

Statement by Ambassador H.E. Dr. Palitha Kohona,
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**General Assembly Fourth Committee (67th Session)
9 November 2012**

**Item 53: Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices
Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the
Occupied Territories (A/67/343)**

Mr. Chairman,

The Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories presents its 44th report.

In accordance with the General Assembly's request in resolution 66/76, the Committee's report examines the human rights situation in the occupied Palestinian territory and the occupied Syrian Golan. It contains information gathered during the Committee's mission to region, which took place from 14 to 19 July, as well as through consultations with Member States that co-sponsored resolution 66/76.

The Committee regrets that, as in past years, the Government of Israel failed to respond to repeated requests to meet and allow access to the occupied territories.

The Committee sought information from a wide range of sources regarding Israeli practices affecting human rights in the occupied territories. I note that the Committee's report was submitted late this year, in order to take full account of extensive information submitted by interlocutors in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory.

Mr. Chairman,

The Committee's investigations over the past year have led to one deeply troubling conclusion. The mass imprisonment of Palestinians; the routine demolition of homes and resultant displacement of Palestinians; the widespread violence by Israeli settlers against Palestinians; the lack of effort by Israel to prevent or hold settlers accountable for such violence; and the blockade of Gaza and resultant reliance on illegal smuggling to survive: These practices may amount to a strategy to either force the Palestinians off their land or to so severely marginalize them as to establish and maintain a system of permanent occupation.

The Committee's view is that this strategy functions in a systematic manner and, consequently casts doubts on Israel's claim that it is committed to the objective of two States living side by side in peace and security.

In addition to examining these concerns in depth, the Committee's report details alarming allegations related to Israel's treatment of Palestinian children in detention.

Testimony provided to the Committee concerned often harsh treatment by Israeli security agents, in the process of detaining, transporting, interrogating, and imprisoning Palestinian children. It was clear that Palestinian children detained by Israel do not benefit from the basic legal, judicial or social safeguards to which they are entitled under international law. This is especially worrying when one considers that Israel arrests between 500 and 700 Palestinian children every year. The Committee was particularly disturbed to learn that 12 per cent of these children are kept in solitary confinement by Israel.

Distinguished Delegates,

Let me highlight selected recommendations from the Committee's report.

The Committee calls on Israel to bring its policies and practices concerning the arrest, detention and sentencing of Palestinian children into line with international laws and standards relevant to minors.

The Committee calls on Israel to end its illegal use of administrative detention against Palestinians. In this regard, the Committee associates itself with the Secretary-General's call on Israel to either bring those administratively detained to trial with all applicable judicial guarantees or to immediately release them.

The Committee calls on Israel to cease the demolition of Palestinian homes and to provide appropriate reparation to Palestinians who have already had their homes demolished.

The Committee calls on Israel to fulfill its legal obligation, as the occupying power, to act for the benefit of the population of the territory which it occupies. A first step in this direction is for Israel to revise, in direct consultation with Palestinians, the planning and zoning regime in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

The Committee calls on Israel to take immediate, effective measures to end violence against Palestinians by Israeli settlers. Such measures must include investigating any incidents of violence, criminally prosecuting perpetrators and ensuring that those convicted are given appropriate punishment.

The Committee recalls the many United Nations resolutions and reports that have made clear that Israel's project to transfer its population to the territories it has occupied since 1967 are illegal. The Committee stresses the need for Israel to desist from the further settlement of these territories.

The Committee urges the General Assembly to adopt measures to address Israel's long track record of non-cooperation with the United Nations. In this regard, the Committee draws the General Assembly's attention to Israel's decision to suspend cooperation with the Human Rights Council and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The Committee urges the General Assembly to transmit this report to the Secretary-General to convey it to the High Commissioner for Human Rights, to be made available

for the Human Rights Council's consideration in conjunction with the relevant reports of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the territories occupied by Israel since 1967.

The Committee reiterates its call on Israel to lift its illegal blockade of Gaza. Israel must ensure a regular and adequate supply of food, medicines and other basic supplies and services to Gaza, in line with Security Council resolution 1860. And Israel must expand the capacity of crossing points for cargo and commercial goods, in order to urgently increase exports from Gaza.

Also in Gaza, the Committee calls on Israel to desist from undermining the agricultural and fishing industries. Israel must bring its policies and practices into line with what it agreed as part of the Oslo Accords, namely a 20 nautical mile limit for Palestinian fishermen.

In relation to the Syrian Golan Heights, the Committee reiterates its call on Israel to allow Syrians in the Golan to visit family members elsewhere in Syria, and to allow such family members to visit their loved ones in the Syrian Golan.

Finally, the Committee calls on Israel to immediately remove all mines near neighborhoods and schools in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.