Medina. Based on such religious faith, so public opinion among the Asian nations, in particular those people who embrace the Islamic religion, refuses the combination of West and East Jerusalem to make it the capital city of Israel. On the contrary, according to the opinion of those nations, Jerusalem should be returned to its status before 1967; that means to the former status under the Arab nations' power.

For all of us it is clear that disturbances of peace and order in the Middle East, basically, are a result of the efforts of the super-Powers, in particular the United States of America and the Soviet Union, to retain their sphere of influence in the Middle East. In that connection, this Seminar should give support to the Geneva Declaration on Palestine adopted by the International Conference on the Question of Palestine in September 1983, which appealed for the convening of an international peace conference on the Middle East attended by all parties to the conflict, including the representatives of Israel, the Palestine Liberation Organization, those Arab States parties to the conflict, the United States of America and the USSR, under the auspices of the United Nations as called for by General Assembly resolution 38/58 C.

In order to combat the so-called "divide and rule" policy, the Arab nations ought to maintain unity amongst themselves. But, on the contrary, the lack of unity among Arab nations themselves creates factors which are not beneficial for the struggle of the Palestinians against Israel.

Such tragic reality is a good occasion to be misused by some Powers and Israel with the after-effect that the United States of America still can retain its sphere of influence in the Middle East, with Israel as its instrument. Therefore, in order to increase the strength and power of the Arab world, this Seminar should also voice an appeal to the Arab nations to maintain their unity and to have a common strategy in facing the Palestinian problem.

Taking into consideration the above-mentioned unpleasant realities and although such a situation must not give rise to discouragement, the question arises: what would be the objectives of Asian public opinion? In order to give an answer to the question concerned, I again want to refer to the suggestion put forward by Ir. Soekarno at the opening of the Asian-African Conference in Bandung in 1955, as follows.

Because of the fact that the people of Asia and Africa wield little physical power, and even their economic strength is dispersed and slight, so that they cannot indulge in power politics, Ir. Soekarno suggested that the only thing Asian-African people can do is to inject the voice of reason into world affairs. According to his opinion, the people can mobilize all the spiritual, all the moral, all the political strength of Asia and Africa on the side of peace. If the above-mentioned ideal can be realized by means of promoting public opinion, we can presume that Asia should and could play a constructive role in this connection, both in the peace-making process and peace-keeping efforts, which would be essential to promote an atmosphere conducive to negotiations.

In connection with the above-mentioned ideals, the Seminar should make it clear that Asian public opinion has an important meaning as a complementary effort to solve the Palestinian question.

SOME OPINIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Inevitably, the fundamental problem of international peace and security brings us back to the United Nations.

Although palpably powerless in the main sphere of influence of the super-Powers, the United Nations has become an indispensable agent for maintaining peace in the Middle East. In that respect, this Seminar should voice its support towards the United Nations, especially in connection with its untiring activity to achieve a just and lasting solution to the Palestinian question.

In fulfilling its important task, the United Nations cannot just apply the formal method, viz. by discussing the problems concerned in the General Assembly or in the Security Council only.

The creation of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People is certainly a correct decision of the United Nations.

In order to intensify the awareness of the Asian people concerning the need for support to the Palestinian struggle and to make the efforts and objectives of the United Nations understood and supported by the people, so besides the existence of the well-appreciated Committee, the prosecution of the duty will be lighter and more effective if the United Nations also maintains a good relationship not only with non-governmental organizations, but also with other institutions, to promote the political will of the Asian people in supporting the struggle of the Palestinians.

In my opinion United Nations agencies or United Nations information centres will be qualified to give the right information about the struggle of the Palestinians and about the political development in the Middle East to the people of Asia.

Referring to resolutions of the Seminar held at Jakarta in 1983, it would be practical if the United Nations could set up United Nations information centres in various cities in Asia. Such centres can communicate with the people and can easily supply to the above-mentioned educational institutions, private associations and the mass media of the country concerned all information materials, literature, etc., needed for the purpose of intensifying public opinion in Asia.

The supply of good information material, literature and other documents to the people through the above-mentioned educational institutions and private associations aiming at the study of international affairs (such as the so-called United Nations Association in Indonesia) not only clarifies all complicated aspects of the Palestinian problem, but also could stimulate the Asian people to invent new ideas and conceptions within the scope of achieving a just solution of the Palestinian question, and simultaneously can serve as a complementary support to the efforts of the United Nations.

We all are aware that the position of scientists, college students and the young generation in Asia, in the framework of intensifying public opinion, is very important, since they can take an unbiased look at the facts, with a view to finding a way to reach a just solution of the Palestinian question.

Based on the assumption referred to above, the Seminar should accept the idea that United Nations information centres should give support and facilities to the institutions and universities mentioned above to hold seminars and discussions in order to intensify Asian public opinion.

As a matter of fact, I have the impression that we do not get enough factual information from the League of Arab States about the political development in the Middle East, especially about the Palestinian question. In order to intensify Asian public opinion, such factual information is needed. I do think it will be beneficial for the common efforts, if the members of the Arab League, as the countries directly involved, ensure factual information on the question.

We are all aware that to achieve the goal of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East, all Government, especially those in Asia, have the political obligation to implement all resolutions adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations. In that connection, the Chairman of the Committee should find ways and means to urge the respective Governments of Asia to support the Seminar's resolutions and to take similar actions in accordance with the contents of the resolutions concerned. In that respect, I think that all proceedings of this Seminar, including the Declaration of the Seminar and the statements of the panelists, should be conveyed to and be published by the United Nations.

As it has been mentioned above, it is evident that the international community places its fervent hopes and expectations in the Security Council, which assumes the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. So, the permanent members of the Security Council, in particular the two super-Powers, should exert their utmost efforts in making a peaceful and just solution of the Middle East conflict possible.

In view of the standpoint of the Indonesian people concerning the question concerned - as one part of Asian public opinion - I want to quote the statement of the President of the Republic of Indonesia in August 1985, in which he told the Parliament about the Indonesian standpoint as follows:

"As a nation upholding the sanctity of national independence and rejecting any form of colonial domination, the people of Indonesia will steadfastly contribute to the common struggle for recognition of the independence of the Palestinian people."

Before I conclude my statement, allow me to suggest that the Seminar express its gratitude to the Chairman of the Committee for his selfless dedication and services to the Palestinian cause. I also want to suggest that the Seminar should express its appreciation to the Government of the People's Republic of China for its kind co-operation in providing a venue for the Seminar and for all the courtesy and assistance it has extended to the participants, to ensure that the Seminar would be a success.

Finally, I do hope that my paper will make a contribution to the success of the tenth Asian regional seminar in Beijing.

Michiyuki Isurugi

It is a great pleasure for me to have this opportunity to participate in this Seminar as the first Japanese parliamentarian to do so.

The peace and stability of the Middle East has a direct bearing on the peace and stability of the world. Especially to those of us living in the vast area extending from the eastern end to the western end of Asia, the Middle East peace problem, with the Palestinian problem as its core, is a matter of serious concern. It is highly significant, therefore, that we are gathered here to exchange views actively and frankly on the Palestinian problem, with emphasis on the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

I am glad that the friendly relations between Japan and the Palestinian people developed steadily during the last decade and that I have been personally involved in some measure in this happy development. In May 1975, I visited Beirut and had the pleasure of meeting with Mr. Arafat, Chairman of the PLO, Mr. Kaddoumi, Head of the PLO Political Department, and Brother Shafiq Al-Hout who is here as the representative of Chairman Arafat, to discuss the future relations between Japan and the PLO, especially the establishment of the PLO office in Tokyo. As a follow-up on my talks with these leaders, Mr. Kaddoumi came to Japan in April 1976 as my guest when I was director of the International Bureau of the Liberal Democratic Party of Japan. We discussed the establishment of that office with the Japanese Government. On the occasion, several Japanese parliamentarians, including me, volunteered to act as intermediary between the PLO and the Japanese Government for its establishment. It finally came into being in February 1977, with Mr. Fathi Abdul Hamid as its first Head. He made enormous efforts to see that the Japanese people's understanding of and interest in the Palestinian problem were deepened. For example, he published a monthly magazine in the Japanese language called Filastin Biladi, and held seminars and photo exhibitions on the Palestinian problem in many cities and towns in Japan. In June 1979, the Parliamentarians' League for Japan-Palestine Friendship, of which I am Vice-President, was established with the aim of promoting friendly relations and mutual understanding between Japan and the Palestinian people. The League has about 100 members covering all the political parties in the Parliament such as the Liberal Democratic Party which is the ruling party, Socialist Party, Kōmei Party, Democratic Socialist Party, Communist Party and New Liberals Club. On October 1981, Mr. Arafat visited Japan as a guest of our League and had meetings with many leading figures of the Japanese political and economic circles, including the then Prime Minister of Japan, Mr. Zenko Suzuki. This meeting was perhaps the first case in the Western block. This epoch-making visit by Mr. Arafat succeeded in impressing on millions of Japanese people the existence of the Palestinian people and the PLO. After that, the League invited Mr. Fahoum, the then Speaker of the Palestinian National Council. However, I must admit that such understanding and interest of our people have been somewhat distracted in recent years by unfortunate events in the Middle East region, such as the PLO's withdrawal from Beirut in 1982, its internal split since 1983, and the escalation of the Iran-Iraq conflict. In this connection, I would like to assure you that our League is determined to do whatever it can to further our people's understanding of the Palestinian problem, in the belief that it is the root of all the problems in the Middle East.

Our League's basic position towards the Palestinian problem has been, and will continue to be, that the following three points are essential to its just, lasting and comprehensive settlement:

- (1) Israeli withdrawal from all the territories occupied in the 1967 war;
- (2) Mutual recognition of the PLO and Israel as negotiating partner and the PLO's participation in the peace negotiations as the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people;
- (3) Recognition of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people including the right of establishing an independent State.

This position was also expressed in the statement which our League handed over to the PLO after the seventeenth session of the Palestinian National Council in November 1984.

Recently we have witnessed important moves by Arab leaders towards a settlement of the Palestinian problem through negotiations, for example, the Hussein-Arafat agreement and the Mubarak proposal. Our League supports these moves because they reflect the Arab side's enthusiasm for peace, and earnestly hopes that they will successfully bring about the promotion of the peace process, and, finally, the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. To this end, it is essential that Israel take a more flexible attitude towards the Palestinian problem, such as the recognition of the PLO as a negotiating partner. In this regard, it is strongly desired that the United States, which is the only country that can exert influence on Israel, begin a dialogue with the PLO immediately and actively address itself to the Palestinian problem. Our League will continue to make efforts to help all the parties concerned to create an environment which enables Israel and the PLO to sit at a negotiating table.

Within the PLO, there has been an internal split between the so-called Arafat faction and the anti-Arafat faction since May 1983, which seems to have even deepened after the Hussein-Arafat agreement. I seriously worry that this internal split will weaken the PLO's position in the peace process. I hope that the PLO will recover its unity as soon as possible, under the leadership of Chairman Arafat, and play a constructive role in realizing the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, and that all the Arab countries will unite in helping the PLO to recover its unity.

I wish all of you would exchange views without reservation on the Palestinian problem, in which you are so well versed, keeping in mind the fundamentals of the whole problem, above all the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

Ron MacIntyre

Origins

The Palestine question is an old one. Its origins can be traced to the late nineteenth century, when Zionist colonial settlers entered Palestine - then part of an Arab province of the Ottoman Empire - to upbuild "the Jewish national home". The British Balfour Declaration (1917) gave further substance and questionable international recognition to Zionist colonization, which developed apace during the interwar years. Nascent Arab Palestinian nationalism was undermined by Zionist colonial settlement operating in tandem with British colonial and strategic interests in the Middle East.

The Arab-Jewish communal struggle for Palestine in the interwar years was a direct by-product of the Balfour Declaration and Zionist plans for the establishment of the Jewish national homeland in Palestine, which had little regard for the national rights and interests of the indigenous Arab Palestinian majority. The consequences of the communal struggle for Palestine contributed to the United Nations partition resolution (181 (II) of 29 November 1947), which provided for a Jewish State (Israel) and an Arab State (Palestine), the internationalization of the Holy Places, including economic unity for all the parts. In the process of implementing the provisions of the partition resolution the Palestine refugee problem or question came into existence.

Since May 1948, the Arab-Israeli conflict has served as the outward expression of the Palestine question. Israel, which had been created as a ward of the United Nations (May 1948), extended its territories allotted to it under the partition resolution (56 per cent of the British Mandate of Palestine) to about 80 per cent of the land by the end of the first Arab-Israeli conflict (1948-1949). Out of a total Arab Palestinian population of 1.3 million (1948), close to 900,000 had been displaced and uprooted from land and homes by early 1949.

Evolution of Australasian attitudes

The Australasian - or Australian and New Zealand - response to the Palestine question developed primarily after the adoption of the partition resolution (1947). Both States were closely involved with the British Commonwealth and had fought in the Middle East and North Africa during the Second World War. But the Labour governments in Canberra and Wellington in 1947 had also adopted a strong internationalist stand, which was reflected in their belief in the collective power of the United Nations to resolve regional conflicts. Both saw the communal conflict in Palestine as the first real test for the world body; their support for the partition resolution was both an article of faith in the principles of the United Nations Charter and the ability of the world body to enforce its resolutions. The Australasians were, therefore, strongly opposed to efforts by the United States in the General Assembly (March-May 1948) to amend the provisions of the partition resolution in favour of a temporary United Nations trusteeship arrangement for Palestine. The Australasians were influenced by the need to uphold the principles of the partition resolution in the face of escalating violence in the wake of Britain's withdrawal from Palestine. New Zealand (Berendsen) observed in April 1948: "If partition with economic union was right in November [1947], it is right today, and indeed, I have heard no logical suggestion to the contrary".

Despite strong Commonwealth ties, Britain's policy of abstaining on the partition resolution was at variance with the "white" Dominions of the Commonwealth. The Australasians, in particular, while praiseful of Britain's policies during the period of the Mandate (1920-1948), believed that London was capitulating in its responsibilities to the world body in refusing to uphold the partition formula. Further differences of style, rather than basic direction, arose with Britain (May 1948-

January 1949) over the diplomatic recognition of Israel. The Australasians argued that recognition should flow logically from their support for the partition resolution. Yet Britain, with defence and considerable ties with Jordan, Iraq and Egypt - three of the five of the Arab States at war with Israel - was unwilling to comply with the "internationalist" ideals of the Australasians. Indeed, due to considerable diplomatic pressure from London in the interests of Commonwealth solidarity, the "white" Dominions, with the exception of South Africa, withheld official recognition of Israel until the termination of much of the fighting in the Palestine war in January 1949.

Official recognition of Israel

For the Australasians, official recognition of Israel was perceived as an inherent part of their commitment to the principles of the world body. Equally so, given the logic of the day, was their commitment to General Assembly resolution 194 (III) of 11 December 1948, which provided mechanisms for conciliation "to facilitate the repatriation, resettlement and economic and social rehabilitation of the [Palestinian] refugees...at the earliest practicable date".

It would be true to argue that New Zealand and Australia adopted a somewhat clinically detached attitude towards the Palestine question in the late 1940s. Arab Palestinian national rights were overlaid by the pressing need to resolve once and for all the problem of anti-Semitism. The memory of the holocaust and Zionist insistence on a national solution to the historic Jewish problem met with favourable response in Wellington and Canberra as, of course, it did in many other capitals of Eastern and Western Europe, North and South America. European Jewish refugees in Australia, and to a lesser extent in New Zealand, added their voice through the various Zionist associations, the media, political parties and parliament in support of partition and official recognition of Israel. It would also be true to say that a significant body of ecclesiastical opinion in Australasia and the Western world was supportive of the Zionist solution in Palestine. Too often this was uncritically equated with the historic return of the Jews to Palestine according to biblical prophecy. And, too often, these highly idealized images of Zionism obscured the realities of the suffering and misery of the Palestinian refugees, displaced in the interests of humanitarian settlement of the historic Jewish problem.

Obfuscation of the Palestine question

Between 1950 and 1974 Australia and New Zealand generally maintained a parallel policy on the Palestine question. This was sometimes referred to as the policy of evenhandedness. In general it amounted to a form of concerned neutrality, often expressed within the framework of wider Western/United States strategic interests in the Middle East. During the height of the cold war Israel was perceived as an important United States ally in the Middle East. Like a number of Western European States, the Australasians by the mid-1960s cooled in their ardour for the strict implementation of the partition resolution. Any radical alteration to the Rhodes Armistice frontier (1949), associated with the repatriation of large numbers of Palestinian refugees, was considered to have been strategically dangerous for Israel. The Palestine question, therefore, became synonymous with the refugee question, and the refugee question came up for discussion annually in the General Assembly under estimates for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). But the nuances of the debate had changed perceptibly following the deadlocking of the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine in the early 1950s. While the question of refugee repatriation (to Palestine) had been foremost in the debates until the early 1960s, by the mid-to-late 1960s greater emphasis was given to resettlement with compensation outside Palestine. Indeed this was probably the thinking inherent in Security Council resolution 242 (1967) of 22 November 1967, which made no reference to self-determination and simply referred to the Palestinians in terms of "a just settlement of the refugee problem" (para. 2(b)).

Watershed years, 1973-1974

It is illustrative to compare attitude in Australia and New Zealand towards the Palestine problem in the late 1960s with those after 1974. It is evident that a certain rounding and broadening of policies had occurred, similar to the common stand taken in the late 1940s. Clearly the oil crisis (1973-1974) marked an important watershed in the reformulation of public and official attitudes on the Palestine question and the wider Middle East conflict. In New Zealand, with a Middle East oil dependence in excess of 80 per cent, there were frenetic efforts to get out to the Middle East to reassure the major Arab oil-producing States that Wellington was evenhanded in its policies towards the Arab States and Israel. In Australia, with greater self-sufficiency in fossilized fuels, the need for policy clarification and reappraisal was no less intense.

Following the rapid increase in oil prices in the mid-1970s and increasing petro-dollar accumulation in the Gulf region, Canberra and Wellington were particularly anxious to develop trade and diplomatic ties with the region. It is interesting to compare the sentiments of the reports on the Middle East of the Joint Committee of Foreign Affairs (Canberra) in 1968 and 1981. The former observed that "the Middle East at present is only a small market...and unlikely to be a vital market". The report of 1981 opened with the comment that the Gulf and the adjacent Middle East was Australia's fourth largest and fastest growing market.

A similar pattern existed in New Zealand where exports to the Middle East increased twelve-fold between 1975 and 1985, to become the fifth largest export market. An interesting aspect of the development of Trans-Tasman trade with the Middle East has been the growing rivalry for agricultural markets. Differences of style and of emphasis within broadly similar policy parameters might be attributed to the quest for political image in a region where the Palestine question is of crucial importance.

Broadening of policy on the Palestine question

While it is possible to show a rounding and broadening of policy on the Palestine question between 1974-1985 and to correlate this with rapid increase in trade, it is more difficult to infer a simple one-to-one relationship. For associated with the rapid growth in Middle East trade with Australasia, the PLO also emerged over the same period as a highly significant international organization, recognized by the Arab States at Rabat (October 1974) as "the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people". In addition, since 1974 the PLO has acquired observer status in the United Nations, the agencies and other international organizations. With representatives in more than 100 countries, the PLO became a potent international force in the 1970s which the Australasians and the West could scarcely ignore.

New Zealand's vote, for example, for the PLO "to be heard" (General Assembly resolution 3210 (XXIX) of 14 October 1974) - Australia and a number of Western countries abstaining - might be seen as the first serious attempt to come to terms with the PLO in relation to the Palestine question (see annex I).

In general, prior to the Palestine sessions of the United Nations in October/November 1974, the level of debate in Australasia on the Palestine question was predictable and fairly one-sided. For years Zionist organizations and fellow travellers had coloured public and official attitudes. "The Report of the Joint Committee of Foreign Affairs on the Middle East Situation" (Canberra 1968) illustrates the point only too clearly. It notes: "The Israelis refuse to be forced out of the Middle East. Israel is their Promised Land; the only place in which they can hope to live a Jewish life on what they regard as Jewish soil. It is their bastion against persecution...". Again: "Australia should work in an impartial way towards a permanent and peaceful settlement of the dispute between Israel and the Arab nations". The nuances and drift of the report make it clear that any commitment to the Jewish Promised Land could hardly lead to any impartial settlement of the Palestine question. The absence of any tangible reference to the national rights of the Palestinians was hardly surprising.

Prior to the improvement of Arab/Palestinian information channels in the mid-to-late 1970s, current literature on the Middle East tended to reflect the Israeli point of view. Stories of the gallant and determined kibbutzniks fighting for the "right to live" in the face of warlike Arabs and "terrorist" Palestinians coloured the minds and imaginations of more than a generation of school children. Students coming up to university had - and in many instances still have - a highly distorted vision of the realities of the Palestine question. It is not surprising, therefore, that public opinion polls in 1974 on both sides of the Tasman Sea displayed marked preferences for the Israelis over the Arabs in the Middle East conflict. While the oil crisis might also have had a self-negating effect on the image of the Arabs, it is clear that older biases and prejudices towards the Arabs and, in particular, the Palestinians, coloured and distorted judgements in the mid-1970s.

Australasian media attitudes

Since the late 1970s in Australasia there have been signs of attitudinal change on the Palestine question at public and official levels. A number of factors would seem to account for this. In Australia, for example, the growing political voice of the Middle East "ethnics" (over 300,000 or 2 per cent) has had the effect of focusing the media on more specific and pragmatic issues relating to the region. This has been enhanced since the mid-1970s by a network of Arab embassy and/or information services which have added to the general awareness about the region on a multiplicity of issues. Ethnonationalist newspapers - among them Palestinian (i.e. Free Palestine) - have been used to leaven public and official attitudes pertaining to their respective communities. Jewish and/or Zionist newspapers (i.e. Jewish News) have been no less vigilant in seeking to get their message across to the public and the nation's decision makers in Canberra.

The Arab "voice" in Australia

It is clear in the 1980s that the Arab "voice" can be heard in Australia, through radio television and the ethnic and national media. Of course, it should be observed that sometimes the Arab "voice" tends to generate more "heat" than "light" on important Middle East issues. All too frequently politico-religious feuds in the Middle East - and especially of late over Lebanon - are fought out in the local pages of ethnic newspapers, while the more controversial are picked up by the large Australian newspapers often to underline the divisiveness of the Arab community and, frequently, to emphasize the diversity of Arab opinion over Lebanon or on the Palestine question. That this simply reflects the biases and prejudices of a number of Australian newspapers (Age, Melbourne; Australian, Canberra) hardly needs repeating. Yet the effect of intra-Arab diversity in weakening and undermining Arab credibility on such important issues as the Palestine question should not be underestimated.

Educational developments: Australian Middle East Studies Association

On a positive note, the development of economic and political relations with the States of the Middle East has tended to generate much more informed interest in schools, colleges and universities. In 1981 the Australasian Middle East Studies Association (AMESA) was formed by a group of academics to foster and develop a

greater interest and understanding of the Middle East. AMESA has held conference in the main centres, covering a number of important subject areas, including the Palestine question. It has involved senior government ministers, bureaucrats, defence personnel as well as teachers and university professors in its deliberations. AMESA has undoubtedly raised the level of the debate on the Middle East in general, and the Palestine question in particular, as has been evidenced by the intensity of Zionist opposition to the organization.

