

PALESTINE

The establishment of the HRC marked a new development in institution-building within the sphere of human rights. As all involved and concerned emphasized that this new institutional structure was intended as an improvement on the Human Rights Commission, hopes were raised among all countries, particularly developing ones, that this new structure would help restore confidence in the value, if not the supremacy of international law. As the issue of human rights has since come to prominence, the unbalanced approach to that issue risks rendering this new institution seem like a fiefdom of power struggles and political manipulation. You do not need to be a UN expert to realise that a decision against a targeted developing country sets in motion volcanic competitive efforts to implement it; while in contrast, adopted resolutions on Palestine attract mere lip service and apologetic expressions and are destined to oblivion. That is why none of the elements of resolutions S.1-1 of 6 July 2006 and S.3 -1 of 15 November 2006 has been implemented. Indeed, the ongoing exemption of Israel from adherence to international law raises a question central to the fundamentals of international legal institutions: whether the interests of dominant centres of power supersede international legality.

Israel, the occupying Power, persists in its military raids causing death and injuries among civilians as well as destruction of property, homes, cultivated farms and trees, and vital infrastructure. Kidnapping of civilians and officials go on unabated, and by now there are 11000 Palestinians in Israeli detention centres including parliamentarians. The building of new colonial settlements and expansion of existing ones in the West Bank including East Jerusalem is the order of the day. The construction of the Apartheid Wall continues despite the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice and the sufferings it inflicts on Palestinians. The checkpoints of humiliation and restriction of movement punctuates the occupied West Bank. Access of Palestinians, both Muslims and Christians, to their holy sites particularly in Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Hebron is subject to a strict permit regime. The Jerusalem Post, the Israeli main English newspaper, and the Associated Press reported on 14th instant on the Israeli restrictions which continue to be imposed on Palestinian access to the third holiest shrine of Islam, Al-Aqsa Mosque, even in the current holy month of Ramadan, that the Israeli army 'turned back many of the West Bank faithful'. This is a flagrant violation of the right to freedom of worship.

This is the body addressing human rights and we have the right and the obligation to continue calling upon it to put an end to the suffering of our people under the Israeli occupation which must come to an end and will definitely come to an end, the sooner the better.