Media and balanced coverage of issues

While undoubtedly Arab popular and informed or official opinion has penetrated the media in Australia, making editorial columnists much more aware of the need for "balance", it would be wrong to conclude that this now occurs as a matter of course. While there is a greater pretence to publish more "balanced" news from the Middle East, on local news items editors of the majority of major dailies (with the notable exception of the Canberra Times and the Advertiser, Adelaide) tend to be pro-Zionist. The basic distinction between press coverage in 1975 and 1985 is that older biases and prejudices inherent in the Australian media towards the Arabs have become more sophisticated within the pretext of securing "balanced" coverage of the news.

The Jewish/Zionist voice in Australia

The Jewish community of Australia (65,000 or 0.43 per cent) has continued to influence public and official opinion in Australia through the media, Zionist/Jewish lobbies, clubs, associations, visits from leading Israeli academics, army officers, diplomats and a whole host of other opinion-forming agencies. Unlike the Arabs of Australia who tend towards the lower socio-economic groups, the Jews over the years have increasingly gravitated towards the white collar business and professional occupations. While there is some doubt among researchers as to the political cohesiveness of the Jewish community, one thing is abundantly clear: moral commitment to Israel. The extent of unanimity on specific policies of the Israeli Government, especially over Lebanon and the occupied territories, would be less certain. The extent of Zionist influence in the national media, major political parties (possibly the more conservative since the mid-1970s), trade unions, universities, schools and colleges is quite considerable. For many years the Zionist point of view was frequently the only clearly defined view of the Middle East and Palestine question. And for those who dared and still dare to question the Zionist perception of the Middle East, the charge of anti-Semitism (the trump card) might be used against the writer and/or unwary publisher.

Opinion in New Zealand

In New Zealand, unlike Australia, public and official opinion on the Middle East and Palestine question has not been greatly influenced by Middle East "ethnics". Apart from a small and long-standing Lebanese community, there are no other significant Middle East communities in the country. New Zealand's opinion channels have been influenced much more by pragmatic trading and economic considerations. True, like Australia, the Zionist point of view went unchallenged for many years prior to the mid-1970s. The Labour party maintained strong and cordial relations with the Israeli Labour party and the Histadrut. Labour party leader Norman Kirk in December 1973, for example, praised the late David Ben Gurion in a moving eulogy. Kirk also tried to introduce to New Zealand, without success, the ideals of Israeli pioneering in the kibbutz.

Jewish/Zionist influence

The Jewish community in New Zealand (4,000 or 0.04 per cent) is numerically very small, as is the membership of the various Zionist associations or Israel-New Zealand Friendship groups. But as in Australia, the Jews of New Zealand are well entrenched in business, the professions, some trade unions and related organizations. Some leading members of the Third Labour Government (1984) are highly responsive to Zionist influence and/or suggestion, which is often reflected in a hostile reaction to the relatively small but vocal pro-Arab lobby centred on the Palestine Human Rights Campaign organization and/or pro-Palestinian groups in Wellington.

The media and balanced coverage

Like Australia, the media in New Zealand syndicate much of their information on the Middle East from overseas news agencies. Since the mid-1970s the news coverage has generally been more balanced. Yet on local information pertaining to the Palestine question there is still a marked tendency to reflect Zionist bias and prejudices about the Palestinians and more specifically about the PLO. I have often felt that this was more the result of ignorance of the issues rather than of contrived editorial policy. Of course, Zionist lobbyist in New Zealand would bitterly resent any inference which implied greater sympathies for the PLO.

The main centre of Zionist activity in the country has been the Israeli Embassy in Wellington (1975). Yet the success of its active programme of media and political indoctrination might be questioned. For while many New 'Landers still unthinkingly imbibe Zionist arguments on the Palestine question, considerable media coverage (including radio and television) of Israel's invasion of Lebanon or its ruthless military policies in the occupied territories have tended to weaken Israel's image in the country. In the biblical scenario of David and Goliath, Israel today is often seen in New Zealand to have taken on the role of Goliath.

Arab/Palestinian lobby

The Arab/Palestinian lobby in New Zealand is very small but, unlike Australia, it is unified and for the most part solidly committed to the Palestine question. The Palestine Human Rights Committee has branches in the main centres and has developed close ties with the equivalent organization in Australia. The Palestine point of view is heard more frequently today in the media and in schools, colleges and universities. The University of Canterbury specializes in modern Middle East politics and has been the centre of informed debate and comment on the Palestine question, which has influenced the media and political opinion.

Diagnosis and prognosis

In this paper we have examined all too briefly the development of public and official attitudes towards the Palestine question. To a large extent we might argue that both tend to be interactive, although it is important to note the existence of opinion-forming agencies which enliven public opinion and political comment on the Palestine question. In April 1985, public and official opinion if much more aware of the exigencies of the Palestine question, though sympathy and understanding translated into political decisions remain quite distinct entities. But greater exposure to Arab States through trade and diplomatic relations has created at least more informed official comment. Since the mid-1970s Wellington and Canberra in official statements have underlined support for Palestinian self-determination in the context of Israel's right "to live within secure and recognized frontiers". The partition resolution (November 1947), which fell into disuse for many years, is now proffered as the "balanced" solution most favoured in both countries. Of course, various nuances and permutations of this theme are to be found in official statements and reports. The Australasians overlay their commitment to Security Council resolution 242 (1967) with commitment to Palestinian self-determination. In this respect there has been significant policy broadening since 1967. In the context of upholding the national rights of the Palestinians, Israel has been increasingly criticized in the General Assembly and the agencies for its violations of the Geneva Convention applying to Jerusalem, the treatment of people in the occupied territories and, of late, in southern Lebanon. Israeli settlements are presented as a stumbling-block to peace: the refugee question has been more clearly identified with Palestinian self-determination.

Ambivalent attitudes towards recognition of the PLO

But on the question of the recognition of the PLO, Wellington and Canberra have been much more ambivalent. If anything, Wellington has moved further than Canberra on this question. From voting for the PLO "to be heard" (General Assembly resolution 3210 (XXIX) of 14 October 1974), New Zealand's explanatory statements at the United Nations now emphasize that the PLO plays a distinctive role, widely recognized, and must be brought more directly into the search for a solution to the Palestine question. While Australia recognizes the need for the inclusion of the PLO in the Middle East peace process, it is less clearly stated. Indeed the question of PLO recognition in Australia is closely associated with intra-inter-political party rivalries. The left-wing of the Australian Labour party has generally advocated a more responsive attitude towards the PLO, which has been countered by right-wing elements, mainly centred on Prime Minister Bob Hawke, who have diluted substantive policy statements on the question. A prime example of this is to be found in the Middle East policy review (1983) which accepts in principle the right of the League of Arab States to open an office in Australia provided that it does not include representatives of the PLO. The contradiction in policy has been further compounded by the fact that Australian ambassadors are now empowered to include PLO representatives in their range of political contacts, provided this is not in Australia. The Hawke Labour Government has enforced this policy in withholding visas from distinguished pro-Palestinian scholars like Faris Glubb (1984) on the pretext of PLO connections. The policy clearly stated in 1983 is that "the [Australian] Government will maintain its refusal to recognize the PLO while it [PLO] maintains its denial of Israel's right to exist". In effect, Canberra, despite its acknowledgement of the right of Palestinians to self-determination, upholds the United States-Kissinger formula (1975) on the conditions for recognition of Israel.

New Zealand and recognition of the PLO

In New Zealand official attitudes towards the PLO are somewhat muted. While in the General Assembly New Zealand's explanatory statements on the PLO/Palestinians are stronger (i.e. must be included/Australia should be included in the peace process), there has been little willingness to extend this to diplomatic recognition. The official position in Wellington is that the PLO is "a legitimate spokesman for the Palestinian people", but "flexibility" is sought in determining the nature of full diplomatic relations. New Zealand has come a long way since the early 1970s when the PLO was seen to be synonymous with international terrorism. The movement in New Zealand's official policy I would attribute less to local partisan inputs and more to the growth and development of Middle East trade, which amounted to 7.5 per cent of total export receipts in 1983-1984. The need to ensure the right trading image has featured prominently in New Zealand's policy

assessments of the Middle East. It is clearly recognized in Wellington that there can be no successful trading strategy which ignores the fundamental issues of the Palestine question. Given this fact, I would not predict any radical change of policy on the part of the new Labour Government (1984).

Connections with the United States

The United States connection with the States of Australasia has had an important bearing on their official attitudes towards the Middle East. True, Wellington has exercised some independence, especially where crucial markets have been involved (Iran). But on the question of getting too close to the PLO, Wellington has been anxious not to offend the United States. I would expect the same consideration to be uppermost in the mind of the Australian Government (1985). New Zealand diplomats are permitted to have contacts with PLO representatives overseas and generally Wellington, since the mid-1970s, has not withheld visas from people with PLO connections. Indeed it is most likely that Faris Glubb would not have been denied a visa had he intended to visit New Zealand in 1984. New Zealand has not made the PLO into a local political football where contending factions and/or groups have lobbied for government support. Rarely, if ever, has there been a coherent debate on the Palestine question and the PLO in the New Zealand Parliament. Policy guidelines derive much more from external perceptions of what is politically wise and prudent at the moment within the United States, and the General Assembly and, more particularly, the Middle East trading areas.

Conclusion

While Australasia tends to fall behind the rest of Asia in responsive public and official attitudes towards the Palestine question, it is important to recognize the fact that these attitudes have developed within a Western political framework. Equally so, that Australasian attitudes towards the Palestine question have generally been in tandem with more liberal opinion in Europe since 1974. In espousing the principles of the old partition formula (1947), the Australasians have certainly rounded and broadened their policy statements on the Middle East situation. Yet, as we have seen, there are important and crucial omissions which contradict and undermine their present policy position. The failure to recognize the PLO would be uppermost in this respect. Unlike the majority of States in the third world, the Australasians have never experienced the problem of foreign colonial exploitation of their land. Psychologically it may be difficult for them to empathize truly with the sufferings and miseries of homeless refugees. It is politically easier to be more clinical and adopt a stand-back position based on the older partition concept. While some might believe that the eventual formula resolving the Palestine question will be based on a partition formula, the Australasians, despite their commitment to self-determination, often take one step forward and several back. The forward step usually attests to concern for the Palestinians, but when it comes to the test of a firm vote where and when it really counts against Israel (e.g. Australia's abstention vote in the Security Council in March 1985 accusing Israel of human rights violations in southern Lebanon), the resort to "balance" is often employed to prevent the States of the international community moving towards more unified policy and concerted effort in support of a durable Middle East peace settlement. The hesitancy on the part of Australia and New Zealand derives certainly from their long and enduring relations with the United States and Western world, to the resiliency of the Zionist/Jewish lobbies and to the belief (real and/or contrived) which asserts that "balance" with no forward movement in the General Assembly is preferable to an acknowledgement of realities which so unfairly created the Palestine question in the first instance.

Annex I

New Zealand and the Middle East

Analysis of major explanatory statements by New Zealand's permanent representatives on the question of Palestine in plenary sessions of the United Nations General Assembly, 1974-1982*

ITEM	21 November 1974 (M.J.C. Templeton)	23 July 1980 (H.H. Francis)	22 April 1982** (H.H. Francis)
1. FRAMEWORK FOR PEACE	SC resol. 242 (1967) with reference to UNGA resol. 181 (II) of Nov. 1947 (the Partition resol.)	SC resol. 242 (1967) with reference to UNGA resol. 181 (II)	SC resol. 242 (1967) reaffirmed
2. PALESTINIANS	Right to self-determination and statehood; freedom to choose national orientation	Right to self-determination and statehood <u>central</u> to any settlement of the Palestine question; freedom to choose national orientation	Right to self-determination the <u>most fundamental</u> of rights, freedom to choose national orientation
3. REFUGEES	Repatriation or compensation	Repatriation or compensation, but problem not simply refugee problem, it is also a political problem requiring a political solution	No specific reference
4. PLO	That the PLO's views should <u>be heard</u> (ref. UNGA resol. 3210 (XXIX) of October 1971)	That the PLO must be <u>included</u> along with the other parties concerned in the peace process	The PLO plays a <u>distinctive role</u> which is widely recognized; it must be brought <u>more directly</u> into the search for a solution to the Palestine question
5. ISRAEL	Israel's right to exist as a sovereign independent State within secure and recognized frontiers (ref. SC resol. 242 (1967))	Israel's right to exist reaffirmed on the basis of SC resol. 242 (1967)	Israel's rights reaffirmed on the basis of SC resol. 242 (1967) (<u>affirmation</u> emphasized)
6. THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES	Withdrawal from territory occupied in 1967: unspecific	Withdrawal from <u>the</u> territory occupied in 1967: specific	Israel in <u>defiance</u> of SC resol. 242 (1967), the principle attesting to the "inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force" with regard to the annexation of East Jerusalem, extension to the Golan Heights of Israeli law, jurisdiction and administration and seizure and settlement of large amounts of land and property on the West Bank
7. SETTLEMENTS IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES		In clear and direct contravention of SC resol. 242 (1967) - implied illegality	Direct contravention of SC resol. 242 (1967) - policy <u>deplored</u>
8. JERUSALEM	Internationalization of the city; non-recognition of Israel's annexation (sic)	Internationalization of the city; non-recognition of Israel's annexation (May 1980)	Specific reference to East Jerusalem only in terms of SC resol. 242 (1967)
9. CAMP DAVID ACCORDS		Limitations with regard to the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Local autonomy not same thing as self-determination	Palestinians <u>must</u> be brought more directly into search for a solution to Palestine question. (Self-determination strongly emphasized.)

*Compiled by Ron Macintyre - emphasis added.

Annex II

Minister for Foreign Affairs News Release No. M104 dated 30 September 1983 Middle East: Policy Review

The Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Hon. Lionel Bowen M.P., announced today that Cabinet was undertaking a general review of the implications for Australian interests of the situation in the Middle East. Mr. Bowen said that Cabinet had so far made certain specific decisions on some aspects of Australian policy, mainly concerned with the Arab-Israel dispute.

Other aspects of political and economic developments in the Middle East and Gulf region and their implications for Australia would be considered after the return to Australia of Mr. Hayden.

Mr. Bowen emphasized that the review reaffirmed the fundamental principles which guide Australia's Middle East policy: namely, the recognition of the urgent need to achieve a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement to the Middle East dispute, Australia's fundamental commitment to the security of Israel and its right to exist within secure and recognized boundaries, and recognition of the central importance of the Palestinian issue for any settlement.

Mr. Bowen said that the following specific decisions had been agreed as a result of the review.

The Government acknowledges the right of self-determination for the Palestinian people, including their right, if they so choose, to independence and the possibility of their own independent State. The Government recognizes, however, that whether such an arrangement is finally settled upon will depend on decisions involving peoples of the immediate region directly concerned in this issue.

The Government will maintain its refusal to recognize the PLO while it maintains its denial of Israel's right to exist. The Government acknowledges that the PLO, which represents the opinion of a significant portion of the Palestinian people, should be included in the process of seeking a comprehensive settlement. It believes, however, that its opportunity to engage productively in such a process is limited and perhaps non-existent while it persists in denying Israel's right to exist. Australian ambassadors in relevant posts will be authorized to include PLO representatives in their range of political contacts.

The Government calls on Israel to freeze the settlement programme in the West Bank, and reiterates its belief that these settlements are contrary to international law and a significant obstacle to peace efforts.

The Government will sympathetically consider, in the light of overseas practices, any application to establish an Arab League representation in Australia. It will insist, however, that no PLO members or representatives are appointed to or employed at any such place.

Australia will continue to give political and diplomatic support to the Reagan peace initiative of 1 September 1982, noting that it is an attempt to start a negotiating process, not to prescribe its outcome.

The Government deplores the conflict and division within Lebanon. It believes that all foreign forces, including those of the PLO, should be withdrawn, except those foreign forces which are in Lebanon at the request of the Lebanese Government and whose presence is necessary to allow the deployment of conditions which can allow social, economic and political stability to be re-established within Lebanon and the authority of the Lebanese Government asserted. Australia's gravest concern would be partition of the State of Lebanon, which has the unqualified right to exist as an undivided sovereign State.

Mr. Bowen noted that with regard to Australian participation in the Sinai Multinational Force and Observers (MFO), the Government had made clear on a number of occasions - most recently, by Mr. Hayden in Rome - that the Australian contingent will not be withdrawn precipitately and that the Government will give close consideration to all relevant issues.

Last week Mr. Hayden met the Director-General of the MFO in Rome as the first step in the review of Australia's MFO commitment and will visit the area in January/February 1984. No decision on the future of the Australian commitment to the MFO will be taken until after that visit.

Gordon D. McIntosh

Firstly, I wish to express my gratitude at being invited to participate in this important United Nations regional seminar on the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

I think it is fair to say that in my country, Australia, the Palestinian issue is much publicized, but little understood.

Precisely because public opinion in Australia is an increasingly significant determinant of Australian Government policy, I am particularly pleased to be addressing the question of Palestine and Australian public opinion in this forum.

I will now seek to give some indication - for that is all it can be - of what Australian public opinion has been, is now, and is likely to be in the future.

Before I start on that difficult subject, however, I must explain what is meant by public opinion in Australia. It is a matter of fact that in a Western-style democracy like ours, there will be many versions of what public opinion may be on a topic at any one time. Different sections of Australian society will, and do, have different opinions on the Palestinian question.

These views may be represented by the federal and state governments and the different political parties which constitute our Westminster style of Parliament or they may be those of union or employer organizations. There are also lobby groups whose function it is to persuade individuals and Governments to their own point of view. They exist for almost every issue of public concern.

Although some of these groups operate on the same issues, they may reflect differing views depending on the opinions of individuals who are members of them.

There can be no doubt that Australia, with its heritage as an outpost of Western civilization, has a population whose views on some specific issues are different from those of the populations of our South-East Asian neighbours.

I am sure that a lack of understanding of the history of the Middle East, added to a general lack of interest in foreign affairs until relatively recently, has led a large number of Australians to believe that consideration need only be given to one side of the argument.

The effect of our cultural heritage, or cultural determinism as some people prefer to call it, has been succinctly outlined by one Australian academic when writing about the Palestinians and Israel:

"Western silence on these issues is due in part to racist attitudes towards the Arabs, in part to guilt feelings about the failure of the West to save the Jews from the Holocaust, and in part to the often brilliant public relations and organizational skills of the Zionist movement itself". 1/

The little sympathetic information that has been available until recently to ordinary Australians through the mass media on the Palestinian case rarely makes its mark, precisely because of this cultural heritage.

However, I am sure that most Australians would agree that human rights, like the right to self-determination, should be perceived to be valid for all peoples and States, without fear or favour. Human rights have of course been enshrined in international agreements like the United Nations Charter and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Having said that, it must also be admitted that Palestinian self-determination is not yet one of the key foreign policy questions under continual debate in Australia. We remain naturally more concerned with issues in our immediate region.

Australian Government policy on the Palestinian questions is consequently rarely a matter for major public discussion.

Only recently has there been any real public debate on the matter, and only then on humanitarian grounds with episodes like Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982 or when direct Australian involvement is concerned, as in the case of the Sinai Peace-keeping Force. The politics of oil, of course, has also required a new perspective. Very few public opinion have been conducted in Australia on any foreign policy issue, let alone Middle East issues, the most recent one being in 1982, concerned with the specific issue of the Sinai Peace-keeping Force.

To my knowledge there have been no major academic studies of either mass population opinion on the issue: the changes in Australian Government policy, or of the domestic determinants of such policies.

What follows, therefore, is necessarily a tentative exploration of trends in facets of Australian public opinion on the question of Palestine, which amounts to an impressionistic perspective.

The Middle East is certainly identified by Australians as a greatly troubled area with enormous suffering and great loss of life. Images of dispossession, disruption and death dominate media coverage of all Middle East events.

There are clear signs that public concern is increasing in Australia for the plight and rights of the Palestinians, but this is occurring alongside a well-established view that Israel, as a State, retains the right to exist.

This has not always been the case however. Not too long ago the issue was simply the right of Israel to exist.

What are the origins of this pro-Israeli and anti-Palestinian sentiment? As was mentioned earlier, racism has played a large part in the process. However, it must also be remembered that the British led similar racist attitudes towards the Jews.

Until recent times, Western culture has treated the Arabs and Palestinians as they were treated by the crusaders...as a people in need of saving from themselves.

These types of attitudes were brought back to Australia and other parts of the British Empire by our armed services personnel returning from the two world wars.

In much the same way, racist attitudes towards Asians were fired up by some of the returned services staff who had seen action in Asia during the Second World War and later in Viet Nam.

Zionist propaganda has also cleverly exploited the cultural affinity which some Australians feel towards the European Jews. No explanation or apology is necessary for the sympathy felt for the Jewish people because of the Holocaust. Some elements of the Zionist movement in Australia have been successful in representing anti-Zionist sentiment as punitive anti-Semitic sentiment, striking down the holder of such views with all the vitriol and hatred that has characterized the Middle East for ages.

Because of this cultural affinity, a naturally protective attitude towards Israel has developed which is only strengthened when Israel is portrayed as a lone nation defending itself against all opposition from its surrounding enemies.

One guide to Australian public opinion is the flow of Australian Government policy on the Middle East over the years. Since 1948, Australian Governments have shown clear support for the Israeli case...either acceptance of the Israeli version of events or wishful thinking that everything will be all right in the long run. But, in recent years, the Palestinian case has become increasingly important.

As early as 1948, the Labour Prime Minister Chifley, in a statement to the Parliament on international affairs, said:

"The position in Palestine, I am pleased to say, seems to be improving. If it is not yet entirely satisfactory, there seems to be a possibility of an agreement between the Jews and the Arabs." 2/

This is the type of thinking that pervaded Australian political thought until the late 1960s.

In August 1967, in a ministerial statement to Parliament, the Liberal Minister for External Affairs, Mr. Hasluck, broached the subject of direct negotiations between the principal parties:

"How can this be brought about?" He asked rhetorically. "On the one hand it will certainly require recognition of the State of Israel and its right to exist in security with access to the Red Sea, and on the other hand it will require a reasonable approach by Israel to territorial question". 3/

But on this question, Israel clearly being given the benefit of the doubt, Hasluck continued:

"The situation on the ground in the Middle East at the time of the cease-fire was that the Israeli forces occupied virtually the whole of the Sinai Peninsula, the whole of the territory of Jordan on the West Bank of the River Jordan, including the City of Jerusalem, and a small but strategically important border area of Syria.

"I do not believe that Israel plans to retain all these areas permanently but, at the most, to seek adjustment by agreement", he said. 4/

There was no reference to any refugees involved in the Middle East conflict of 1967.

However, in a response to the Ministerial statement from which I just quoted, Mr. Whitlam, at the time Leader of the Labour Opposition, said that ever since 1956:

"There has been a refugee problem in the Israel area. It is more intense now than it has been for 20 years. The budget makes no increase in Australia's donations for refugee relief". 5/

From this time on, there was at least a recognition of the existence of refugees.

In a statement on the Australian position on the Middle East in April 1971, the Liberal Minister for Foreign Affairs said:

"Australia's position on the Middle East is quite clear. We enjoy friendly relations with both Israel and the Arab countries. We are committed to neither side. This does not preclude us from expressing our views on specific issues. Our basic position is that there must be a settlement ensuring the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of all States in the area, including Israel within agreed borders. It should also provide a just settlement of the refugee problem..." 6/

Implicit in this statement was the idea that the Arab States were the aggressors without provocation in the past and were likely to be so in the future. The reference to "States" clearly implied that the Palestinian calls for self-determination were not to be acknowledged by the then Liberal Government.

Broader Australian indifference to Palestinian self-determination was reflected in the Labour Opposition's response to the Liberal Government's 1971 statement:

"The Minister's comments on the Middle East were sound enough, the opposition finds itself in much the same position as the Government of waiting on events before determining future policy." 7/

By 1976 refugees were being called "Palestinian refugees" and the Liberal Government of that year was prepared to concede that alongside an "absolute recognition of the right of Israel to survive as a nation", there was "an equal recognition of the problems of the Palestinian refugees". 8/

This was further developed in 1977, when the then Liberal Foreign Minister, Mr. Peacock, outlined Australia's new position on the Middle East:

"Australia has lent its support to United Nations resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), seeing them as giving absolute recognition of the right of Israel to survive as a nation and as also recognizing the need for Israel to withdraw from occupied territories. One change in the situation since 1967 is that the Palestinian problem has come to be seen generally not merely as an issue of refugees, but of the need of any settlement to take account of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people..."

He went on to say:

"If, as a result of negotiations, there is agreement on the establishment of a Palestinian homeland alongside Israel, this will have Australian support." 9/

Similar statements of concern for the condition of the Palestinian people were made between 1977 and 1983. All were mild in their criticisms of the role played by Israel in the creation of the Palestinian refugee problem and its refusal to return occupied territories to their rightful owners. None went so far as to suggest a detailed plan for the solving of the problem, one supposes either from a lack of genuine interest, fear of strong public comment against siding with the Palestinians, or for the simple fact that, by not doing so, there was really nothing to be lost. Statements of mild moral indignation seemed to suffice. But it can also be said that since 1977 the Palestinian desire for a homeland has been recognized even by the conservative Australian Liberal Party, as an issue of consequence. The reason that the Palestinian people, their history and politics, are now the subject of increasing attention is, I believe, directly related to the growth of the Palestinian resistance movement since 1967, and its recourse to various forms of armed struggle, as well as the politics of oil.

In recent years, there has been a slowly increasing number of academic works that challenge the long-time mythology about Arab and Israeli militarism and terrorism. Andrew Mack, an Australian academic, writing on the Palestinian issue in 1979, made a point that few Australians would have considered:

"The Zionist project which was to lead to the creation of a State, 'as Jewish as England was English', initially required imperialist protection. Indeed, despite the mythology of Zionist anti-imperialism, it is clear that without British imperialism's aid, Zionism would never have succeeded in its State-building project, and without support from the United States, it would never have survived as a State." 10/

It is little recognized that Britain's support for the creation of the State of Israel was based less on altruism than strategic self-interests.

Australians with access to academic or social issues publications now have little difficulty in learning some of the basic facts concerning the Palestinians, for example:

- (a) That Palestinian nationalism is not just a new phenomenon;
- (b) That the Palestinian National Congress first met in 1919;

(c) That the Palestinian aspiration to self-determination cannot be satisfied within the so-called "Arab Nation";

(d) That the numbers of Palestinians killed by Israel actions far exceed the numbers of Israeli deaths.

While there is increasing awareness of such basics, it cannot be said that these are widely known by the mass of Australians.

Zionist propaganda in Australia has had the same wide-ranging success that it seems to have had in the Western world in general, but it is not the only explanation for the limits of Australian understanding. Australia's media monopolies bear a major responsibility for these limits.

The role of Australia's media in shaping Australian public opinion would require a separate paper. Let me illustrate the subtlety of the media's approach with just one story.

On 2 April this year, the Melbourne Age, a newspaper which prides itself on being liberal and progressive, carried a front-page story on how children in schools and kindergartens in a town in the far north of Israel were learning safety procedures against rocket attacks. Their teachers explained this was necessary because they feared Palestinian rocket attacks on the town when Israeli forces withdrew from southern Lebanon.

This is, of course, a highly emotional image - little children under fire - given front-page prominence.

Then, when you turn to page 7 of that same Ace newspaper, you find an article less than half the size of the earlier story, showing that the Israeli Government has seized control of 52 per cent of land on the occupied West Bank.

The fears of the people in North Israel about what might happen in the future are presented in prominent, impactful, human terms. The significance of the actions of the Israeli Government on the West Bank, which have the potential to further curtail the aspirations of a whole people, is lost in facts and figures on page 7 of the Age.

Despite presentations such as this, there can be no doubt that in the last few years, there has been a re-evaluation of the situation by many ordinary Australians. The reason for this are wide ranging.

The spread of education, especially at a tertiary level in Australia, has meant that more and more people are better informed about foreign affairs and are becoming aware of the importance of looking at both sides of the argument.

No longer is traditional Zionist propaganda accepted at face value. Along with this is the realization that Australia's interests have been self-interests. These have taken shape over our concern to ensure safe passage through the Suez Canal rather than the longer and more uneconomical route around the Cape of Good Hope; or they have been concerned over a stable supply of oil from the Gulf region.

Trade with the Arab world has increased four- to five-fold in as many years. Our increasing economic relationship with the Middle East has also meant an increasing awareness of the history and nature of the people from the various States within the Middle East.

The Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 was, I believe, a turning-point in many peoples, including Australians' thinking on the Middle East. Electronic media coverage of the invasion deluged the homes of millions of Australians every night for several months. The amount of destruction rained on Lebanon, and in particular, Beirut and cities south of it, was a stark awakening for a majority of Australians of the extent to which some of the extremist elements within the Israeli military would go to destroy their Palestinian enemies. Especially so were the revelations of Israeli military complicity in the Phalangist massacres of innocent and defenceless Palestinian men, women and children in the Shatila and Sabra refugee camps. There was also an awareness that all was not well within Israel itself, with a great deal of internal division there over the objectives of its "defensive offensive". The nightly spectacle of the carnage also saw a turnaround in the attitudes of many Australians. It is often said that Australians prefer to support those who are seen as weak, what we call the "underdog", and there was no doubting who were considered the weak during this invasion.

Underlying these attitudes is a growing awareness that this conflict is much more complex than had been previously thought. In much the same way, there was a reappraisal of Australian involvement in the Viet Nam conflict.

What, then, has been the impact of these changing perceptions on Australian opinion about the Palestinian case?

An important guide would be the policies of the churches in Australia towards the matter. Perhaps no better indication of this exists than a press release issued in August 1982 by the Australian Council of Churches. It was made public after a delegation from the Council had met with the then Liberal Prime Minister, Mr. Fraser, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Street. I might add that the delegation included members of the Anglican Church, the Roman Catholic Episcopal Committee for Development of Peace, the Uniting Church in Australia, and the Churches of Christ and I quote:

"A delegation of church leaders has reminded the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs that there will be no solution to the Middle East conflict until the rights of the Palestinian people for self-determination in a Palestinian State have been recognized and put into practice." 11/

The Anglican Bishop of Melbourne, Bishop David Penman, reported after the meeting that:

"We had a significant discussion about the prejudice that exists within the Australian community regarding the situation of the Palestinians and the importance of an increasing understanding of their plight as homeless and stateless people." 12/

This view was reflected in the last policy statement of the Australian Labour Government made on 7 May 1984. I quote, in part, from that statement:

"...Fundamental is our recognition of the need to achieve a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement of our commitment to the security of Israel and its right to live within secure and recognized boundaries, and our recognition of the central importance of the Palestinian issue for any settlement". 13/

The statement continued as follows:

"...We must also recognize that the future of Israel cannot be considered without also considering the fact of the Palestinian people.

"The Australian Government acknowledges the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, including their right, if they so choose, to independence and the possibility of their own independent State.

"While the Government maintains its refusal to recognize the PLO so long as it maintains its denial of Israel's right to exist, the Government also believes that, as the PLO represents a significant portion of the Palestinian people, it should be included in the process of seeking a comprehensive settlement." 14/

It should be noted that the Conservative Liberal Opposition remains unprepared to identify as strongly with the Palestinian cause.

While the current Australian Labour Government policy is a major advance on earlier years, it still has obvious shortcomings as far as the Palestinians are concerned. One such shortcoming is the continued refusal to allow official Palestinian representatives to visit Australia, on the grounds of the PLO's continued refusal to recognize Israel's right to exist.

This refusal, and the nature of public opinion on such a policy, is best illustrated by what has become known as the Faris Glubb case.

In May 1984, the Australian Government decided to refuse one Faris Glubb entry into Australia on the basis that he is a member of the General Union of Palestinian Writers and Journalists. As a union affiliated with the PLO, the Government appeared to consider that this meant that Glubb holds individual membership of the PLO. This decision caused many expressions of public support for the right of free speech in Australia for Palestinians.

As might be expected, the Palestinian Human Rights Campaign complained that the policy discriminated against Palestinians, specifically, they pointed to the fact that other political groups...such as the African National Congress and the South West Africa People's Organization...which are engaged in much the same sort of activities as the PLO were allowed to have their point of view put to the Australian public by their own representatives.

They also asked, rhetorically:

"Does the Australian Government intend to deport the thousands of Palestinians in Australia who are members of the General Union of Palestinian Workers, the Palestine Red Crescent Society and similar PLO-affiliated bodies?" 15/

Given the fact that at least 40 prominent Israeli speakers and publicists gained entry to Australia between May 1978 and March 1984, the policy did seem to be one-sided and of course reflects the strength of the Jewish Lobby in Australia. A reasonable gauge of Australian public opinion on the matter can be gained by looking at what some newspaper editorials said at the time.

The normal conservative Australian newspaper said on the matter:

"It is fundamental to an open society that, in case of doubt, Governments should act so as to encourage freedom of speech and debate rather than to restrict it.

This is a principle for which the Federal Government seems to have little respect." 16/

The editorial writer of the less conservative National Times said:

"While the Government has the right and duty to protect the people from bombings and burnings and other acts of terror, it has no right to 'protect' people from

ideas - except by answering them." 17/
And the Canberra Times, in an editorial, said:

"The latest decision against Mr. Faris Glubb can only strengthen suspicions that, in spite of the rhetoric, the Government is not even handed in its attitude to Middle East problems." 18/
It is obvious that these newspapers, as an expression of Australian public opinion, do not think much of the Government's rationale with its policy, which is, in part:
"To deny visitor entry to members of the PLO until there is an amelioration in the stance of the PLO in relation to its recognition of the State of Israel." 19/
In summary of the Faris Glubb case, there are two points which can be made. Firstly, it is apparent that even though the Australian Government had condoned the opening of a Palestinian information office in Melbourne, it feared the possibility of a strong reaction from the anti-Palestinian Lobby if entry to Glubb had been allowed.

Secondly, opposition to the Government's decision from normally conservative Australian newspapers clearly suggests increased acknowledgement that there are two sides to the Palestinian debate and that the Palestinians have a right to put their view to Australians.

In 1975 an establishment opinion poll showed 60 per cent of Australians were opposed to the entry of five PLO representatives into Australia. 20/ Ten years later, there are no poll figures to quote on this issue, but the indicators are that such opposition would be significantly reduced.

There are certainly hopeful signs that the Australian Government will feel it is possible to gain significant public support for decisions to allow Palestinian representatives to visit Australia to explain their case to the Australian people.

I would like to conclude my presentation with this brief summary.

Ten years ago, the Australian public, in common with peoples of other Western countries such as Britain, the United States of America and Canada, displayed strong support for the Israeli side of the story. Even then, however, over half the population polled in all those countries was either undecided in its opinion or supported neither side. 21/

I feel sure the tide has turned.

While Australians strongly support the right of Israel to exist, there is increasing sympathy for the Palestinian right to self-determination.

Our position is even handed. We want to support moves, any moves, which work towards a peace settlement. Public opinion is a significant determinant of Australian Government action on this issue. It is my opinion that the signs which exist in Australia today will permit Australian Governments to act more clearly in support of the Palestinian people.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to address this historic Seminar.

Notes

- 1/ Andrew Mack, "Israel and the Palestinians", Arena, No. 54, 1979, pp. 14-42.
- 2/ Hansard, 2 December 1948, p. 3895.
- 3/ Hansard, 17 August 1967, p. 210.
- 4/ Hansard, 17 August 1967, p. 210.
- 5/ Hansard, 17 August 1967, p. 217.
- 6/ Hansard, 6 April 1971, p. 1495.
- 7/ Hansard, 22 April 1971, p. 1931.
- 8/ Hansard, 1 June 1976, P. 2741.
- 9/ Hansard, 15 March 1977, p. 206.
- 10/ Andrew Mack, op.cit., p. 18.
- 11/ "Churches urge Prime Minister to support Palestinian rights", Australian Council of Churches Press Release, 25 August 1982, p. 1.
- 12/ Ibid., p. 9.2.
- 13/ Hansard, House of Representatives, 7 May 1984, p. 1919.
- 14/ Ibid.
- 15/ "Why Faris Glubb should be granted a visa", Palestine Human Rights Campaign (Australia), p. 1.
- 16/ Australian, 2 May 1984.
- 17/ National Times, 4-10 May 1984.
- 18/ Canberra Times, 4 May 1984.
- 19/ Letter to Palestine Human Rights Campaign (Australia) from Immigration Minister Stewart West.
- 20/ Roy Morgan Research Centre Pty. Ltd., 24 February 1975.
- 21/ Morgan Gallup Poll, Finding No. 63. Published in Bulletin, 23 February 1974.

Malik Mehrban

The idea to create a homeland as a Jewish State for the Jews of Europe was originated by Theodor Herzl, who published a pamphlet in the name of the Jewish State in 1896. He was an Austrian journalist. He suggested Argentina or Palestine as a possible location for the proposed State. It is stated that the concept behind it was that the Jews had a historical right to Palestine for the reason that it was the country of their ancestors. This concept had no foundation as Palestine had been the homeland of Palestinians from the dawn of history till 1948, when Israel was created. As to the Jewish occupation of Palestine, this was a biblical episode and cannot give rise to a historic right. In fact, Muslims and Christians possess a greater right, based on the occupation, than any other people, for they continuously held the country from A.D. 323 until the British occupation in 1917-1918.

Herzl, inventor of the idea of a Jewish State, tried to have the Sultan of Turkey take an interest in Jewish colonization in Palestine but failed. Herzl died in 1904 and the Zionist plan then remained dormant for some period. During the First World War the Zionists saw a chance of winning support for their programme and they succeeded in securing from the British Government a declaration of sympathy later known as the Balfour Declaration. The Balfour Declaration guaranteed a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine, thus ignoring its previous undertaking and assurances to its Arab allies, led by King Hussain Bin Ali during the First World War, who helped the British Government against the Ottomans and Germans and in return he was assured full independence and establishment of a unified independent Arab State comprising the territories of Hedjaz, Syria, Iraq, Palestine and Jordan.

At the time Palestine was conquered by the British Government with the help of Arabs, it was held by the Turks. It was brought under British Mandate as the Council of the League of Nations granted the Mandate for the administration of territories severed from Turkey and Germany at the end of First World War. It was embodied in a provision for putting into effect the Balfour Declaration. It was done against the express wishes of the people most directly concerned, the Palestinians. Their wishes were ascertained by the King Crane Commission but its recommendations were concealed. The inclusion of a provision in the Mandate for the implementation of the Balfour Declaration resulted in the denial to the Palestinian Arabs throughout the Mandate any right of self-government. During the whole period Great Britain through the mandatory government spared no effort to implement its undertaking to world Jewry to establish a national home in Palestine for the Jews. The programme of massive Jewish immigration and settlement in Palestine was forcibly implemented by the British Government with the aid of British troops, who were constantly called to suppress Arab Palestinians with the aid of force.

As a result of this massive Jewish immigration in Palestine during the 30 years of the Mandate, the Jewish population of Palestine increased from 56,000 in 1918 to about 650,000 in 1948, whereas the Arab Muslim population and Christian population during the same period decreased from 6,000,000 to 1,400,000. Similarly, the land ownership of Jews also increased from 2% to 5.66%.

Then in 1947 Britain brought the Palestine problem before the United Nations. The latter sent a committee to that country, the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP). The majority of this Committee proposed a plan of partition of Palestine. The plan gave the Jews the largest and viable part of the country. The resolution called for partition of Palestine into three divisions:

(1) A division for a Jewish State of 56.35% of the total area of Palestine irrespective of the fact that Jewish ownership on that date did not exceed 5.66%,

(2) A division for an Arab State of 43% of the total area of Palestine notwithstanding the fact that they owned 83% of the land;

(3) An international sector comprising Jerusalem with its Arab and Jewish population.

This was not acceptable to Palestinian Arabs. They were supported in their refusal by the Arab countries against the unjust division of Palestine and also the Muslims of the entire world, especially Pakistan because it had great sympathy with the just cause of the Palestinians and two months after the establishment of Pakistan, the Quaid-i-Azam warned that partition of Palestine was a great danger and unprecedented conflict. The entire Muslim world, he said, will revolt against such a decision, which cannot be supported, historically, politically and morally. These were the thoughts of our great Quaid, who was a symbol of our nation's idea. From this one can gather how much sympathy the Pakistani nation had for the just cause of the Palestinians. The reason behind this is that the cause is just and Israel is an aggressor. It has forcibly occupied and captured the land of others to which it had no moral and legal right. It is felt with great concern that the British Government, throughout the whole period of the Mandate, forcibly implemented the programme of massive Jewish immigration in Palestine, and when the Zionists were sufficiently strengthened in 1947, the British Government relinquished the Mandate over Palestine and referred the question of its future to the United Nations so that Palestine is divided and the Israelis are further strengthened. The Pakistani delegation, in the opinion of impartial observers, was second to none in its advocacy of the right of the people of Palestine and in pointing out the perfidy that was perpetrated on them. "The Holy Land," it declared, "was being nailed and stretched on the cross". It is to be pointed out that a majority of African and Asian nations were at that time under the colonial yoke and therefore unrepresented at the United Nations. Owing to this reason a two-thirds majority in favour of the United Nations General Assembly's resolution partitioning Palestine into Arab and Jewish States was therefore manipulated by the Western Powers with the United States in the forefront. On 8 December 1947, Quaid-i-Azam called President Truman, appealing to him to reconsider the policy of the United States on this issue. The message said:

"At this hour when the Muslim world has received a terrible shock owing to the most unfortunate division of the United Nations Organization to enforce the partition of Palestine, I would like to address to you, Mr. President, this personal appeal.

"This decision is ultra vires of the United Nations Charter and basically wrong and invalid in law, morally it is untenable, geographically and practically it would be impossible to enforce partition against the united resistance of the Arabs who have the support of over 300 million Mussulmans and many more Muslim countries, and not only those who voted against the United Nations decision.

"In the long run it will and must fail. The very people for whose benefit the decision is taken - the Jews, who have already suffered from Nazi persecution - will, I greatly fear, suffer most if the unjust course is pursued. Moreover, the decision presents a great danger to world peace.

"May I, therefore, at the eleventh hour appeal to you and through you to the great and powerful American nation which has always stood for justice, to uphold the rights of the Arab race. The Government and people of America can yet save the dangerous situation by giving a correct lead and thus avoid the greatest consequences and repercussions."

As would be seen, the eyes of the Quaid saw a great danger behind the United Nations resolution which came to light after the lifting of the British Mandate in 1948 in the shape of bloodshed rendering the Palestinians homeless.

Then after the lifting of the Mandate over Palestine Israel proclaimed the State of Israel, formed a provisional government which was recognized by the United States Government and three days later by the Soviet Union. This was a great shock to all the Muslim States, the Quaid said, we are all passing through a perilous time. The drama of power politics that is being staged in Palestine, Indonesia and Kashmir should serve as an eye-opener to us. It is only by putting forward a united front that we can make our voice heard in the council of the world. Then after the lifting of the Mandate the rule of terror and cruelty started in the newly established State of Israel which resulted in expulsion of over one million Palestinians, Muslims and Christians. These Palestinian Arabs who became homeless refugees were never allowed to return despite the various resolutions adopted by the United Nations. Their lands, houses and even their household effects were used to settle thousands of Jewish immigrants who were lured in the newly established State of Israel from the four corners of the world with promises of financial and material support by the Jewish agency and State of Israel. This immigration resulted in the rapid growth of the Jewish population in Palestine from 650,000 at the end of the British Mandate in 1948 to 2,400,000 in 1967, and the total area of land, which was 14% prior to 1948, also rose to 73% after the 1948 war.

The Asian countries have always condemned the expansionist policy of Israel within the United Nations and outside the United Nations. Since the support of Palestinians was the major aim of the policy of the Government of Pakistan from the very coming into being of this Islamic State and even prior to that, as it is a historic fact that the same session of the All India Muslim League which adopted the Pakistan resolution also adopted a unanimous resolution on Palestine. It is also because of the fact that Pakistan has a spiritual affiliation with Palestine since the holy places of worship of Muslims are situated in Palestine, and the City of Jerusalem is its first focus (Qibla).

The President of Pakistan, General Mohammad Zia ul Haq, on the visit of the Palestine Liberation Organization leader, Mr. Yasser Arafat, to Pakistan in 1982, said that the brave and freedom-loving people of Palestine who made exemplary sacrifices for their just cause are greatly loved in Pakistan. He said that the only possible solution of the Middle East problem is that the rights of the Palestinians be restored without any further delay on the basis of the right of self-determination because a vast majority of the nations of the world have admitted this fact, that the only solution for the Middle East crisis is the restoration of the rights of Palestinians. It is quite clear that not only the Pakistanis, the Asian people, but a vast majority of the nations of the world consider that the Palestine problem holds a central place in the crisis of the Middle East. The Western countries in supporting the cause of Israel have their own ends in view in maintaining their influence in Asia and Africa. Rich oil tributaries and the Suez Canal were the biggest temptations which they could not afford to lose at any cost.

The following suggestions and recommendations are made for the solution of the problem of Palestine:

(1) World opinion should be mobilized to exert pressure on Israel to vacate all the occupied land, including Bait-ul-Maqdus;

(2) The Palestinians should be given a right to establish their independent State on the basis of the right of self-determination under the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO);

(3) The refugees should be allowed to go back to their homes and they should be suitably compensated for their losses;

(4) The resolutions of the United Nations should be faithfully implemented.

One of the main items of this meeting concerns the convening of an international conference on the Middle East issue, which shows that people the world over are very much concerned with its peaceful settlement. The core of the Middle East issue is the Palestinian question. Only by a just and rational settlement of the Palestinian issue and restoration of the national rights of the Palestinian people can there be a genuine peaceful settlement of the Middle East issue and lasting peace for this region.

I.

A promising opportunity

Recently a new factor has appeared in the developments of the Middle East--the dawn of a peaceful solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict including the Palestinian question. Therefore, some people believe that this is an opportune moment to solve the problem.

Recently, while persisting in its resistance against Israel, the Palestine Liberation Organization has been co-ordinating its stand with Jordan and other Arab countries for a peaceful settlement of the Middle East issue in an effort to open up a prospect for peaceful negotiations. Not long ago, the PLO and Jordan reached a five-point agreement on peaceful negotiations and called for an international conference with the participation of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council to bring about a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Palestinian question.

The Twelfth Summit Conference of the League of Arab States held at Fez, Morocco, in September 1982, adopted an eight-point resolution for the solution of the Middle East issue and the Palestinian question. This was the first time that the PLO and all Arab countries reached unanimity on this issue. The Fez Summit Conference expressed the principled stand of the Palestinian and other Arab peoples for a peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. In line with the resolution of the Fez Conference, the relevant resolutions of the Palestinian National Council and all United Nations Security Council and General Assembly resolutions on the Palestinian question, the PLO has reached a five-point agreement with Jordan. This reflects maximum flexibility and sincerity on the part of the PLO for peace. It is hoped that the five-point agreement will break the stalemate in the Middle East. As far as the PLO is concerned, it has made its greatest efforts.

II. Obstacles to peace

Despite the above-mentioned new factors in the Middle East situation, the road to peace is still full of obstacles, which come mainly from the Israeli authorities supported by the United States.

Israel clings to its old stand. The Israeli authorities' attitude toward the five-point agreement between the PLO and Jordan remains negative. Israel declared that it would hold negotiations directly only with Jordan and with those Palestinians "who are not holding weapons in their hands", that it would never negotiate with any joint delegation which includes the PLO, and still less would it agree to the establishment first of an independent Palestinian State and then of a confederation between Palestine and Jordan, as called for in the five-point agreement.

When the Likud was in power, Israel, after its withdrawal from the Sinai Peninsula, made it clear that it would not evacuate from other Arab territories. In contrast, it speeded up the establishment of Jewish settlements on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in an attempt to make the two places completely Israeli, and furthermore annexed east Jerusalem and the Golan Heights, and invaded Lebanon under the pretext of ensuring the "security" of its northern border. What Israel calls "security" is in fact a synonym for aggression and expansion.

After the general elections in Israel last year, the Labour Party and the Likud formed a coalition government. In the approach towards the occupied Arab territories and other questions, the Labour Party differs somewhat from the Likud, but not in substance. It voted for the Parliament bill to annex east Jerusalem, and the establishment of Jewish settlements started when Labour was in power. In the present coalition, the Labour Party's policy is somewhat different from that of the Likud, but it cannot break away from the latter's restraint. The Likud has all along persisted in its stand that the questions of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip can only be solved according to its interpretation of the Camp David accord, which meant direct Israeli-Jordanian negotiations (including representatives of the residents of the two places), so that Israel could perpetuate its occupation of the West Bank and Gaza while granting "self-determination" to the residents under Israeli rule. The Israeli response to the five-point agreement between the PLO and Jordan shows that the Labour Party does not, and cannot break away from the policy the Israeli Government has long been pursuing.

The United States has so far rejected dialogue with any joint delegation that includes the PLO. It deems that an international conference is "not a constructive step", which is a clear indication that its partiality to Israel remains unchanged. This brings disappointment.

III. Chinese public opinion

Following are the characteristics of the opinion expressed in Chinese papers and magazines, forums and lectures by experts on the Middle East problems

(1) The Chinese people suffered from imperialist aggression and oppression in the past. Sharing similar historical experiences, the Chinese people sympathize with the oppressed Palestinians and other Arab peoples in their sufferings. Therefore, Chinese public opinion has always given firm support to the Palestinian people's just struggle and their sole legitimate representative -- the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Chinese public opinion stands for a just and permanent settlement of the Middle East issue, the prerequisite of which includes: Israel must withdraw from all Arab territories occupied since 1967, including the Arab sector of Jerusalem; the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to return to their homeland, to exercise self-determination and to found a Palestinian State must be restored; and Palestine has the right to take part in the settlement of the Middle East issue as one party on an equal footing. Chinese public opinion expresses support for the Arab countries and the PLO to make all efforts through various means, including peaceful negotiations and political solutions, for the realization of its national rights.

(2) Chinese public opinion firmly denounces Israel's reactionary policies and has fully exposed Israel's scheme to occupy the West Bank and the Gaza Strip permanently. Israel has been setting up Jewish settlements continuously on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, totalling 204 by 1983. This operation has now halted temporarily only due to economic difficulties. Chinese public opinion emphasizes that Israel's act runs counter to resolution 446 (1979) of the United Nations Security Council, which affirmed that the settlements established by Israel in Palestine and other Arab territories occupied since 1967 are legally null and void and constitute a serious obstruction to achieving a comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East.

Chinese public opinion denounces Israel's annexation of the Arab sector of Jerusalem and the Golan Heights as a violation of the Geneva Treaty of 12 August 1949 on the Temporary Preservation of Peace. It calls on world opinion to denounce any Israeli action which may change substantially the legal status, the geographic and demographic nature of Arab territories including Jerusalem since 1967.

Chinese opinion denounces Israel's confiscation of the Palestinians' territory on the West Bank and its control of most of the water sources on which the local people's survival depends, pointing out that this is part of Israel's scheme to expel the local residents and occupy these places forever.

(3) Chinese public opinion criticizes the United States for conniving at and supporting Israeli aggression and establishing a strategic relationship with Israel. World public opinion has repeatedly pointed out that the international community must resolutely condemn the aggressive and expansionist policy of the Israeli authorities. The United States emphasizes only the right of existence of Israel and disregards the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people. This only serves to increase the arrogance of Israel in its aggression and expansion, and is detrimental to peace in the Middle East. This disappointing attitude of the United States naturally brings on criticisms from the Arab world, the Islamic community, non-aligned countries and the third world countries as a whole.

(4) Chinese opinion believes that the key to victory is unity within the PLO, between the PLO and the Arab nations, and among the Arab States. It points out that because of their different positions, there are some differences among them on certain questions. But they all belong to the same nationality, speak the same language, believe in the same religion and all suffer from Israeli aggression. Therefore they have the common task of recovering their lost territories. This lays the solid foundation for their unity in struggle.

The Chinese people have drawn a very important conclusion from their own experience, which is, victory can be won only by preserving and strengthening internal unity. Only thus can one bring one's own force into full play in struggle, and make better use of aid from external force for final victory. The Chinese opinion has

repeatedly expressed sincere hopes that the Palestine Liberation Organization and Arab countries will take the whole situation into account, make allowances for and support each other, achieve unanimity through consultations, and strengthen their solidarity.

The Chinese people have always shown great concern for unity among the Palestinian people, their sole legitimate representative the PLO, the Arab people and States. The Chinese people are deeply convinced that so long as they unite as one, adopt a realistic strategy and tactics, and persist in struggle, they are sure to achieve their goal someday no matter how tortuous the road of struggle may be.

(5) A peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict has become the common wish of people the world over. Chinese opinion has noted that the Middle East is a "hot spot" in the world. Any deterioration in the situation in this region endangers world peace. World opinion strongly calls for an early settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The majority of the Islamic, non-aligned and third world countries support the Palestinian and other Arab peoples in their just struggle, and demand that Israel withdraw from the occupied territories. The Venice Declaration made by the Western European countries also supports self-determination for the Palestinian people and stand for the peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. All this shows that the majority of countries and people in the world are aware that a just settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict is in keeping not only with the interests of the peoples of this region but also with those of people throughout the world.

(6) Chinese opinion calls on the international community to give still greater support to the just struggle of the Palestinian Liberation Organization and the Arab peoples and States. It notes with pleasure that the PLO has for a long time been making global diplomatic efforts for achieving its goal of struggle. The PLO is recognized as the only legitimate representative of the Palestinian people not only by all the States members of the Arab League, but also by more and more other countries in the world. At the same time, Chinese opinion has also noted that Israel still refuses to carry on any negotiations with the PLO. Chinese opinion deems it necessary to further mobilize world opinion to put strong moral pressure on Israel to make it accept the political reality in the Middle East. No negotiations on the Palestinian question can be held without the participation of the Palestinian people's only legitimate representative, the PLO, and nothing can be achieved even if such negotiations should take place.

In short, Chinese opinion believes that the key to achieving a just and lasting peace in the Middle East lies in the unity of the Palestinian people, the PLO and the Arab people and States in their struggle, and in the vigorous support of the justice-upholding peoples of the world. We firmly believe that with the peoples of the whole world united in a common effort to support Palestine and the Arab peoples, a just and rational solution of the Palestinian question will be reached.

Yilmaz Altug

Geographically, Palestine is an integral and inseparable part of the continent of Asia, but the origins of the Palestine question lie in Europe. This question arose out of the declaration at the end of the first Zionist Congress, held at Basle (Switzerland) in 1897, that the aim of Zionism was to create a home for the Jewish people in Palestine.

As early as 1900, the Ambassador of the Ottoman Empire at Berlin, Ahmet Tevfik Pasha, stated in a dispatch which he sent to Istanbul that the real aim of the Zionists was to make Jerusalem and its surroundings a large State with frontiers extending to the neighbouring countries.

At the same period Theodor Herzl, promoter of the Zionist movement, described the Asian dimension of the problem when he said that, for Europe, the Zionists would form in Palestine a barricade against Asia, and would act as the outpost of civilization against barbarism.

This same man went to Istanbul in 1902 and asked Sultan Abdulhamit II to allow the Jews to settle in Palestine in exchange for a large sum of money to cover the Empire's external debts. The Sultan promptly rejected the offer, saying that Palestine belonged to his people, and not to him.

Eventually, the First World War, the Balfour Declaration, the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire, the British Mandate, and Jewish immigration to Palestine prepared the ground in which the question of Palestine took root.

It is difficult to discern a specifically Asian position in this preliminary period. This is understandable, since at that time most of the continent was under the colonial domination of foreign Powers, Asia had no independent political identity and the Asian peoples had no means of expressing themselves freely.

Consequently, the Ottoman and Arab nationalist opposition to the Zionist designs supported by the European Powers also represented the Asian reaction.

The Palestinian question can be approached from various angles. But whatever the approach, the fundamental and constant aspect of the question is its colonial character. To the colonialist mentality of the early twentieth century it was simply a matter of offering a land to a people, without any regard for the rights and heritage of another people to whom the land belonged.

Asia has suffered deeply from other examples of this mentality. This creates a natural basis of solidarity and kinship between the Palestinian and Asian peoples.

As the Asian peoples have made progress in ridding themselves of the colonial obstacles which prevented them from being masters of their own fate, concrete signs of this solidarity have begun to emerge. In this connection, we may mention as an instructive example the Congress of Oppressed Nationalities held at Brussels in February 1927 on the initiative of the Asian leaders of the time. At this Congress, which was a meeting-place for peoples, not for Governments, the Palestinians and the Egyptians represented "Arabia".

In the era which began after the Second World War, while the Asian countries under foreign domination were beginning to regain their full independence, the process of depriving the Palestinian people of their most basic rights was completed. The fact that in 1947, 9 of the 11 Asian States represented at the United Nations voted against the plan for the partition of Palestine can be seen as a first and important Asian reaction to this alarming development.

In the 1950s, inter-Asian meetings at various levels, organized with a view to promoting continental co-operation, also provided an opportunity for demonstrating solidarity with the Palestinian people. In this connection, it may be recalled that, in its final declaration, the Colombo Conference held in April 1954 expressed grave concern about the suffering of the Arab refugees in Palestine and affirmed its desire for a just and speedy solution of the problem of Palestine. The Bandung Conference, which gave birth to the still valid principles of "third-worldism" and non-alignment, declared its support for the rights of the Arab people in Palestine. Although barely a year separated the two conferences, the difference in approach is remarkable.

There is a move from the concept of Arab refugees to that of the nation of the Palestinian people, from the expression of sympathy with suffering to the declaration of support for rights.

During the same period, a similar attitude is to be seen at the non-governmental level. The Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Organization adopted a negative attitude to Israel's attempts to participate, stating that it supported the Arab cause. Similarly the Israeli Labour Party did not achieve membership of the short-lived Organization of Asian Socialist Parties.

Today, despite minor variations from one country to another, Asia as a continent is firmly on the side of the supporters of the Palestinian cause. For the great majority of Asian peoples, the Palestinian cause recalls their own struggle to exercise their rights and obtain complete freedom. In a world whose dimensions have been greatly reduced by technological advances, there is a better understanding of the implications of the explosive situation in the Middle East - which is an integral part of Asia. It must also be said that the principles defended by the Palestinians and the Arab countries directly concerned in the conflict, which are endorsed by numerous resolutions adopted by the United Nations, are to a large extent based on concepts prepared and disseminated by the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, in the emergence of which Asia has played a major part.

The Palestinian question will be solved only when the injustices inflicted on the Palestinian people are remedied and the necessary conditions created for the free exercise by the Palestinian people of their legitimate and inalienable rights.

Public opinion, which is a popular form of expression going beyond the limits, sometimes imposed on Governments by reasons of State, is a most valuable source of support for advancing a cause. It is largely because of awareness on the part of world opinion that the Palestinians today enjoy a vast measure of international support. But this is not enough. There is still much to be done to rally the masses to the just struggle of the Palestinians to regain their rights.

In Asia, there is a large potential in this field. The best way of tapping it would undoubtedly be to establish effective channels of communication so that the mass media may be better informed of the true nature of the problem and of relevant developments. Equally important is the regular dissemination of Asian reactions to

other parts of the world.

Turkish public support for the Palestinian people in their struggle for their own homeland is evident from several statements by the President of the Republic of Turkey, Kenan Evren. On 3 December 1983, during an official visit to the Kingdom of Jordan, Evren made the following statement at a dinner offered in his honour by King Hussein Ban Talal:

"We are deeply disturbed by the unhappy fate of our Palestinian brothers. We have supported and shall always support their just cause. Further, the divisions separating the Arab countries and the division of the Palestinians among them is a sad development for us all. We must not forget that the problem of Palestine lies at the heart of the problem of the Middle East. The restitution of the usurped rights of the Arab and Palestinian peoples constitutes the essential pre-condition will necessitate evacuation of the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel in 1967 and recognition of the Palestinians' right to self-determination".

However, with conditions as they are today, events are moving in the opposite direction. Israel is engaged in consolidating its presence in and sovereignty over the occupied territories, changing the demographic structure of the territories by establishing new settlements, and presenting us with new faits accomplis. Although conditions might not be propitious, we must embark on a peace process in order to avert new crises and new divisions. In our view the re-establishment of Arab solidarity and mutual support is essential for a successful outcome. Evren, who participated in the Fourth Islamic Summit Conference held at Casablanca, made the following statement on 16 January 1984 before the plenary assembly:

"For centuries the Turkish people has played a major role in maintaining Jerusalem's Arab and Islamic identity and has firmly resisted Zionist pressure and designs on Palestinian territories. In 1947 the Republic of Turkey categorically rejected, in concert with the Arab countries, the plan for the partition of Palestine, thus demonstrating once again its historic responsibility for the Palestinian problem. Since that time Turkey has consistently defended the just cause of our Arab brothers".

The denial of the legal and inalienable rights of the Palestinian people underlies the problem of the Middle East. The situation which has arisen is a tragedy for mankind, in that millions of Palestinian refugees are suffering; it has also engendered continuing instability in the region. All those who are concerned with the problem, whether at first hand or more remotely, should bear this fundamental reality in mind. We believe it to be essential. Israel's unilateral change of Jerusalem's status, its policy of colonizing occupied Palestinian lands, its annexation of the Golan Heights and its invasion of Lebanon are all very dangerous developments. They are all elements in Israel's general strategy. The most effective countermeasure is to devise an effective countervailing strategy and for all concerned to pursue it.

The Peace Plan adopted at Fez in September 1982 at the Twelfth Arab Summit Conference drew the outlines of a general strategy. Israel's rejection of that Plan and the rather lukewarm reception the Plan was given by certain circles have in no way diminished its importance and value. But subsequent developments, especially in Lebanon, have diminished the impact of the Fez Plan. It is important to reach agreement on a plan, but it is also important to work unceasingly and resolutely in order to implement it. We believe that this conference will provide a valuable opportunity to stimulate all efforts towards that end.

The President of the Republic, on his return from Fez on 19 January 1984, made a statement to Turkish and foreign journalists at Esenboga airport, Ankara. The President reiterated the need for a counter-strategy in order to resist the faits accomplis which Israel continues to carry out. The President also declared that Turkey is ready to defend the just cause of the Palestinians today, just as it has been doing since the beginning of the conflict.

In conclusion, I should like to reaffirm that Turkey recognizes the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and fully supports their just cause in all international forums, in which Turkey has done its utmost to secure the participation of the Palestine Liberation Organization in the process aimed at resolving the question of Palestine.

3. The International Peace Conference on the Middle East, the need for such a conference; efforts and prospects to promote a successful outcome, and benefits thereof

Houssam Al-Khatib I. The need for such a conference

Despite the noble efforts that are being made by the United Nations, the constantly widening gap between the theoretical advancement of the question of Palestine in the United Nations and the sharp deterioration of the situation in the Middle East is astonishing. As from the 1970s onwards, the United Nations General Assembly in particular has been deeply preoccupied with the discussion of the different aspects of the problem of Palestine: the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, the human rights of the Palestinians under occupation, the legal status of the Palestine Liberation Organization, the Middle East conflict, the Israeli practices and infringement on international law, Israel's co-operation with the South African regime, Israel's aggression and military adventures, the plight of the Palestinians of the camps, the necessary social and sanitary conditions for them, relief and replacement, etc.

In fact, the convening of the International Conference on the Question of Palestine at Geneva has come as a coronation of all these efforts of the United Nations. Its wide attendance, its clear and categorical Declaration, its detailed recommendations, its full endorsement by the United Nations General Assembly (resolution 38/58 C of 13 December 1983), all these appearances gave the impression that the theoretical aspects of the question of Palestine have been fully examined and what remains is action in the field. The well-organized and painstaking efforts of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People has contributed, probably more than any other single factor, to the attainment of this peak in the General Assembly.

Unfortunately, the picture on the ground is quite different. It is almost the other phase of the moon. Israeli policies of aggression, expansion, oppression, violation of human rights, colonization, deportation, closure of academic institutions, alteration of the demographic and geographical nature of the occupied territories, collective punishment of villages and camps, etc. still continue as strong and ruthless as ever. (Does one need here detailed reference? Do not the successive resolutions of the United Nations on these subjects form a huge material that is very difficult to reference in detail? And is not this fact the best substantiation of what the recent paper has started with?) The Palestinians do not seem more protected after those series of resolutions. Their plight continues to acquire more and more tragic dimensions. Even geographically, those who were always the victims of only the air bombing have become in 1982 in Lebanon the target of direct tank and ground artillery, let alone massacre, demolition of homes and famine. Furthermore, the Palestine Liberation Organization, which has always been proud of its democratic integrity and its flexibility in dealing with ideological and political differences, has found itself, for the first time in its rather long history, victim of dividedness and perplexity. After all, what remains to be said to the Palestinian under occupation or his brother in diaspora? True, the Palestinians are not desperate at all in spite of all the suffering, but still they need someone to tell them when and how their tragedy will come to an end; they know the beginning but no one can tell them any word about the end. And around the Palestinians there are also the Arabs, at least those of the Golan Heights and South Lebanon. The same Israeli tactics are applied there, more destruction and more bloodshed, more violation of human rights, more tension, more threat to the area's peace and stability. In brief, the tragedy is taking everyday catastrophic dimensions.

At the same time there is real hard work in the United States for coping with the grave situation, but there are also obstacles which seem beyond control. The Security Council, which has the supposed power of action and which is looked upon as the source of hope for finding a way out of this cul de sac, seems to be the victim of its very own construction. The right of veto is concurrently being used by one super-Power in order to protect the aggressor from any sanctions in spite of the presence of a wide consensus over condemning its practices. By insisting that balance is needed and not justice, the United States veto obstructs all opportunities for United Nations action in the Middle East. By blocking the ways of international action it leaves room only for two options: either the Camp David style of institutionalizing the aggression and injustice or simply mere chaos.

Thus the idea of an international conference comes as a rescue from the present cul de sac. It is bitterly needed at least in order to keep international work going and to keep the door open for the exploration of the long contemplated just and durable peace. Whether the Conference will be a substitute for the lack of action on the

part of the Security Council or an extension of the existing phenomenon, nobody can tell. But still the matter is worth trying.

To conclude this section, it can be said that the international peace conference is needed for the following main reasons:

1. It comes naturally as a second step after the International Conference on the Question of Palestine held at Geneva and it is supposed to work for the rendering of the Geneva Declaration and recommendations into action.
2. It comes as a fresh experience in the exploration of the new horizons of international work for finding a just solution for the question of Palestine and for establishing durable peace in the Middle East.
3. It comes as a forum for the participation of all parties concerned on the highest level possible, on an equal footing and within arrangements hopefully free from the pre-imposed institutional bonds of the existing international bodies.
4. It comes as a new opportunity for bringing about more international concentration on the developments of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the continued deepening of the suffering of the inhabitants of the Palestinian and Arab occupied territories.
5. It also comes as a new mechanism for the intensification of the world public opinion campaign for peace in the Middle East and against policies of aggression and violation of international law as well as human rights.
6. Finally, the International Peace Conference on the Middle East is needed not only because of the continued aggravation of the situation in the Middle East but also because of the absence of any other concrete options for international work.

II. Objectives and substance

The Geneva Declaration states that the Conference is aimed at achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, an essential element of which would be the establishing of an independent Palestinian State in Palestine. ^{1/}

General Assembly resolution 38/58 C goes into detail in stating the provisions for the Conference. In these provisions the aims too are included. For the specific course of the recent discussion it seems necessary to have these provisions, or guidelines as they are called in the resolution, stated here. In fact, they summarize the major conclusions of the United Nations and other international bodies, such as the Inter-Parliamentary Union, regarding the conception of a peaceful settlement of the Middle East conflict. In paragraph 3 of resolution 38/58 C, the General Assembly:

"3. Welcomes and endorses the call for convening an International Peace Conference on the Middle East in conformity with the following guidelines:

- a) The attainment by the Palestinian people of its legitimate inalienable rights, including the right to return, the right to self-determination and the right to establish its own independent State in Palestine;
- (b) The right of the Palestine Liberation Organization, the representative of the Palestinian people, to participate on an equal footing with other parties in all efforts, deliberations and conferences on the Middle East;
- (c) The need to put an end to Israel's occupation of the Arab territories, in accordance with the principle of the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force, and, consequently, the need to secure Israeli withdrawal from the territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem;
- (d) The need to oppose and reject such Israeli policies and practices in the occupied territories, including Jerusalem, and any de facto situation created by Israel as are contrary to international law and relevant United Nations resolutions, particularly the establishment of settlements, as these policies and practices constitute major obstacles to the achievement of peace in the Middle East;
- (e) The need to reaffirm as null and void all legislative and administrative measures and actions taken by Israel, the occupying Power, which have altered or purported to alter the character and status of the Holy City of Jerusalem, including the expropriation of land and property situation thereon, and in particular the so-called 'Basic Law' on Jerusalem and the proclamation of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel;
- (f) The right of all States in the region to existence within secure and internationally recognized boundaries, with justice and security for all the people, the sine qua non of which is the recognition and attainment of the legitimate, inalienable rights of the Palestinian people as stated in subparagraph (a) above;"

The positions of the different States that have accepted the idea of the Conference do not move outside these guidelines despite the fact that some States lay more stress on certain guidelines and others seem to be selective or cautious according to their different positions. This is natural since the Conference is meant to provide an open opportunity for ideas and suggestions within the general context of the guidelines which have been repeatedly confirmed by the overwhelming majority at the General Assembly.

So the major task of the Conference is to achieve justice and peace in the Middle East according to the related United Nations resolutions.

III. Participation in the Conference

On the point of participation there is an atmosphere of international consensus. Paragraph 4 of General Assembly resolution 38/58 C reads:

"4. Invites all parties to the Arab-Israeli conflict, including the Palestine Liberation Organization, as well as the United States of America, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and other concerned States, to participate in the International Peace Conference on the Middle East on an equal footing and with equal rights".

The Geneva Declaration of 1983 is identical with this, and it takes the opportunity to stress the fact that the Conference is to be held under the auspices of the United Nations. ^{2/} This assertion is of great importance since the international peace conference is meant to be an extension of the United Nations efforts in this respect.

The United Nations remains the safest and most reliable framework for peace-making.

The above-mentioned paragraph 4 is quite clear on the matter of participation. The participation of the two super-Powers is indispensable. The "other concerned States" have been defined through a letter by the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Among the very few States that object to the idea of an international peace conference are Israel and the United States. Their objection is not related only to the idea of the conference but also to the participation of the Palestine Liberation Organization, which is considered by the United Nations and the world community as the representative of the people of Palestine.

It should always be stated - as it is rightly done in the United Nations literature on the question - that the PLO's full participation on an equal footing and with equal rights is a condition sine qua non for the success of any effort towards peace in the Middle East. Other participation problems should be settled also by the United Nations.

IV. The major predicament

Any consideration of the chances of success or failure for the international peace conference should take into consideration the categorically biased position of the United States not only against the Palestine Liberation Organization but also against the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. From the very beginning it should be remembered that the chances of convincing the United States to withdraw its objection to the participation of the PLO are rather slim. In this respect, it should not be forgotten that it was the negative position of the United States in the Geneva Peace Conference of December 1973 that made it possible for Israel to decide not to go to Geneva if the Palestinians were present. Moreover, the growing Israeli intransigence finds its roots in the absolute and unreserved backing of Israel by the United States on every conceivable level. This super-Power, which supposedly bears a great burden of responsibility in the international life of our era, has allowed itself both to be answerable for all those offences committed by its ally, Israel, and to stand in the way of justice by using the veto or other means in order to defend Israel, thus obstructing the will of international consensus. All this could have been relatively understood had the United States cared to use its influence on Israel for at least controlling or modifying the latter's inhuman attitude towards the Palestinians and the other Arabs under occupation. But, contrarily, what happens is that, even when a sort of difference between the positions of the two allies eventually emerges, the American position tends to bend towards the Israeli position. Take, for example, the retreating American attitude towards the settlement policy in the occupied territories or the principle of the necessity for Israel to pull out from the occupied territories with slight border modifications. In both cases phrases like "illegal and obstacle to peace" and "1967 borders" have now given way to languid phrasing which suggests that Israeli clinging to acquisition of land and to settlement policy may in the end convince the Arabs to exchange land (whose land?) for peace (peace for whom?).

Public statements, however, are not always the repositories of truth. Then let us turn to deeds and actual policies. The American aid to Israel has reached almost imaginary figures. It increases every year. It is coupled with a rise in the standard of technical military assistance. Israel now rates first among other countries both in the amount of aid received from the United States and the size of per capita aid. The estimated figure of total United States official aid to Israel in 1984 amounts of \$3 billion and a half, which means that each Israeli citizen has received in 1984 something like \$1,000; whereas the figure in Egypt, for example, hardly amounts to \$40.

The American arms supplies have played a major role in creating Israel's modern war machine. Israel's war machine costs are clearly far beyond the State's economic means. Israel's overall mobilization resources include 450,000 men. They are armed with the modern sophisticated American weaponry. The United States Government declares always that it wants to keep Israel stronger than the whole bulk of the Arab States.

One can go on endlessly to enumerate the huge American military aids to Israel from the war industry to the technological and communication assistance, to the question of the nuclear weapons, to the field assistance during the military clashes, etc. But this is not the major topic of the recent paper. Moreover, relations between States are in principle a matter of their own concern. But here we face a case wherein the aid of a super-Power is used by its ally to commit more offences against other peoples and to obstruct and defy international work for peace. Worse still is the fact that on the few occasions when the United States tried to make a connection between the flow of its aid to Israel and the latter's conduct in the area it failed to keep up its policies, and in several cases tended to take the direction of appeasing the aggressor. It is well known, for example, that the first official accord between the United States and Israel was signed on 30 November 1981, i.e. just after the intensified Israeli air raids on both Beirut and the Palestinian refugee camps around the Lebanese capital. Ironically, the accord was called the "Memorandum of Mutual Understanding in the Field of Strategic Co-Operation". Less than one year after the Israeli occupation of Lebanon in 1982, and despite some official American objections to its bulk (not to its principle), an annex to the Memorandum was signed in 1983. To all appearances, and in spite of all Israeli practices against international law and human rights, Washington seems to be determined to lay greater and greater emphasis on the special nature of United States-Israeli relations, militarily, politically and economically, and also to seek the most effective forms of such a partnership.

Any realistic preparation for the International Peace Conference on the Middle East must cope with this situation. An examination of the bearing of this partnership on the cause of peace in the Middle East leads one to believe that the problem of the United Nations' disability to put into effect its resolutions does not lay in the structure of the Organization but in the political position of one super-Power. Will the peace conference be able to find a way out? All means of work should be explored and tried, including international, political and media pressure. This is a vital issue, and if efforts achieve no success in this respect there lies the danger of running out of time and confining the conference to public opinion and media activity instead of concrete action.

V. International action, not "sit and talk" style

Another aspect of the United States policy which any international work for peace is destined to cope with is this super-Power's activity in the Middle East, and probably outside that area, towards acting as a mediator for peace agreements which take little notice of the United Nations' efforts and moral authority. Here the interests of both the United States and Israel combine to make the Middle East a zone of influence. The oppressed is told to just sit with the oppressor and talk without any conditions. In the first place this means that the land acquired by the use of force belongs to the occupying Power, who can exchange it for other privileges. The Camp David accords and the Israeli Egyptian Treaty that followed in 1979 are an example of what is hidden for the Palestinians and the Arab area. The Palestinians were denied even the self-rule that was stated in the accords. The Arabs were divided and weakened. The Americans were stationed in Sinai and the Israelis condensed their military action against the Palestinians, the Syrians and the Lebanese.

It might be useful here to listen to an official Syrian argument in this regard. The Syrian letter of acceptance of the principle of the International Peace Conference states the following:

"The events that have occurred in the Middle East region have demonstrated that partial and piecemeal solutions cannot lead to the establishment of a comprehensive, just and durable peace in the region. The situation has become even more complex and explosive and Israel is committing one aggression after another without hindrance and in defiance of the United Nations Charter and international law.

"It is now clear that the policy of force and fait accompli which Israel has been pursuing, with the unlimited support of the United States of America, is the main obstacle to the conclusion of a just and comprehensive peace in the region." ^{3/}

Day after day it becomes clear that to bring the oppressed to accept the conditions of the aggressor is not peace-making. But, whatever one's opinion may be regarding Camp David policy style, it is clear that if the United States made the same efforts within the framework of the United Nations the results would be more balanced and even more applicable and durable. Furthermore, no wisdom seems to be latent in keeping a super-Power like the Soviet Union outside any peaceful effort or in telling the countries of Europe, who have kept always traditional relations with the Middle East and whose security is tightly connected with that of the area, that they have nothing to do with peace-making efforts in that particular area, or in excluding China or any other State that wishes to share the responsibility of peace-making.

Finally, nothing brings balance, justice and durability like international action. Peace needs balance and probably guarantees. These guarantees cannot be the responsibility of any singly Power; it is an international responsibility within the framework of the United Nations. Only in this case can guarantees be "guaranteed" not to become signposts for exerting power influence. All parties concerned should concentrate their efforts to lead the International Peace Conference to success. All efforts outside the framework of the United Nations run the danger of expediency and may even jeopardize international action for peace.

VI. Main recommendations

1. The International Peace Conference is needed at least for the following main reasons:

- (a) It comes naturally as a second step after the International Conference on the Question of Palestine held at Geneva and it is supposed to work for the rendering of the Geneva Declaration and recommendations into action.
- (b) It comes as a fresh experience for the exploration of new horizons of international work for finding a just solution for the question of Palestine and subsequently for establishing durable peace in the Middle East.
- (c) It comes as a forum for the participation of all parties concerned on the highest level possible, on an equal footing and within arrangements free from the pre-imposed institutional bonds of the existing international bodies (no veto at least).
- (d) It comes as a new opportunity for bringing about more international concentration on the development of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the continued deepening of the suffering of the inhabitants of the Palestinian and Arab occupied territories.
- (e) It also comes as a new mechanism for the intensification of the world public opinion campaign for peace in the Middle East and against policies of aggression and violation of international law as well as human rights.

2. The major task of the Conference is to achieve justice and peace in the Middle East, to restore the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and to work out a just solution for the question of Palestine and the Arab-Israeli conflict in all aspects.

3. More careful effort should be exerted for: defining the parties concerned and for ensuring their positive participation in the International Peace Conference. The participation of the Palestine Liberation Organization is a condition sine qua non. Special efforts should be exerted in order to remove the United States objection to PLO participation and to secure a positive and wholehearted participation on its part.

4. All parties concerned are called upon to create an atmosphere of positiveness, to exert all efforts possible in order to secure the success of the Conference and to refrain from any activities that may have a negative bearing on the work of the Conference, namely, partial settlements and arrangements outside the framework of the United Nations. It should always be stressed that the peace conference is held under the auspices of the United Nations and within the context of its Charter and related resolutions.

Notes

^{1/} Report of the International Conference on the Question of Palestine, Geneva, 29 August-7 September 1983) (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.83.I.21), p. 2.

^{2/} Ibid., p. 2.

^{3/} A/39/416-S/16708 of 22 August 1984.

Phan Anh

On behalf of the Vietnamese Committee for the Defence of World Peace, we reiterate our firm and unswerving support for the struggle of the Palestinian people and other Arab peoples to achieve their just cause and their inalienable right in the face of imperialism and the Israeli aggressors.

In order to assist the Palestinian people in their struggle to realize their national rights and to restore peace, a just and lasting peace in the Middle East, we feel it is urgent to convene an international conference on the basis of the following considerations.

I.

The need to convene an international conference for a just, complete and lasting solution of the Palestinian question in order to ensure peace and security in the Middle East:

(a) The current situation is ripe for such an international conference, because of the long continuation of the crisis, which for several generations has imposed on the Palestinian people the unspeakable sufferings and sacrifices caused by the aggressors; because of the need to avert the serious repercussions of this crisis on the Middle East, the Arab world and the peace of the whole region, regional repercussions which could degenerate into a world conflagration; and because of the attempts to achieve separate and partial settlements along the lines of the Camp David agreement and the Lebanese-Israeli agreement have been a resounding failure and have merely prolonged and aggravated the situation and the sufferings of the Arab peoples.

(b) The experience through which the Vietnamese and other peoples have lived proves that the imperialists and the forces of reaction have never on their own initiative renounced their selfish interests, and that they never give ground unless the peoples intensify their struggle on all fronts, military, political and diplomatic, in order to deal them well-deserved blows. Consequently, all wars of aggression must be combatted not only on the spot by the victims themselves, but also by the entire international community, whose opinion takes shape in the information media and in international forums and seminars leading to international conferences. These conferences end in the triumph of the just cause and the rule of law, and are an effective means of achieving that end. Such conferences include the 1954 Geneva International Conference on Indo-China, which brought to fruition the right of self-determination of the Vietnamese, Lao and Kampuchean peoples and ended the French colonial war, and the 1973 Paris Conference, which reaffirmed the national rights of the Vietnamese people to independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity, rights that had been violated by the United States in its aggression against Viet Nam. This Conference, culminating in the Paris Agreement, justified the patriotic struggle of the Vietnamese people for the realization of their national rights.

II.

Conditions for the success of such an international conference:

(a) The principle of all dialogues and all negotiations is the enjoyment of the right of full equality between the two sides. The convening of a conference in the absence of one directly interested party, especially the principal party, is misguided and runs counter to the very principle of the conference. The holding of such a conference, in the absence of a principal party in order to undermine the determination of a people in its just struggle, and thereby to achieve the aim of domination by non-military means, is not only misguided; it is a fraudulent, immoral act. The result achieved by such a means is doomed to failure.

(b) The experience of Viet Nam has proved this truth. During the French colonial war, the French Government obstinately denied the existence of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam, its main adversary, describing our State as a puppet at the United Nations. At the 1954 Geneva Conference, however, the French delegation was obliged to participate on an equal footing with the delegation of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam. The experience at the 1973 Paris Conference was the same: the Government of the United States and the puppet regime in Saigon were obliged to appear face to face with the Government of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam and the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Viet Nam.

(c) Thus, in law and in fact, the presence of the PLO at any conference on Palestine is an undeniable necessity. Without the presence of the PLO, any conference or any talks would be no more than a monologue, a farce staged to deceive public opinion so as to impose a dictated settlement on the Palestinian people, who in their struggle are defending not only their just cause but that of the Arab peoples and of peoples fighting for their national independence, freedom and a just and lasting peace in the world.

(d) In addition to the PLO, the principal party, attendance at the Conference should take account of the geographical and political realities of the question of Palestine. In this connection the proposal by the Soviet Union of 29 July 1984, supported by many countries, represents a just and realistic initiative. The Conference would bring together the two main adversaries: the PLO and Israel, neighbouring countries (Syria, Jordan, Egypt and Lebanon), and the USSR and the United States, the former co-chairmen of the International Conference on the Middle East. In addition, a number of other countries of the region could, by common accord, be invited.

III.

Efforts to be undertaken to convene the Conference: the idea of such a conference is gaining increasing favour with world public opinion and support from many interested countries. To make it a reality it will be necessary to act quickly, and to mobilize public opinion through the mass media, conferences, seminars, and regional, political and parliamentary forums, so as to exert pressure on Governments. Further we have the right to call upon the United Nations to assume its responsibilities at every level, and particularly to ensure that the Security Council take effective measures to convene such a conference.

In our view, success will require heightened solidarity on the part of peace- and justice-loving forces, which constitute a decisive factor for victory. In our struggle we have conquered the enemy and won peace through solidarity, achieving national unity within our country and international support from peace- and justice-loving peoples throughout the world - the socialist countries, the forces of national independence, and the forces of democracy and peace in all other countries.

On the basis of the above considerations, we may summarize our position as follows.

The Vietnamese Committee for the Defence of World Peace:

(a) Reiterates its firm support for the Palestinian people in their struggle, under the leadership of the PLO, for their inalienable rights against imperialism, Zionism and other reactionary forces in the world, and affirms its unswerving support for all efforts to strengthen solidarity within the PLO and among the Arab countries with the just cause of the Palestinian people and the peoples of the Middle East.

(b) Condemns United States imperialism and the Israeli aggressors for their aggression against the Palestinian people and the other Arab peoples and denounces imperialism and other reactionary forces which, by imposing a separate settlement on the Middle East that would benefit the interests of the United States and Israel alone, are again manoeuvring to divide and undermine the solidarity of the Palestinian people and other Arab peoples.

(c) Demands the complete and unconditional withdrawal of Israeli troops from Palestinian territory and the occupied Arab territories, including Jerusalem, to enable the Palestinian people to attain their right to self-determination and establish a Palestinian State on their native soil.

(d) Recognizes the PLO as the sole authentic representative of the Palestinian people, fully competent to participate on a basis of equality in international talks, negotiations and conferences on the question of Palestine and the Middle East, as well as at the United Nations and other forums, in accordance with United Nations decisions aimed at finding a satisfactory, comprehensive and lasting solution to the hostilities in the Middle East and at preserving peace and security in the region; and supports the initiative of the Soviet Union and other countries aimed at convening an international conference on the Middle East, the time being ripe for the convening of such a conference with the participation of the PLO.

(e) Welcomes the support and material and moral assistance of peace-loving and progressive forces throughout the world for the just cause of the Palestinian people.

Eduardo Faleiro

I am deeply grateful for this opportunity of addressing the Seminar organized by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People in this beautiful city of Beijing. I bring to the Government and the friendly people of China as well as to all participants the greetings and good wishes of Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, Prime Minister of India and current Chairman of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, whom I have the honour to represent.

The question of Palestine was a mandate-responsibility of the League of Nations which was explicitly returned in 1947 to its successor organization, the United Nations. In a real sense of the term, one of the "Sacred trusts of humanity", the question of Palestine represents a continuing moral responsibility of the highest order to all who cherish the goals and principles of the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The question of Palestine is central to the future of the

United Nations, and a major test of the credibility of this world Organization. Today, as we enter the fortieth year of the existence of the United Nations, it is pertinent to analyse how far this sacred task has been discharged, what have been the major obstacles in its fulfilment, and what is the plight of the people most brutally

uprooted from their homeland, and sacrificed as pawns in the power play of international politics.

Palestine is ultimately something more than a piece of real estate with special geo-political importance. It is a corner of the globe endowed with meaning - the land of prophets, the cradle of Judaism and Christianity, and Islam - these great religions of the world. Political geography has accentuated conflict and protracted it in and around Palestine.

It is not necessary to delve into the contours of the Palestinian problem, in terms of its historical, political and military dimensions. This has been done often enough before. India's own sympathy for the people of Palestine, and support for the establishment of a Palestinian State, are rooted in our awareness of the historical, territorial and national identity of the Palestinians. Even during the days of our struggle for national independence, our leaders identified themselves with the Palestine cause and raised their voices in support of the establishment of an independent Palestinian homeland. The continuing struggle of the brave Palestinians has evoked sympathy and understanding among the people of India to this day. The decision to partition Palestine was taken in the same year as India became independent. India secured its independence, but the people of Palestine were banished from their own lands. Many countries since then have also become free and are now masters of their own destinies. However, the Palestinians not only remain homeless, but even more of their lands have since been occupied. May I recall the words of the late Prime Minister of India, Srimati Indira Gandhi, in her address to the Seventh Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries in New Delhi. She said and I quote: "We are of one mind in our support for the brave, homeless and much harassed Palestinian people. Israel feels free to commit any outrage, unabashed in its aggression, unrepentant about its transgressions of international law and behaviour. But can it forever obstruct the legitimate rights of Palestinians?"

India has consistently advocated that a just and comprehensive solution to the problems of West Asia should comprise the exercise by the Palestinian people of their inalienable national and human rights, including the right to establish an independent State in their homeland, the total and unconditional withdrawal by Israel from all Arab territories occupied since 1967, including the Holy City of Jerusalem, and a guarantee for all States in the region, including Palestine, to live within secure and recognized borders. In our view, the Palestinians have a right to return to their homes and property in Palestine, from which they have been mercilessly displaced and uprooted. Their right to self-determination should be exercised without any external interference and, like other States in the region, the State of Palestine should be enabled to live in peace and security and follow its own domestic and foreign policies. An essential prerequisite for the attainment of a peaceful solution is the full and equal participation of the Palestine Liberation Organization, the only genuine representative of the Palestinian people, in any discussions relating to their future and indeed the future of the entire region.

Writing in the 1950s, the renowned Egyptian scholar Charles Issawi spoke of four constant features of the West Asian scene - one of physical geography, one of combined physical and human geography and two of culture.

The first constant he underlined was the fact that Egypt and Syria formed the natural boundary between the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean, between Europe and the farther East. The impact of technology and communication has not negated this constant. To this geographic factor he has added the historical factor of the role played by Egypt and Syria as well as by a prosperous and dynamic Mesopotamia. The third constant was cultural - the social cohesion produced by Islam and, finally, the immense religious significance of Jerusalem.

Issawi's analysis is in many respects relevant even today. Indeed, the parallelism he drew between the Crusades and the current crises in the Near East is all too relevant if we remember that all movements begin as mystique and end as politics. Both the Crusades and Zionism drew their original impetus from a yearning for Jerusalem, and both resulted in the establishment of a State in the historic land of Palestine without regard to the essential character or contemporary yearning of the indigenous population. Yet these intrusions were successful mainly because of different approaches adopted by, and disunity among, the Arab States themselves. It is useful at this juncture of history to quote from Runciman's History of the Crusades. The political thrust, he said, was "founded by a blend of religious fervor and adventurous land-hunger. But if it was to endure healthily, it could not remain dependent upon a steady supply of men and money from the West. It must justify its existence economically. This could only be done if it came to terms with its neighbours. If they were friendly and prosperous it too would prosper. But to seek amity with the Moslems seemed a complete betrayal of Crusader ideals; and the Moslems for their part could never reconcile themselves to the presence of an alien and intrusive State in lands that they regarded as their own. Their dilemma was less painful, for the presence of the Christian colonists was not necessary for their trade with Europe, however convenient it might be at times".

Are we not facing a similar situation mutatis mutandis today also? As in history, will the West eventually lose interest in purely propping up Israel as an artificial island amidst an ocean of enemies or would it take the larger view of history and work in consonance rather than contrary to the forces of history? That is the challenge.

This Seminar focuses on one of the most important aspects of the problem, i.e. the proposed International Peace Conference on the Middle East. Today, after 36 years of United Nations action, the question of Palestine remains as tangled as ever before, with the major protagonists in the field remaining as far apart as they were in the beginning of the United Nations involvement on this issue. Yet peace in West Asia and indeed world peace and security depends on a satisfactory solution of this problem.

The attempt by the international community to convene an international conference on the Middle East was propelled by a sense of urgency, by an awareness raised to a level of revulsion over the continued violation of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to and in their ancient homeland. These efforts by the international community to find a comprehensive solution of the problem of the Middle East received a fresh impetus at the International Conference on the Question of Palestine in 1983 which adopted the Geneva Declaration. Speaking at the inauguration of the Conference, the Secretary-General of the United Nations stated:

"As you are aware, the question of Palestine has engaged the attention of the United Nations almost since the inception of the Organization. No other international problem has claimed more of the time and attention of the world Organization. Today, 36 years after the United Nations first addressed the problem, I regret to say that we are no nearer a solution than we were then... This Conference, convened at the request of the General Assembly of the United Nations, is the latest step in the many efforts made in the search for a solution of the question of Palestine. It is the General Assembly's hope that this Conference will help to create better awareness of the issues involved, and promote government and non-government support for effective ways and means to enable the Palestinian people to exercise its inalienable rights."

At its thirty-eighth session, the General Assembly, by resolution 38/58 C, adopted by an overwhelming majority, endorsed the Geneva Declaration on Palestine and its call for the convening of an international peace conference on the Middle East. The Geneva Declaration had envisaged that the proposed peace conference, to be convened under the auspices of the United Nations, with the participation of all parties to the Israeli conflict, including the PLO as well as the United States, the USSR and concerned States on an equal footing, would take as its basis the internationally recognized guidelines endorsed at the International Conference on the Question of Palestine. These guidelines include:

- (a) The attainment by the Palestinian people of its legitimate inalienable rights, including the right to return, the right to self-determination and the right to establish its own independent State in Palestine;
- (b) The right of the Palestine Liberation Organization, the representative of the Palestinian people, to participate on an equal footing with other parties in all efforts, deliberations and conference on the Middle East;
- (c) The need to put an end to Israel's occupation of the Arab territories, in accordance with the principle of the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force, and, consequently, the need to secure Israeli withdrawal from the territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem;

(d) The need to oppose and reject such Israeli policies and practices in the occupied territories, including Jerusalem, and any de facto situation created by Israel as are contrary to international law and relevant United Nations resolutions, particularly the establishment of settlements, as these policies and practices constitute major obstacles to the achievement of peace in the Middle East;

(e) The need to reaffirm as null and void all legislative and administrative measures and actions taken by Israel, the occupying Power, which have altered or purported to alter the character and status of the Holy City of Jerusalem, including the expropriation of land and property situated thereon, and in particular the so-called "Basic Law" on Jerusalem and the proclamation of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel;

(f) The right of all States in the region to existence within secure and internationally recognized boundaries, with justice and security for all the people, the sine qua non of which is the recognition and attainment of the legitimate, inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

The General Assembly had requested the Secretary-General, in consultation with the Security Council, urgently to undertake preparatory measures to convene the Conference and to report to the General Assembly no later than 15 March 1984 on his efforts. We are indeed grateful to the Secretary-General for initiating a process of consultations with the members of the Security Council and with other concerned States for the convening of the proposed International Peace Conference. India had conveyed broad agreement with the plan of action proposed by the Secretary-General. We had however suggested that some flexibility be retained in the selection of participants for the Conference. On the time framework for the convening of the Conference, it was our view that the situation in West Asia did not brook

any delay and urgent preparatory measures should be undertaken so that the Conference can be convened at the earliest possible time. While most of the States consulted have indicated their agreement to the proposed Conference, we deeply regret that some others have not found it possible to do so.

In his report on the situation in the Middle East contained in document A/39/600-S/16792, the Secretary-General of the United Nations stated, and I quote "The history of the Arab-Israeli conflict in the Middle East and of the Palestine question has thus been a long record of missed opportunities punctuated by wars and violence that have only served to complicate the situation further and to create new misery and new obstacles to peace." Indeed the time has come to pursue with determination our search for ways and means to remedy the injustice done to the Palestinian people and to find an early solution to the tragic conflict. The negative attitude of a handful of States to the proposed Peace Conference has led the Secretary-General to conclude that the conditions required for convening the proposed Conference with any chance of success are not met at the present time.

The Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, from its inception, has consistently advocated a comprehensive solution of the question of Palestine, the core of the Middle East problem and the root cause of the Arab-Israeli conflict. It was at the initiative of the non-aligned countries that the majority of United Nations resolutions on the subject have been adopted. In the past years, the non-aligned countries have been particularly active in mobilizing international support against Israeli action in occupied territories and its invasion of Lebanon. The non-aligned countries have also reaffirmed their firm opposition to the Israeli practices and policies in occupied Arab and Palestinian territories and called for the withdrawal of Israel from the occupied Syrian Golan Heights. At the Seventh Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries, held at New Delhi in March 1983, this question was exhaustively examined. Fundamental principles for the solution of the problem were again reaffirmed. The Heads of State and Government affirmed, and I quote: "...that a just and durable peace in the Middle East cannot be established without the total and unconditional withdrawal of Israel from all Palestinian and other Arab territories occupied by it since 1967, including Jerusalem, and without the achievement of a just solution of the problem of Palestine on the basis of the attainment and exercise in Palestine of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the right ... to establish the Palestinian Independent State in its homeland, Palestine."

The Committee of Eight on Palestine, set up by the New Delhi summit conference "to work with the various forces influential in the Middle East for the achievement of a just, durable and comprehensive peace in the region" has endeavoured during the year to implement the mandate entrusted to it by the summit. The Committee has maintained its contacts with representatives of various States and with the Secretary-General of the United Nations to pursue the goal of the early convening of the Peace Conference. The search for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East and active support for and solidarity with our Palestinian brothers has been a fundamental feature of the Movement. The Committee met in October 1984, again in New Delhi at the Ministerial level, and decided to continue its active role in this direction and to spare no effort in support of the inalienable rights of the Arab Palestinian people in accordance with international law and the will of the non-aligned countries and their peoples.

As a member of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, India has fully supported the Committee in its efforts to secure the rights of the Palestinian people and to promote their cause. Though the basic recommendations of the Committee have remained unimplemented so far, its activities during the year have served to increase the support of the international community to the cause of Palestine.

It is well known that the primary reason for the lack of progress in finding a comprehensive solution is the arrogance and intransigence of Israel, which has deliberately defied the will of the international community, as well as the lack of political will among some important Member States. We appeal to all members of the international community to display statesmanship and join in the effort to find a speedy and just solution to the problem based on the principles enunciated by the United Nations and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries. As a first urgent step, we urge them to strive for the discontinuation of the Israeli policy of settlements and call for an immediate freeze on new settlements and dismantling of those already established. At the same time continued Israeli occupation of Lebanon is totally unacceptable. We all want to see a sovereign, independent and united Lebanon. This calls for the withdrawal of all foreign forces. Side by side, increased and sustained efforts, and an initiation of a new process towards a just, durable and comprehensive settlement of the question of Palestine through peaceful means, have become a matter of highest priority. It is essential to realize that the path of confrontation, rejection and war cannot lead to any solution, and that the only hope for a viable and mutually acceptable settlement lies with negotiation and accommodation.

And yet, despite these negative developments, there is reason for optimism. Non-aligned solidarity with Palestine's nationalism and aspiration; has remained steadfast. The right of the Palestinian people and the role of the Palestine Liberation Organization have come increasingly to be widely recognized, even in non-traditional quarters. Western European States had joined the overwhelming majority of the international community in ensuring Israel regarding its settlements policy, violation of basic human rights and attempts to make Jerusalem its capital. Many of them have also underlined the necessity of associating the Palestine Liberation Organization in any negotiation for a solution of the problem. Mobilization of international public awareness of the true nature of the Palestine problem and of Israel's barbarous policies has much to do with this gradual evolution of positions, and credit should go to the untiring efforts of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People towards increasing the support of the international community for the cause of Palestine.

No people as determined and steadfast in achieving their legitimate rights as the brave Palestinians can be subdued indefinitely. Under the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization, their sole and authentic representative, Palestinians have repeatedly demonstrated their bravery and heroism in resisting Israel's settler colonialism and state terrorism, notwithstanding the tremendous cost in terms of human lives and resources. Their struggle may be protracted and bloody, but we have no doubt whatsoever of their final victory. If, through these seminars and the mobilization of international public opinion, we can contribute to making their struggle a little shorter and reducing their sacrifices ever so little, we would have done something worthwhile.

I would like to take this opportunity of underlining India's solidarity with and support to the heroic struggle of the Palestinian people under the Palestine Liberation Organization. Speaking at a dinner hosted in the honour of Chairman Arafat in March 1980 in New Delhi, the late Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, said and I quote: "... Our sympathy for the Palestinian Arabs has been a part of independent India's foreign policy from its very inception. Even in the 1930s when we ourselves were struggling for freedom, Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru spoke out against the injustices to which Arabs, and Palestinians in particular, were subjected. Thus our support for the Palestinian cause has been time-tested and consistent. ... The plight of Palestinians has been one of the tragedies of history. Few people have been more systematically oppressed and humiliated in their own land. I hope - indeed I am sure - this will change soon, and that achievement will be the key to harmony in West Asia. The PLO has striven to provide its people as distinct and forceful identity.

There are new developments which are taking place continuously in West Asia. Power politics and partnerships based on temporary political alignments have imposed certain new constraints on the feasible alternatives open to the international community for a political resolution of this problem. These do not, however, gainsay the need for urgent new initiatives to unfreeze the situation. The world community cannot afford, however, to ignore certain basic requirements which will have to be fulfilled if lasting peace is to be ushered into West Asia. Such a lasting peace must also result in realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. The basic requirements of a political settlement are:

- (1) An international peace conference would seem to be the only viable mechanism to establish the process for ensuring a lasting peace in West Asia.
- (2) The participation of the permanent members of the Security Council, countries directly involved and other States that have traditionally played an important role in this question is necessary for such a process to succeed.
- (3) The representation of the Palestinian people now embodied in the PLO, which is its sole and authentic representative, must be provided for. This must be accompanied by acceptance on the part of all States that only the granting of independence to, and realization of the national aspirations of, the Palestinians can resolve this problem in the long term. Any short-term fix based on makeshift temporary formulae would not ensure lasting peace.
- (4) There must be a recognition of the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territories by force. Israel's withdrawal from all occupied Arab and Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem, is a pre-condition of any resolution of the question.
- (5) Finally, the right of all States in the region to existence within secured and internationally recognized boundaries, with justice and security for all people, must be recognized.

The aims of an international conference should be to work out legally binding agreements which will combine in an organically interrelated fashion the various components of a settlement, namely, the question of withdrawal of Israeli troops from all occupied Arab territories, ensuring the realization to the Palestinian people of their legitimate national rights, including the right to an independent State of their own, the right of Palestinians to return to their homeland and the establishment of peace between all the States of the region and means to ensure their independent development in an atmosphere of peace and security without interference or intervention by outside powers. The above elements could be combined by effective guarantees of compliance by the parties involved. Obviously, arrangements such as those suggested would have to be worked out in an integrated package. Any piecemeal approach has the danger of upsetting vital balances and would endanger the prospects of an overall settlement.

In the course of my comments earlier on, I had drawn attention to the parallelism between the current conflict and historical pressures in earlier times on the States of the area. An important prerequisite to any solution of the problems of West Asia is unity among the Arab States themselves. The solidarity expressed in the

statements of the non-aligned countries needs to be implemented in specific terms while addressing details of the negotiating process. This is a historic responsibility for the Arab nation as a whole. I have no doubt that it will respond with a sense of responsibility and with imagination to the occasion. I am also sure that the United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, which has organized this Seminar, will in its activities contribute to this ultimate objective to break the present impasse and launch a new chapter in the history of this region.

Tajol Rosli Mohamed Ghazali

Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

I would like first of all to thank the Committee for the invitation extended to me to participate as one of the panelists in the Seminar. I would like also to take this opportunity to congratulate the Committee for the effort and hard work to make this Seminar a success.

Mr. Chairman, the Palestinian question is the core of the Middle East problem, a problem that has not only beset the region but the whole world for more than three decades. Unless positive steps are taken to solve the Palestinian problem, to overcome the pain and agony, peace in the Middle East will continue to elude us. The search for peace in the Middle East is the continuing responsibility of the international community. It will be a search for peace that relates to humanity as a whole.

Events have proved that peace in the Middle East cannot be left to the big Powers alone, nor can it be found with the involvement of a handful of countries only. Given its dimension and its wider implication the Palestinian problem needs global or international attention. And for that matter there has been a broad-based accord on the need to convene an international peace conference on the Middle East. This is reflected specifically in the United Nations General Assembly's resolution 38/58 C, and in the resolutions of many other international fora.

The preparatory meeting of the Asia Pacific Region held in Kuala Lumpur had laid down the framework for the International Conference on the Question of Palestine. Indeed the Meeting, in which 40 countries participated, collectively and unanimously agreed to this approach and this was further endorsed by the International Conference on the Question of Palestine, held in Geneva in 1983.

To this end therefore the Security Council must continue to assume the role as well as the international commitment to the realization of the international conference in an effort to achieve a comprehensive settlement of the Palestinian problem. It is precisely the moral and legal duty of the international community to correct the injustice which has befallen the Palestinian people on the one hand and eliminate the attendant increased insecurity that has plagued all countries in that part of the world on the other.

We have witnessed that the attitude of the big Powers, which, instead of using their power and influence for a positive contribution towards a comprehensive peace settlement, has inhibited and obstructed the search for a just and durable settlement because they have given priority to their respective strategic interests. Added to that is the intransigent attitude of Israel towards peace, her indifference towards international opinion and her complete disregard of the United Nations' resolutions. And this is being done with impunity because of the selfish attitude of the big Powers.

Mindful of that, of the failure or partial success of various efforts before, and of the ever-increasing danger confronting world peace resulting from this unresolved question, the international community now realizes that the Middle East problems need to be tackled globally and urgently.

There is no doubt about the apparent helplessness of the international community in trying to find a comprehensive solution to the Palestinian problem. However, in spite of that and the unwillingness of some countries to join in a global search for peace, the international community must persevere and must exert greater effort towards convening an international conference to resolve the Palestinian problem.

Meanwhile the conflict in the Middle East has continued, with countless suffering befalling the Palestinian people. Israel not only refuses to acknowledge the fundamental and national rights of the Palestinian people but does so through suppression of even basic human rights. Israel not only continues to occupy Arab lands but at the same time adopts a policy of expansion and annexation. It has now become the policy of Israel not only to deny the Palestinian people their rights but also to disperse and annihilate them so that soon there will be no more Palestinians to make any claim to statehood.

The iron-fisted rule of Israel over the Palestinian people and its inhuman policy towards the Palestinians cannot be condoned by the international community. It is a grave injustice to a human race. So much so the Palestinians could not even find safety in refugee camps. Neither Israel nor the world should view the Palestinians as mere refugees, for indeed they are a people with a history and culture of their own, and just like any other human race with history and culture, have all the rights that are due to them, including a State of their own. The struggle of the Palestinian people, therefore, is a just and lawful struggle to liberate themselves. Israel should know that no Power can suppress a people who have a mission to liberate themselves. The Jews themselves should remember their own struggle to achieve the State of Israel. Therefore the policy on which Israel stands on today is very dangerous, not only to the region but also to the whole world. It is only within the United Nations' framework that a confrontation of major Powers in that region can be eliminated.

The root of the problem has become obscured over time. It is a duty of the international community to put the question of Palestine in its correct perspective once again. The process by which the rights of the Palestinian people are to be realized, in particular the rights of self-determination, national sovereignty and independence, must necessarily first return to the point of time when those rights were violated.

The Palestinian people have suffered enough. We therefore should endeavour to find a solution to end this injustice inflicted on them not because they did wrong, but because others wish to assuage their conscience. There has never been any parallel in history where a political entity has been created to supplant an existing rightful State and then continue to perpetuate aggression against the people they had displaced. If the international community chooses to ignore Israeli aggression and expansionism, others will be encouraged to commit similar crimes elsewhere. The international community must stand firm in upholding the basic principle that aggression is not anymore the solution to racial or national conflicts.

It is in this context that the United Nations General Assembly, at its thirty-eighth session, adopted resolution 38/58 C, which endorsed the recommendation of the International Conference on the Question of Palestine in Geneva for the convening of an international peace conference on the Middle East in which all concerned parties to the Arab-Israeli conflict, including the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the United States and the Soviet Union be invited. The United Nations Secretary-General was requested to consult the parties concerned and the Security Council to facilitate the convening of such a conference. Unfortunately, the Secretary-General in his report to the General Assembly at its thirty-ninth session stated that Israel and the United States were opposed to the proposal. The General Assembly again reaffirmed its support for convening the international peace conference and requested the Secretary-General to continue his consultations. The latest initiative by the PLO and Jordan specifically called for peace negotiations conducted under the auspices of an international conference in which the five permanent members of the Security Council and the parties to the conflict will participate, including the PLO.

The PLO and Jordan accord underlined the very need for an international conference to bring about comprehensive peace to the region. There is no other entity in this region, after more than a generation of suffering, that can genuinely call for an international conference to solve their problem, than the Palestinians themselves. The 11 February 1985 Accord between the PLO and Jordan testifies to the wishes and desires of the Palestinian people to talk about peace. Israel should be made to understand that the Palestinians are offering the olive branch for the sake of peace and security of not only every State in the region but also of the world.

The PLO-Jordan Accord is based on the principles of peace in exchange for land which goes without saying that the return of Arab lands by Israel will bring about peace in the region. As spelt out in the Accord, there should be total Israel withdrawal for a comprehensive peace as established in the United Nations and Security Council resolutions.

The willingness of the PLO to accept all General Assembly and Security Council resolutions is a new element. The Security Council should therefore, play an active role to activate movement towards an international conference because that would be the only logical way to solve the Palestinian problem and bring about peace in the region that has experienced no peace for more than three decades.

The search for peace is the common responsibility of the international community. It is, therefore, most regrettable that some countries, including certain permanent members of the Security Council, choose to ignore the wishes of the majority of the international community. The success of the International Conference on the Question of Palestine in Geneva clearly underlined the need for such a conference given the international tension that has persisted for decades in the Middle East. Clearly there is no denying the need or the urgency for the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East, particularly in the face of recent developments in the Middle East as illustrated by Israel's current "iron-fist" policy which emphasizes its consistent belief in resorting to military aggression,

expropriation of Arab lands and denial of basic human rights.

I just hope that the report agreed upon in this Seminar will be implemented. The implementation of this report is necessary to ensure that Israel respects this august body. This would also guarantee that peace and stability are restored in the Middle East, thus contributing to the enhancement of international peace. Peace and security in the Middle East can be achieved not by way of aggression or by embarking on pre-emptive strikes against neighbouring countries but by the elimination of suspicion, hatred, fear and by serious and responsible efforts to ensure a durable and comprehensive solution to the Middle East problem, the core of which is the Palestinian question and the legitimate rights of the Palestinians to a homeland and to self-determination to establish their own free and independent State. Suffice it to say, at this juncture, that such a lasting solution will continue to be illusive until Israel demonstrates its commitment to peace by its actions and refrains from unbridled acts of aggression such as that unleashed on the nuclear installations in Iraq and the refugee camps in Lebanon. These acts of aggression are manifestations of Israel's mischievous inclination to terrorize the Arab world and to deflect world attention from the plight of the Palestinians whose territory she has robbed and whose people she has displaced to make way for Jews brought in from the Diaspora. In order to camouflage its wrongdoing Israel has come up with preposterous agreements to justify her attacks. Israel always wants the world to believe that her aggressive behaviour was indeed legitimate and committed in self-defence. Pre-emptive strikes on Jordan, Syria, Egypt and Iraq were all committed on the pretext of self-defence and national security. Such blatant and pompous disregard for the right of others must be corrected. Israel must learn to respect others if she herself desires others to respect her.

Mr. Chairman, the international community has to continue to intensify international pressure on Israel through the International Peace Conference on the Middle East, and by ensuring its compliance with the relevant United Nations resolutions, which provide a firm basis for a just and durable peace in the Middle East. Such a settlement alone can provide a guarantee for all the States in the region to live at peace with one another.

Thank you.

Konstantin Gueivandov

Nearly 40 years have already passed since the time when the United Nations General Assembly adopted a well-known resolution on the division of Palestine and creation on its territory of two States – the Jewish and the Arab States. However, one has to state with regret that until now it was carried only in one part, in that part where the matter concerned the creation of the Jewish State of Israel. The decision on the creation of the Arab Palestinian State has not yet been fulfilled, and by now a situation has arisen when Israel occupied not only the territory of Palestine which was designed for the creation of the Arab State, but also part of lands which belong to the Arab neighbours of that country. Thus, mankind, the international community of nations, is still greatly indebted to all the people – the Arab people of Palestine, and therefore, as it seems to us, they should deem it to be one of their primary duties to do their utmost to restore its trampled national rights, including the right to self-determination and creation of its own independent State. This is especially important if we want the Middle East to cease to be a zone of one of the most dangerous conflicts on Earth so that peace and security would reign supreme in that region.

It is possible to see without any difficulty that the Arab-Israeli conflict is multi-faceted, but it is a generally recognized fact and circumstance that the Palestinian problem is its core. Therefore, it is impossible to bring about a comprehensive, just and durable settlement of the Middle East conflict ignoring the full-scale solution of the Palestinian issue. I can say with confidence that at present on this score there is the broadest international consensus in regard to seeking such a settlement through collective efforts by the convocation of an international peace conference on the Middle East.

This international consensus expressed in the resolutions of the United Nations concerns such principles as to wit: the settlement of the conflict must be of a comprehensive nature, the recognition of the inalienable rights of the Arab people of Palestine to self-determination, to the creation of its own independent State, the inadmissibility of the seizure of foreign lands by aggression, which means that Israel must return to the Arabs all territories occupied since 1967 – the Golan Heights, the West Bank of the River Jordan and the Gaza Strip, the Lebanese lands and eastern part of Jerusalem as an integral part of the West Bank of the River Jordan; the international guarantees for all States of the region, including the Palestinian State and Israel, the right to safe and independent existence; the establishment of international guarantees for a settlement; the elaboration and the signing of the treaty or treaties which would envisage the cessation of the state of war in the Middle East and the establishment of a state of peace between all the participants in the conflict.

The international consensus on these principles is reflected in many resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and, in particular, in resolution 38/58 C whose content can be regarded as result of the collective struggle of the peace-loving countries for a peaceful, comprehensive, just settlement of the Middle East problem, for the speediest convocation of a peace conference on the Middle East. This resolution was opposed by the votes of only four delegations: the United States of America, Israel, and also Australia and Canada.

The broad consensus on these principles is reflected in the resolutions and in the Declaration adopted by the International Conference on the Question of Palestine held under the auspices of the United Nations at Geneva in August-September 1983, in the Fez Programme adopted at the Twelfth Arab Summit Conference, in the Political Declaration adopted at the Seventh Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries, held at New Delhi in March 1983, in the political statements of the democratic and socialist countries, including the Soviet Union, and the statements and resolutions adopted by many international and national organizations.

I would like to draw special attention to the fact that on 29 July 1984, the Soviet Union launched a new important initiative on a Middle East settlement. In the "Proposals of the Soviet Union on the Middle East Settlement", the Soviet Union put forward a comprehensively elaborated plan for encompassing a just and durable settlement of the Middle East conflict. The USSR is coming out in favour of a collective way of settling the conflict with the participation of all sides concerned, including the Palestine Liberation Organization. No separate settlement is able to resolve the complex knot of the Mid-East contradictions. This conclusion was reached by all, it seems to us, except the United States and Israel.

The Soviet proposals have formulated the principles for a Middle East settlement which, as is known, received wide international support at the United Nations and other international organizations, in the League of Arab States, in the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, and others. The section "The Ways for the Achievement of Settlement" has clearly and definitely formulated the principal aims of the conference on the Middle East. According to the Soviet Union, the conference on the Middle East must end with the signature of a treaty or a number of treaties encompassing the following organically interconnected components of the settlement: withdrawal of the Israeli troops from all Arab territories occupied since 1967; the implementation of the legitimate rights of the Arab people of Palestine, including its right to the creation of its own State; the establishment of a state of peace and ensuring security and independent development for all States involved in the conflict. Simultaneously, one should elaborate and adopt international guarantees for the observance of the terms of such a settlement. All agreements reached at the conference should constitute a single whole approved by all participants.

The Soviet Union believes that the right to take part in the conference should be given to all Arab countries which have common borders with Israel, that is, Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon and Israel itself. The Palestine Liberation Organization, being the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, should be an equal participant in the conference. This is a principal issue because the Middle East settlement is unthinkable without resolving the Palestinian problem, and it cannot be resolved without the participation of the PLO.

The USSR and the United States of America should also be participants in the conference because they play a major role in Middle Eastern affairs and are the co-chairmen of the previous conference on the Middle East. Following general consent, the participants in the conference could also include other States of the Middle East and the adjacent regions.

The seriousness of the approach of the Soviet Union to the Middle East settlement and the convocation of a special peace conference on this issue is proved by the fact that the Soviet proposals contain major political issues of the organization of work of that conference and the mechanism of its functioning.

The Soviet Union, guided by the interests of establishing a just and lasting peace in the Middle East and elimination of an explosive situation in that region, addresses all the participants in the conflict with an appeal to act on all disputable issues in the conflict, proceeding from a sober-minded account of the legitimate rights and interests of each other, and all other States should assist in the search for such a settlement.

The principled importance of the Soviet proposals for a settlement of the Middle East conflict lies first of all in the fact that they take into account the basic interests of all countries and peoples involved in that conflict and they proceed from their desire to ensure as soon as possible to the peoples of that region a just peace and genuine security. The Soviet proposals take into account a number of new aspects in the Middle East situation connected with the efforts of many countries and international organizations aimed at the solution of that problem: resolutions of the United Nations, as well as the general stand taken by the Arab States which has found reflection in the resolutions of the Fez Conference.

The implementation of the Soviet proposals can bring the peaceful settlement in the Middle East away from the impasse in which it is found to be, owing to the fault of the United States and Israel. Therefore, it is necessary to step up pressure on them on the part of all peace forces, all States, big and small, because the United States and Israel continue to reject all efforts aimed at the convocation of an international conference for a peaceful settlement of the Middle East conflict on a just basis.

Such a negative stand taken by Washington is in complete accord with the adventurist line of the present-day United States Administration in international affairs and the course aimed at the destabilization of the international situation which is fraught with the most serious threat to peace and security throughout the world. The position taken by Israel is irrational and dangerous, because it, as we see it, is in direct contradiction with the national interests of the people of that country. It is clear to all that Israel with its limited manpower and material resources is unable to sustain the rate of the arms race and military confrontation to the Arab countries adopted by it. Already now, this course steered towards militarization of the country has resulted in the enormous foreign debt of Israel, a high level of inflation, a reduction in the living standards of the people and the polarization of the forces inside the country, and the Israeli military machine has suffered its first defeats in Lebanon.

Israel, it seems to us, should make use of the opportunity to strengthen its borders and security with the help of international guarantees and normalization of its relations with the neighbouring Arab countries, including the Palestinian State which must be created in conformity with the resolutions of the United Nations, because historical perspective is on the side of the Arab peoples and the sooner Israel understands the complete lack of historical perspective of staking on force and senseless expansion at the expense of foreign lands, the better it will be for Israel itself. The present-day leaders of Israel should realize that by their political deeds and their policy in the Middle East they push the people of Israel and its future generations towards a tragic end.

Historical experience confirms again and again that the attempts of the United States and Israel with the help of military force, economic pressure and blackmail to impose on the Arab States a separate settlement cannot result in stability and peace in the Middle East. The Camp David accords as a means of settling the Middle East conflict were rejected not by chance by the Palestinian people, the Arab States and world public opinion. They have resulted directly in the Israeli aggression in Lebanon, and the separate agreement of 17 May 1983, thrust upon that country with the help of arms, was cancelled by the Government of Lebanon.

The proposals made by United States President Ronald Reagan on 1 September 1982 in regard to the settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict again bypass the core of the conflict - the Palestinian problem - and therefore they cannot serve as a basis for a just Middle East settlement. In this connection, it should be underlined in general that no formulas and concepts can bring a viable Middle East settlement without taking into account the right of the Arab people of Palestine to create its own independent State.

Thus, it can be said that the overwhelming majority of States, excluding the United States and Israel, and wide circles of the world's peoples are coming out for a comprehensive, just Middle East settlement through holding an international peace conference on the Middle East with the participation of all sides concerned, as was defined in the resolutions adopted by the United Nations. The peace-loving States members of the United Nations and the peoples of the world are convinced that an end must be put once and for all to the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the Middle East should be turned into a zone of peace and security of the peoples. This will no doubt most effectively influence universal peace and security on Earth.

In the existing situation, as we see it, it is necessary to continue within the framework of the United Nations and other international organizations, within the framework of the national governmental and public organs and organizations, to expose the aggressive and dangerous essence of the policy of Israel and the United States for the cause of peace which contradicts the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The duty of all peace-loving forces is to demonstrate more energetically their solidarity and resolute support for the just cause of the Palestinian people and those Arab countries which are fighting for the emancipation of the lands occupied by Israel to bring about the speediest settlement of the Middle East conflict.

We believe that it is purposeful to turn to the world community and first of all to Asian and Arab countries and peoples, to their Governments and public organizations, with an appeal through common efforts to exert powerful pressure on the Governments of the United States and Israel in order to force them to abandon their present-day course in Middle Eastern affairs.

The League of Arab States, in particular, has set up the Committee of Seven for making clear the positions of the sides concerned, including the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, in regard to the Fez Programme for a peaceful settlement of the Middle East conflict. This was no doubt a major step in the direction of speeding up the settlement of the Middle East conflict. As we see it, the activity of that Committee should be intensified.

One may have no doubts that the Arab countries have opportunities and the real means of exerting pressure on the United States in order to force it to reckon with the will of the peoples and to refuse unilateral support of Israel's claims to its domination over the peoples of the Middle East.

One should also induce the Governments of European countries, and first of all the United States NATO allies, to realistically approach Middle East affairs and understand the entire danger, for its own peoples, of the course which is being pursued by the United States in the Middle East. There is an impression that West European countries under pressure from the United States even deviated from the statement adopted by them at the session of the European Economic Community in Venice in 1980 in which they recognized the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and which contained a demand to put an end to the Israeli occupation of Arab lands seized in 1967.

I believe that if the European countries, members of the European Economic Community firmly adhere to the positions of that statement, then the process of the Middle East settlement, including the issue regarding the convocation of a peace conference on the Middle East, could be given a fresh major impetus.

The dual position of the West European States in this issue, and sometimes direct participation in the implementation of United States-Israeli plans in the Middle East, not only obstructs the convocation of an international conference on the Middle East, but also contributes to the aggravation of the situation in that region which poses a threat of proliferating the conflict.

A major contribution to a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement in the Middle East should be contributed by the African countries which consistently support the just cause of the Palestinian people and Arab countries fighting against the aggressive policy of Israel. The severance of relations with the aggressor by African countries has increased its isolation in the international arena, leading to the consolidation of the front of struggle against the Israeli aggression against the Arab countries and peoples.

The international isolation of the aggressor is a major factor of exerting pressure upon it within the framework of collective efforts aimed at a just settlement of the Middle East conflict. It is necessary to make clear to the leaders of Israel and the United States Administration supporting it by all means that they cannot indefinitely ignore the will of the overwhelming majority of the world community both in a just Middle East settlement and in resolving the Palestinian problem.

Yu Chongjian

Today, the Palestinian question remains the core of the Middle East issue. The problem of a just settlement of the Palestinian question has long been closely linked with the question whether peace can be restored and strengthened in the Middle East. The Arab world and people of all countries have expressed their deep concern in this regard. To solve the Palestinian question, the Palestine Liberation Organization, the Arab peoples and the international community have put forward various proposals and formulas. For some time, related parties have again been making efforts to seek a solution to the Palestinian question.

Can the Palestinian question be solved? How? What are the prospects? These have always been questions in people's minds. Here I would like to give my view for discussion with my fellow colleagues present today.

To answer these questions, I think it necessary to review the development of the Palestinian issue since the setting up of the State of Israel 36 years ago.

I

Over the past three decades and more, Arab-Israel conflict over the Palestinian issue has at times been intense, at times relaxed. Sometimes open military confrontations have broken out; other times there has been a temporary deadlock. At present the conflict is continuing unabated. The crux of the problem lies in the following facts: Israel refuses to recognize the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people and stubbornly carries out its policy of aggression and expansion. Not only does it refuse to return to the Arab countries vast territories under its occupation, but also refuses to withdraw from Lebanon. It continues to threaten the security of its neighbours and has become a serious threat to peace in the Middle East and the whole world as well.

II

Aggression and oppression invariably cause resistance and struggle. The Palestinian people have never stopped in their resistance and struggles for more than 30 years. It was in the course of this long-term struggle that the PLO was created, developed and strengthened. The PLO is an evitable offspring of history and

represents the determination and strength of the Palestinian people and is the backbone of their cause. It has united the Palestinians under its leadership to wage all kinds of struggles inside and outside the occupied areas, undaunted in the face of a brutal enemy. PLO fighters have advanced wave upon wave looking death calmly in the face. Their unyielding spirit has won the sympathy and admiration of all countries and peoples that love peace and uphold justice. The PLO has won not only the recognition of all Arab countries, but also the recognition and support of over 100 countries. The United Nations General Assembly granted the PLO the status of a permanent observer to participate in the meetings and work of the Assembly. The just struggles of the PLO have met with increasing sympathy and support from world public opinion. Today, the PLO cannot be ignored if a solution is to be found for the Palestinian question. Only when the PLO is recognized as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people with the right to participate in all Middle East peace talks will there be a favourable climate for the solution of the Palestinian issue. This is now the common stance of the majority of countries. It should be pointed out here that although the PLO has suffered repeated setbacks and is facing many difficulties, it will undoubtedly withstand all trials in its struggles. The PLO and the Palestinian people will surely win victory. The Palestinian question has been in existence for more than 30 years. To date there are still millions of homeless Palestinians. Their primary national rights have been violated, they suffer from oppression of all kinds in the occupied areas. In the southern part of Lebanon, savage slaughters of the Palestinian people have occurred again and again. Such tragedies must be put to an end. The Palestinian residents who have lived there for centuries are completely justified in their demands for the right to return to their homeland, to restore their national rights and to found their own Palestinian State.

III

The tragic experience of the Palestinian people has aroused the deepest sympathy and concern of all countries and people who love peace and uphold justice. For many years the Palestinian people have made great efforts and put forth many suggestions and proposals for the settlement of the Palestinian question and to achieve peace in the Middle East. The PLO, in particular, has made unremitting efforts for the peaceful settlement of the Middle East question while, at the same time, it is persisting in its armed struggle.

In recent years the PLO, led by Chairman Arafat, and the then Saudi Crown Prince Fahd (now the King) have successively put forward proposals for a comprehensive settlement of the Palestinian question and the Middle East issue. Especially the Fez formula, adopted at the Twelfth Arab Summit Conference held in September 1982, reflects the desire of the Palestinians and the Arab peoples for a just and rational solution of the Middle East issue. It was a major move adopted by the PLO and Arab countries to seek a peaceful solution to the more than 30-year-old Palestinian issue and to achieve lasting peace in the Middle East. The Fez formula calls for the withdrawal of Israel from all Arab territories it occupied in 1967, the founding of an independent Palestinian State and the guarantees of peace for Middle East countries by the United Nations Security Council. This initiative has won the welcome and support of the majority of countries and peoples throughout the world. In addition, there have been growing demands from the international community for earliest possible settlement of the Middle East issue. For example, the European Economic Community took an independent stand by recognizing the legitimate rights of the Palestinians in its "Venice Declaration" and "Luxembourg Document" adopted in 1980. The EEC holds that any Middle East peace talks must be linked with the PLO, and it expressed hope for the earliest settlement of the Palestinian question.

In the past year a new situation has emerged as regards the Palestine question as a result of new developments and change in the balance of power. Various political forces in the Middle East and the international community have been in frequent contact to work out formulas and proposals. Many parties have expressed hope for a political solution of the Middle East issue. It should be emphasized that the Arab countries and the PLO have made new efforts for the peaceful settlement of the Middle East question.

In March last year, the Jordanian House of Representatives passed a political statement calling for a world peace conference to discuss the Arab-Israeli conflict and find a just solution to the Middle East issue. It said that the conference should be attended by the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council and all the parties concerned with the Middle East conflict. Later in December, King Hussein and President Mubarak jointly urged the United Nations to sponsor an international conference on the Middle East which should be attended by all parties concerned, including the PLO. Meanwhile, the Yemeni Socialist Party and the Syrian Arab Baath Socialist Party also called, in a joint statement, for such an international conference. At the end of last year, on the initiative of the Arab countries, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution supporting the Palestinian people in their struggle for the restoration of their national rights and calling for an early convening of an international conference on the Middle East. In February, PLO Chairman Arafat and King Hussein of Jordan reached an agreement in which they decided to take a joint approach for the settlement of the Palestinian question and the achievement of peace in the Middle East. The question of setting up a Jordan-Palestinian confederation was also raised.

In brief, various parties are now discussing new peace formulas for the solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Palestinian question. My personal view is that the Jordan-Palestine agreement represents their new effort in seeking a just solution of the Palestinian question. An international conference on the Middle East as proposed by the PLO and many countries will be an important channel towards achieving a peaceful solution of the Palestinian question. However, waging struggles will still be necessary for the realization of the above-mentioned aspiration, as Israel has remained stubborn in its position of opposing all peace formulas designed for a comprehensive settlement of the Middle East issue and in boycotting any international conference on the Middle East which will be attended by the PLO. Israeli Prime Minister Peres said not long ago that such an international conference is designed to "exert pressure on Israel" and that Israel should unilaterally hold direct talks unconditionally with Jordan. As for the Palestinians, he said that they will exercise limited autonomy in the West Bank of the Jordan River and the Gaza Strip which will fall under the joint administration by Israel and Jordan. In actuality, Israel hopes by this means to achieve its aim of permanent occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Through the numerous activities centering on the Middle East issue, people are aware of the schemes of the big Powers to scramble for spheres of influence, which makes the situation all the more complicated. The United States has expressed opposition to the holding of an international conference on the Middle East to solve the Palestinian question. Thus there remain differences of principle among the various parties as regards the convening of such a conference. Though the Arab countries and the PLO, headed by Chairman Arafat, have shown the greatest flexibility on the Palestinian question and sincerity for the earliest solution of the Arab-Israel conflict, difficulties still exist for both parties to come to the negotiating table and arrive at a mutually acceptable agreement within a short period. This is primarily because Israel refuses to depart from its policy of aggression and expansion, and refuses to give recognition to the PLO. There are also other forces of obstruction.

In my view, the convening of an international conference to discuss the peaceful settlement of the Middle East issue and seek a just and permanent settlement of the Palestinian question is a good thing. It is in conformity with the hopes and demands of the Arab peoples and all justice-upholding peoples in the world. To this end, however, a favourable atmosphere and favourable conditions must be created. Firstly, this conference should be held under the auspices of the United Nations. Secondly, the participants should include all related countries. Thirdly, the PLO must participate in the conference as one party on an equal footing. Israel must recognize the PLO and the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people and their rights to establish a Palestinian State.

In the final analysis, a just and permanent settlement of the Palestinian issue depends on the strengthening of unity among the Arab countries and the PLO, and their perseverance in an unswerving struggle. At the same time it is necessary to win the sympathy and support of the Israeli people, who are now awaking and rising up against the policy of aggression and expansion pursued by the Israeli authorities. The cause of the Palestinian people is a just one; theirs is a just struggle. A just cause is invincible. Therefore, even though it may be necessary to wage a long-term struggle to solve the Palestinian question, the prospects are bright and the Palestinian people will win ultimate victory for their cause.

Zheng Weizhi

I

To reach a comprehensive and just solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict is a matter of growing concern to the Middle East and Arab people and the people of the world as a whole. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the Governments of Arab countries and the international community have put forward programmes of all kinds for seeking a just solution to the Palestine question and made unremitting efforts for the realization of these programmes.

In April 1980, the PLO advanced the five-point plan on solving the question of Palestine, including such proposals as to start negotiations "under the auspices of the United Nations" with the participation of all countries concerned in the region to solve the refugee, boundary and other questions. King Hussein of Jordan also made suggestions to the same effect during his visit to America in June of the same year. The Soviet Union twice put forward the proposal on holding an international conference on the Middle East, in September 1982 and July 1984, respectively. What should be particularly mentioned here is that the peace programme on the

settlement of the question of the Middle East and Palestine adopted at the Twelfth Arab Summit Conference, held at Fez from 6 to 9 September 1982, fully expressed the common aspiration of the people in the Middle East and Arab countries. It advanced a set of principles to be followed in a peaceful solution of the Middle East question, advocating that the United Nations Security Council should guarantee peace for all countries (including an independent State of Palestine) in the Middle East, and see that these principles are respected. The propositions contained in the Fez Programme are reasonable and practical, laying a sound basis for an all-round and just solution to the Middle East question.

It should be noted that, along with the development of the Middle East situation in recent years, there is an ever stronger voice for holding an international conference on the Middle East question, consultations have become more active, and more and more detailed and explicit propositions and suggestions put forward. The Arab countries and the PLO clearly advocated holding an international conference on the Middle East to be participated in by the five States which are permanent members of the Security Council, countries concerned in the Middle East and other interested parties to seek an all-round and just solution to the question. And through holding frequent consultations, co-ordinating each other's position and exploring programmes acceptable to all sides, they have tried in real earnest to create conditions for convening such a conference. On 11 February of this year, King Hussein of Jordan and Chairman Arafat of the PLO reached, through consultations, the Plan of Joint Action, namely, the Jordan-Palestine Accord, which calls for peace negotiations at the level of an international conference with the participation of the five permanent members of the Security Council and all the parties in dispute, including the PLO, the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, which will be a member of the joint delegation.

All these efforts made by Arab countries and the PLO have amply demonstrated their sincere aspiration and that of the people in the Middle East in general, including the Israeli people, for seeking a peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflicts in the Middle East. The past 30 years and more witnessed four large-scale wars and continuous small-scale armed clashes, which have brought bitter sufferings to the people in the Middle East as well as various Arab countries, with the Palestinian people being the most miserable victims. There are more than a million homeless Palestinians drifting everywhere and leading a tragic life as refugees. People of other Arab countries in the Middle East also find it impossible to live and work in an easy and stable environment and to devote themselves to national development. Sticking fast to the militaristic policies of aggression and expansion, the Israeli authorities have launched repeated warfare, which has not only subjected the Israeli people to deep sufferings of the scourge of war, but has thrown Israel's economy into a terrible plight plagued with high military expenditures amounting to about one third of its national budget, inflation and huge debts, and has almost exhausted foreign exchange reserves. Such policies have met with strong opposition from the Israeli people and, as a result, brought about vigorous peace activities of the Israeli people in opposition to war in recent years. One can say that in the present-day Middle East as well as in the Arab world there prevails a common desire for peace, a beautifully renovated homeland and a happy life. Therefore, ideologically and politically speaking, the endeavour to hold an international peace conference to solve the question of Palestine is deeply rooted in the people of the Arab countries, in particular and of the Middle East, in general. Though with divergence of opinion on some other issues, they almost hold the same view on convening an international conference on the question of the Middle East.

The third world people are in sympathy with and resolutely support the sincere aspiration and unremitting efforts of the people in the Middle East and various Arab countries. This could find ample expression in the United Nations and international conferences as well as in bilateral exchanges.

Among the over 20 programmes on a peaceful settlement of the Middle East question presented up to now, a great majority were advanced by the third world countries.

Western European countries, Japan and other developed countries, whose interests are linked with that of the Middle East, also hope for peace and stability in the Middle East. In 1980, the European Community issued a Venice Statement and in 1982, France and Egypt jointly prepared a draft resolution on the settlement of the Middle East question for the Security Council. Both the statement and draft resolution mentioned above noted that while advocating the rights of all countries in the Middle East to peace and existence, one should respect the national rights of the Palestinian people. After his recent contacts with the parties concerned in the Middle East, Giulio Andreotti, President of the European Community, stressed that Israel should not ignore the Arab leaders' desire for peace. The Western European countries also adopt a positive attitude towards the endeavour to hold an international peace conference on the question of the Middle East.

To summarize, many countries have paid much attention to and show concern about holding an international conference on the Middle East as one of the ways to arrive at a peaceful solution to the Middle East question.

II

There are complicated reasons for the failure of the proposal about holding the international peace conference to materialize.

Through the four major wars in the Middle East, Israel has invaded and occupied large tracts of Arab territories, annexed the Golan Heights and Arab Jerusalem and systematically established settlements on the West Bank with a view to permanently occupying the area through changing the demographic and social structure of the West Bank. Furthermore, it launched massive aggressions against Lebanon, committed arbitrary massacre of the civilians there and is still occupying some southern parts of Lebanon. It is absolutely clear that the Israeli policies of aggression and expansion have fundamentally blocked the way to the realization of peace in the Middle East. Always biased towards Israel, the United States' course of action has inflated the Israeli arrogance of aggression and expansion. Apart from that, the situation in the Middle East has become more complicated owing to the interplay of various conflicting forces within the region and the influence of the Powers from without.

There are two key issues with regard to the peace talks on the Middle East. Firstly, the issue of the national rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination; and secondly, the qualification of the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. The Israeli ruling group maintains an intransigent attitude towards these two issues. In Israel, both the Labour Party and the Likud bloc reject the possibility of holding any negotiations with the PLO and are opposed to the establishment of an independent Palestine State and to the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East, their aim being to destroy the Arab countries one by one through bilateral peace arrangements.

III

With regard to holding an international peace conference on the question of the Middle East, the Chinese Government supports the position of the Arab countries and the PLO. In its letter to the Secretary-General of the United Nations last April concerning the issue of convening the International Peace Conference on the Middle East; the Chinese Government explicitly expressed its support for the convening of the international conference under the auspices of the United Nations with a view to reaching a just solution to the Palestinian question and bring peace to the region. Last May, President Li Xiannian stated China's firm support for the proposal put forward by Chairman Arafat of the PLO and King Hussein on holding an international conference with the participation of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council to discuss how to settle the question of Palestine. In order to bring about the International Peace Conference on the Middle East and achieve positive results through the Conference, I think, three points should be mentioned.

Firstly, the International Peace Conference on the Middle East should be convened under the auspices of the United Nations. It should be participated in by the five permanent members of the Security Council and the countries and parties concerned in the Middle East. With more than 150 Member States the United Nations is an authoritative organization aimed at safeguarding world peace and security. It thus has a major responsibility for promoting a settlement of the Middle East question and maintaining peace in the region. Therefore, the Arab countries in the Middle East and all the justice-upholding countries and people in the world hope that the United Nations, in particular the Security Council, will exercise its influence and play its role in convening an international conference for a just solution to the question.

Secondly, a just and reasonable solution to the Palestine question is the key to the settlement of the Middle East problem. Likewise, it is also a key to the success of an international conference on the Middle East. It is my view that any solution to the Palestine question should include the following principles: Israel must unconditionally withdraw from the Arab territories it has occupied since 1976, including Arab Jerusalem, the national rights of the Palestinian people, including their rights to return to their homeland, to national self-determination and to statehood, should be restored; and all the States in the region should have the right to existence and independence after the lost land and legitimate rights of the Palestinian people are restored. Most of the proposals and programmes put forth by the international community for the settlement of the Middle East problem share these principles. I believe that only by basing itself on the recognition of these principles can an international conference on the Middle East achieve positive results.

Lastly, the resolution of the Palestine question must have the participation of the Palestinian people, the party immediately concerned. As the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, the Palestine Liberation Organization has the right to participate in the International Peace Conference on the Middle East and all other efforts to solve the question of the Middle East. The important role of the Arab States in the Middle East should be similarly respected. Middle East affairs should be run by the people in the region, while the international community has the duty to extend support and guarantee. This also applies to convening an international conference on the Middle East. It will not do to put the PLO and the Arab States in the Middle East in a less important position.

It should be noted that while difficulties and obstacles still exist for convening an international conference on the Middle East, they are not insurmountable so long as we set store by world peace as well as the interests of the peoples in the Middle East.

VII. STATEMENTS BY REPRESENTATIVES OF UNITED NATIONS ORGANS

STATEMENT BY MS. SAVITRI KUNADI ON BEHALF OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE AGAINST APARTHEID

Mr. Chairman,

On this concluding day of the Tenth United Nations Seminar on the Question of Palestine, in Beijing, I would like to extend my felicitations to you for the able manner in which you have guided the deliberations of the Seminar. The adoption of the report of the Seminar today by consensus underlines the great importance attached by the international community and the Asian countries in particular, to the just, comprehensive and lasting solution of the question of Palestine, the core of the Middle East problem.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank you and the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for extending an invitation to the Special Committee against Apartheid to attend the Seminar in this beautiful and historic city of Beijing. I would also like to thank the Government and the people of the People's Republic of China for the warm hospitality extended to us.

Mr. Chairman, our deliberations have underlined the international community's deep concern for the plight of the Palestinian people as a result of Israel's aggressive policies and the urgent measures required to be taken for the early settlement of the Palestinian problem. We have profited greatly from the high quality of presentations made by the panelists who were invited to the Seminar.

Mr. Chairman, the Special Committee against Apartheid attaches great significance to the mobilization of international opinion for the attainment and early realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. We consider the Palestinian problem as our own and would work, along with you for the early realization of this goal.

Mr. Chairman, the Seminar has stressed the need for the early convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East. The International Peace Conference, we feel, would contribute to the just solution of the Middle East problem, the core of which is the Palestinian problem. Only a handful of States stand in the way of convening the International Peace Conference.

The Special Committee against Apartheid has consistently reaffirmed its support to the General Assembly resolution relating to the question of Palestine. The persistent and blatant denial by Israel of the rights of the Palestinian people to return to their homeland is in grave violation of the fundamental principles of the United Nations Charter. The Special Committee against Apartheid expresses its solidarity with the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People in the task of securing an independent State for the Palestinian people in Palestine.

STATEMENT BY MR. NIHAT AKYOL ON BEHALF OF THE UNITED NATIONS COUNCIL FOR NAMIBIA

On behalf of the United Nations Council for Namibia, I would like to express my deep gratitude to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for having kindly invited me to participate in this important Seminar, which will undoubtedly help to draw the attention of the international community to the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and to publicize as widely as possible the facts concerning these rights. The Council and its President have long appreciated the dedicated efforts of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, which has become the champion of the cause of freedom of the oppressed people of Palestine.

The organization of this Seminar has made it possible not only to measure the deep concern of the international community for the Palestinian people but also to convey the fact that it attaches the highest importance to finding a definitive and just solution to the Palestinian problem. The Palestinian question is the core of the problem of the Middle East, and this problem cannot be solved without a positive settlement of this question.

The United Nations Council for Namibia is deeply convinced that the problems of the Middle East are inextricably linked with the just solution of the question of Palestine and that the fact that no such solution to this question has been found will continue to aggravate the tensions and conflicts in the region, while also threatening international peace and security. Recent events in this region have once again proved how dangerous and explosive the situation is.

The Palestinian people continues to be denied its fundamental and inalienable rights to live in freedom, peace and dignity in its own country. It has been driven from its homeland and has become a homeless people in foreign lands. The international community cannot remain indifferent and tolerate the fact that Israel persists in its acts of aggression against the Palestinian people and annexes the territories of its neighbouring States. The United Nations Council for Namibia wishes to reaffirm once again the General Assembly resolutions relating to the right of the Palestinian people to return to its homeland in Palestine and recover its property.

The Council for Namibia is also convinced that the persistent denial by Israel of the just and legitimate right of the Palestinian people to return to its homeland is a violation of the fundamental principles of the United Nations Charter as well as of the United Nations resolutions on the question of the right of all peoples under colonial or foreign domination to accede to nationhood. The Council for Namibia is of the view that all States have a right to expect Israel - which owes its very existence to a United Nations resolution - to comply with the wishes of the international community as set forth in numerous General Assembly and Security Council resolutions on the subject. The United Nations should spare no effort to make Israel understand that the international community rejects its attempts to make Jerusalem its capital, in violation of Security Council resolutions 476 (1980) of 30 June 1980 and 478 (1980) of 20 August 1980.

The Council for Namibia, affirming its solidarity with the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian people, strongly condemns Israeli policies and plans aimed at driving the Palestinian people from its homeland. It is also convinced that all manoeuvres designed to arrive at a settlement plan outside the framework of the relevant United Nations resolutions are doomed to failure.

The question of Palestine, like that of Namibia, continues to haunt the conscience of the international community. Like the question of Namibia, that of Palestine has been on the agenda of the United Nations General Assembly for many years, and a solution has not yet been found. During this time, the suffering of the peoples of these regions and the troubled situation which prevails there have been worsening daily.

In Namibia, the people of the territory continue to be subjected to the brutalities of the racist Pretoria regime. The South Africa regime pursues its apartheid policy in Namibia in order to try to force the people of this territory to accept its illegal colonial occupation.

Efforts to reverse this trend continue to be blocked by the intransigence and arrogance of the South African regime. Efforts to implement Security Council resolution 435 (1978) - which approved the United Nations plan for the independence of Namibia - continue to be greeted with scorn by the racist Pretoria regime. South Africa continually blocks the implementation of resolution 435 (1978), emphasizing facts which are extraneous to the problem, such as the linkage of the independence of Namibia to the withdrawal of Cuban forces from Angola. It is essential to exert pressure on South Africa in order to make it understand that the path which it has chosen for the independence of Namibia will lead only to a further deterioration in political and economic conditions in southern Africa and will again call in question the maintenance of international peace and security.

The Council for Namibia urges the international community to redouble its efforts to put pressure on South Africa to comply with the wishes of the international community with regard to the question of Namibia's independence and finally consent to implementing Security Council resolution 435 (1978).

Just as in South Africa, the situation in the Middle East remains particularly critical and explosive because uncertainty, discord and violence continue to prevail in these regions. Therefore, on the occasion of this Seminar, it is more important than ever for us to reaffirm our dedication to the promotion of a just and lasting settlement of the Middle East conflict. Indeed, as I have said from the beginning, the achievement of such an objective will continue to elude us as long as the Palestinian question, which is the core of this problem, is not resolved. This is why we must work diligently towards the ultimate achievement of this objective and towards the creation of conditions that are favourable to a just and lasting peace in the region. These conditions include, inter alia, the implementation of the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, its right to establish an independent State, the right of all States of the region to an independent

existence and strict respect for the principle of the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territories by force.

The convening of this Seminar is, for us, another occasion to reaffirm our solemn commitment and our determination to give the greatest support possible to the Palestinian people, and to associate ourselves with the defence of its noble cause. In that regard, and in accordance with the relevant General Assembly decisions, it is the responsibility of each of us to work closely and co-operate fully with the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, so that this people may decide its own fate, in accordance with its freely expressed will and true aspirations. Indeed, it is only through collective efforts and through the full implementation of the relevant United Nations decisions that the injustice suffered - for too long - by the Palestinian people can finally be redressed.

The Council for Namibia demands that South Africa and Israel be compelled to conform to the universally accepted norms of the international community or continue to be condemned for their defiance of world opinion. The Council for Namibia considers that South Africa and Israel can and, indeed, should be forced to respect the relevant United Nations resolutions on the questions of Namibia and Palestine. The Council for Namibia is firmly convinced that the means of compelling South Africa and Israel to comply with United Nations resolutions can easily be found in the provisions of the United Nations Charter: it is convinced that the work of this important Seminar will make a major contribution to the settlement of a problem which has lasted far too long.

STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY MR. ABDUL G. KOROMA (SIERRA LEONE),
CHAIRMAN 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. Chairman, distinguished delegates and guests,

On behalf of the Special Committee of 24 on decolonization, I wish to thank the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for having organized this important Seminar on the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

Mr. Chairman, it is an honour and privilege for me to be present here at this Seminar in the People's Republic of China. I wish to take this opportunity to pay a special tribute to His Excellency, President Li Xiannian, an eminent statesman, under whose able guidance China continues to extend its stalwart support to the millions of peoples fighting for human dignity, freedom and justice.

I also wish to place on record my warm appreciation and gratitude for the cordial reception and generous hospitality accorded to me since my arrival, by our gracious host, the Government and people of China.

The decision of the General Assembly to hold this Asian regional Seminar on the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people is not only a measure of the international community's deep concern for the Palestinian people, but also a reflection of its recognition that a just solution of the Palestinian problem is of overriding importance in the search for a lasting settlement of the Middle East question. Through this occasion, the General Assembly reaffirms its commitment to the Palestinian people for the realization of their inalienable rights and seeks to enlighten and mobilize international public opinion towards the attainment of the objectives of the United Nations on the question of Palestine.

Indeed, we in the Special Committee attach great significance to the mobilization of international opinion for the attainment of the objectives of the United Nations on the question of self-determination for all peoples under alien and colonial domination. We are profoundly aware that world public opinion is a powerful weapon in the struggle against injustice, oppression and alien and colonial domination. It therefore gives me great satisfaction to join in this effort to enlighten and mobilize international opinion on the question of Palestine before such an influential and broadly representative gathering as assembled here today.

As we are well aware, the situation in the region continues to constitute a crisis which bears the explosive potential of a conflict that would seriously endanger international peace and security. It is particularly relevant in this context to recall that the General Assembly has repeatedly called for the full and speedy exercise by the Palestinian people of their right to self-determination without external interference and to national independence and sovereignty, as well as their right to return to their home and property from which they have been displaced and uprooted.

While the Palestinian question continues to be one of the most complex, difficult and dangerous issues facing this Organization, this should not discourage the international community in its search for a just solution to the problem. On the contrary, our commitment to the goal as set forth in a number of related resolutions of the United Nations must be reinforced with a grave sense of urgency.

Mr. Chairman, the situation today remains most critical and explosive, as uncertainty, discord and violence continues to prevail in the area. At this important Seminar, it becomes all the more important therefore that we should firmly rededicate ourselves to the promotion of a genuine and lasting settlement of the Middle East conflict. However, the attainment of such an objective will continue to elude us unless the core of the Middle East conflict namely, the Palestinian question, is resolved. We must therefore work diligently for the realization of that objective and for the creation of all the conditions favourable to a just and lasting peace in the area. These include the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination, including the right to establish an independent State, the right of all States in the area to an independent existence and the strict observance of the principle of non-acquisition of territory by force.

While increasing worldwide support for and deeper understanding of the Palestinian cause is to be continuously sought for, time is overdue for concerted action to persuade the supporters of Israel to compel it to respond to relevant United Nations resolutions and to the will of the international community on the question of Palestine. It must be impressed upon Israel that it can no longer systematically ignore United Nations resolution and world public opinion on the question of Palestine. Above all, Israel must be made to comply fully with General Assembly resolution 181 (II) of 1947, leading to the establishment of an independent Palestinian State. The underlying principle is that the recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinians is one of the basic conditions for lasting peace in the region and that the Palestine Liberation Organization must be involved in comprehensive peace negotiations.

Recent events in the Middle East and the continuing destruction of life and property in Arab lands underline the heavy responsibility incumbent upon the international community to do everything in its power to preserve peace and security in the region. These events have once again made it unmistakably clear that a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Middle East conflict cannot be achieved without resolving the question of the Palestinians' legitimate right to a homeland. The people in the region have suffered far too long.

Mr. Chairman, this Seminar has before it an agenda which calls on its participants to put forward viable proposals designed to seek a solution to one of the most critical problems which has engaged the attention of the world community since its inception - the question of Palestine. Through its examination of a wide range of basic issues relating to and including, in particular, the restoration to the Palestinian people of their fundamental and inalienable rights to their homeland, I am confident, the Seminar will be able to formulate further concrete measures that will increase international awareness of the facts relating to the Palestinian problem and thus enhance our efforts in the search for a speedy resolution of the problem itself, which is at the heart of the Middle East conflict.

Before concluding, I should like to acknowledge with appreciation the very important work carried out by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People under the outstanding and dedicated leadership of Ambassador Sarré of Senegal.

It is my confident hope that the holding of this Seminar will take us a step closer to the fulfilment by the Organization of its obligation to the Palestinian people. I therefore extend to you, Mr. Chairman, and to the Committee my best wishes for a successful outcome of your deliberation.

VIII. CLOSING STATEMENTS

STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY MR. QIAN QICHEN,
DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

The present Seminar on the Question of Palestine is drawing to a close. At the Seminar guided and organized by Ambassador Sarré, the distinguished Chairman of

the United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, and other distinguished United Nations officials, specialists, scholars, government representatives and those from international organizations have for the past few days held serious, in-depth and warm discussions with a sense of responsibility on the restoration of the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people and on ways to seek a fair settlement of the Palestinian question. The Seminar called on all Governments and world opinion to voice support for the just struggle of the Palestinian people, to support in various forms the participation by the Palestine Liberation Organization as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people in the settlement of the Middle East issue, to demand that Israel relinquish its policy of aggression and expansion and recognize the national rights of the Palestinian people. This fully reflects the sympathy of the international community for the Palestinian people in their bitter sufferings and its concern over the sanguinary conflict in the Middle East, and is a source of great encouragement and strong support for the Palestinian people in the arduous struggle. The report prepared by the Seminar will cover many useful views and proposals set forth by the specialists and will be submitted to the United Nations. Undoubtedly, this will enable the international community to have a better understanding of the just cause of the Palestinian people and the present grave situation in the Middle East and thus pay greater attention to the matter. It can be said that this Seminar has satisfactorily accomplished its expected mission and is a great success. On behalf of the Chinese Government and people, I wish to express warm congratulations to the sponsor and all the participants of the Seminar. One of the subjects of the Seminar is the convocation of an international peace conference on the Middle East. Many specialists and representatives have pointed out the necessity for such a conference and made many valuable suggestions. This shows that the convocation of such a conference as a way for the peaceful settlement of the Middle East question is receiving ever greater attention from the international community. It also gives expression to the urgent desire of the Mideast countries and people and other peace-loving countries and people of the world for an early settlement of the Palestinian question. We support the convening of an international peace conference on the Middle East under the auspices of the United Nations and with the participation of all the parties concerned in the Middle East to seek a fair settlement of the Palestinian and Middle East issues. Based on the proposals made by many countries in recent years and the views expressed at this Seminar, we deem it necessary to observe and adhere to the following principles and objectives in order to make a success of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East:

1. The task of the Conference should be the solution of the Middle East issue centering around the Palestinian question. In this respect, the principles stated in the Fez formula adopted by Arab countries are reasonable and practical, and should form the basis for the Middle East settlement.
 2. The PLO, as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, has the right to participate on an equal footing with other parties in the Conference.
 3. The United Nations Security Council shoulders special responsibility for maintaining world peace and security: it should play a positive role in promoting the convocation of the Conference and work to ensure its success.
- I would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm that China will make efforts along with other countries concerned for the convocation of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East. The Chinese Government and people deem it the most desirable way to settle the Palestinian and Middle East questions and through peaceful negotiations. However, so long as Israel stubbornly refuses to recognize the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and to withdraw from Arab territories, we shall continue to support the Arab countries and the Palestinian people in their just struggle till victory is won. It is our firm belief that, although there will be many twists and turns on the way to a fair settlement of the Palestinian question and realization of peace in the Middle East, the just cause of the Palestinian people will surely find wide support from all justice-upholding countries and peoples. A just and reasonable solution to the Palestinian question can eventually be found so long as the Arab countries and the Palestinian people take into account the overall interests of their great national cause, strengthen their unity, persist in struggle of various forms and continue to work with the parties concerned to seek formulas and ways in the light of the realities of the Middle East and in the interests of all parties. Sooner or later, the unceasing Middle East conflict will come to an end and lasting peace for the Middle East will be realized.

STATEMENT BY MR. SHAFIQ AL-HOUT,
MEMBER OF THE PALESTINE NATIONAL COUNCIL AND
HEAD OF THE DELEGATION OF THE PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION

As we have happily concluded the work of this Seminar, I would like very much to express, on behalf of my delegation, our profound thanks and congratulations to you, Mr. Chairman, and to your colleagues in the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the United Nations Secretariat and all those who have made our work in this Seminar possible and successful and I would like to seize this opportunity to express as well our feeling of gratitude to the Chinese people and to the Chinese Government. I am sure all the participants here share with me the fact that we will be leaving this beautiful capital and will be preserving wonderful memories of the hospitality and generosity of the Chinese people. We, the Palestinians and the Palestine Liberation Organization, have always valued very highly the firm stand of the People's Republic of China on the question of Palestine. Our people will everlastingly strive to keep and maintain the deep friendly relationship with the people of China. So I would like His Excellency the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs to convey a message of love and friendship to the people of China and I feel that I should really appreciate and give a word of thanks to all the participants and particularly to the panelists for their contributions, the outstanding papers that they have contributed to this Seminar. I am sure that their work and their contributions would be inspiring to our people, our leadership, to continue our struggle to pursue the national rights of the Palestinian people, to see that the Palestinian State is established, which will put an end to the catastrophe of the Palestinian people and give them a chance to lead a human natural life like the rest of the people of the whole world.

A few comments, Mr. Chairman, with your permission. I feel it is my duty to elaborate a little bit on a few points before I conclude this small intervention. First of all I would like everybody, before leaving this Seminar, to know that the Palestinian people have no problem either with the Jews or with Judaism. Our conflict is with the Zionist movement and with the State of Israel and so because I have heard some comments in this Seminar, I am sure with good intentions, referring to conflicts between Jews and Palestinians, I just feel it is my duty to make clear that we have no problem either with Judaism as a religion or with the Jews as a people. Our problem is strictly limited to the Israeli aggressors who have occupied our own territories and made us desert our land and try to deny our national rights in Palestine. So I hope other seminars in the future or other discussions will limit themselves to this very strict fact.

Another point Mr. Chairman. I have heard that those who have mentioned something about the split within our Movement have really been alarmed. I am sure they are really concerned. I would like to state the fact that we are having some difficulty within the PLO. It is only natural to have differences in national liberation movements. I can hardly recall any national liberation movement which was able to avoid some internal troubles. But I want to assure all the respectable audience over here that the differences we have within the PLO have not touched on the basic political common targets which we are all striving for. There isn't a single Palestinian who has anything against the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. Every Palestinian is in full agreement that the PLO is the only representative of the Palestinian people and should remain the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. And, secondly, we have no problem whatsoever about our strategic political interest and all parties involved around the PLO and in the PLO have agreed that it is very important and necessary and essential to pursue the struggle for a political solution to the question of Palestine based on United Nations resolutions relevant to the question of Palestine and as long as they fulfil our national aspirations, namely, the right to self-determination, to return to our homeland and to maintain our national State. I will conclude, Mr. Chairman, that we have ahead of us a very important task and that is the struggle for the convening of an international conference. I hope we shall all start thinking of a real serious intensified campaign to convince all parties involved in the crisis of the Middle East and the question of Palestine to make this international conference possible because it is, in our opinion, the only option for a peaceful settlement and the only option that would save our region, our people as well as the Israelis, and the whole universe from the danger of real war and destruction.

Again allow me, Mr. Chairman, to thank you again and to thank our host and to thank everybody who has participated in this Seminar.

STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY MR. MASSAMBA SARRE,
CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE
INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

With the adoption of the final report of the Seminar, we have now come to the end of our deliberations. The week of intensive work that we have just completed has not only been most constructive, but also of considerable importance to a cause to which we are all dedicated - namely, the attainment by the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights.

The papers that were presented by the distinguished parliamentarians, scholars and leading opinion makers who gathered here, the discussions that followed their presentations and the general interest displayed in the subject under discussion may be regarded as a major contribution to public understanding of the issues involved. As has been stated in the report and in accordance with previous practice, the papers will be published in due course along with the report.

I would like to take this opportunity, once more, to emphasize the importance that the Committee attaches to the convening of the International Conference on the Middle East. The views that were expressed here and the interest that the item evoked offer clear proof that there is general agreement that such a conference, under the aegis of the United Nations, will be an important step towards peace in the Middle East and towards a resolution of the problem of Palestine. We feel that we should continue our efforts in this endeavour to ensure that the Conference will be convened without further delay. It is our hope also that this message will go out from the Seminar and help to convince those Governments which still have doubts, that a conference of this nature can bring peace to the Middle East.

I am sure that we are all agreed that this Seminar has been an outstanding success. This, I know, can be largely attributed to the excellence of the papers presented by the panelists and to the discussion that those papers provoked. Our thanks are due to them for their painstaking and dedicated research, which will prove to be of the greatest value to the cause of the Palestinian people.

Our special thanks are also due to the Government of the People's Republic of China for the co-operation and generous assistance extended to us both before and during the Seminar. Its active participation is a reflection of the deep interest that the Government and people of China take in the question of Palestine. We are especially grateful to His Excellency Mr. Qian Qichen, Vice Foreign Minister, and His Excellency Mr. Zhou Gue, Assistant Foreign Minister, of the People's Republic of China for taking the time to be with us on this occasion. Their presence and the support we have received from their Government greatly reaffirmed China's firm support of the just cause of the Palestinian people.

Before I conclude, I would like to express our appreciation to all those who have worked behind the scenes to make the Seminar a success: the interpreters, translators, secretaries, conference officers, officials of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the administrative/finance officer and the press officer as well as the officials of the Division for Palestinian Rights, who have all extended themselves to make our task easier. To all of them we are duly grateful.

As we are about to return to our various places of residence, may I thank you all once again and express the hope that we leave Beijing determined to work even harder in the search for a solution to this extremely complex problem. I wish you all bon voyage.

I thank you and declare the Seminar closed.

IX. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS AND OBSERVERS

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H.E. Mr. Massamba Saré (Senegal), Chairman

H.E. Mr. Victor J. Gauci (Malta), Rapporteur

H.E. Mr. Zain Azraai (Malaysia), Member

Mr. Mohamed Lessir (Tunisia), Member

Mr. Zehdi Terzi (Palestine Liberation Organization), Observer

Panelists

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Dr. Houssam Al-Khatib (Syria Arab Republic)

Prof. Yilmaz Altug (Turkey)

Mr. Phan Anh (Viet Nam)]

Mr. Eduardo Faleiro (India)

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Mr. Nihat Akyol, Counsellor

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

H.E. Abdul G. Koroma, Chairman

Permanent Representative of Sierra Leone to the United Nations

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Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Mr. Christopher Jenns Carpenter

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United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

H.E. Dr. Hans Leo Teller, Representative

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Organization of the Islamic Conference

Mr. Nabil Maarouf, Director

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National liberation movements

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Mr. Shafiq Al-Hout, Member of the Palestine National Council

and representative of H.E. Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine
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