

Statement by Ambassador Masood Khan, Permanent Representative of Pakistan on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, on Agenda Item 7, "Human Rights Situation in Palestine and Other Occupied Arab Territories", 20 September 2007

Mr. President,

I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of the OIC.

The OIC thanks Prof. John Dugard for his report to the Council. We commend his consistent efforts to report fairly on the situation of human rights in the OPT. We admire him for his courage and respect his decision to discontinue his work. We wish him all success in his future endeavours.

The OIC thanks Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Professor Christine Chinkin for their report to the Council in June this year regarding their Mission to Beit Hanoun in implementation of resolution S-3/1 of the Council, which unfortunately did not take place.

Archbishop Tutu in his last report to the Council had described the plight of the Palestinians as unacceptable, adding that the Palestinians' suffering should end in the interest of all. Archbishop Tutu and Professor Chinkin have insisted that those responsible for Beit Hanoun should be held to account. The people of Beit Hanoun still await a fair hearing and justice.

Archbishop Tutu in his letter of August 31, addressed to you has informed that because of prior commitments it had been impossible for him and Professor Chinkin to travel to Beit Hanoun. We will appreciate, Mr. President, if you could apprise the Council whether Archbishop Tutu and Professor Chinkin were given the visa to travel to the region. This is important because Archbishop Tutu has talked about two aborted missions earlier after spending a total of two weeks in Geneva.

We welcome Archbishop Tutu's clear advice to the Council to remain seized of the matter and to consider at its 6th Session the various recommendations of the Mission made in its report to the Council on 13 June 2007. We have taken note of your letter to Archbishop Tutu.

Mr. President,

The OIC remains concerned over the deteriorating humanitarian and human rights situation in Palestine and other Occupied Arab Territories. We welcome the statement by the Secretary General expressing concern at the decision taken on September 19 by the Israeli Government to declare the Gaza Strip as "enemy entity" and the Government's announced intent to interrupt essential services such as electricity and fuel to the civilian population. The Secretary General has stated that such a step would be contrary to Israel's obligation towards the civilian population under international humanitarian and human rights law. The OIC strongly support the Secretary General's call for Israel to reconsider this decision.

Mr. President,

The Palestinians face military incursions; extra-judicial and targeted assassinations; restriction on movement; and demolition of houses and infrastructure. Continued arbitrary detention of Palestinian ministers and parliamentarians; erection of the separation wall; executions, abductions, and disappearances; the widespread practice of torture; and other human rights abuses that stalk their precarious existence.

Following his visit to the region in July this year, Special Rapporteur Martin Scheinin reported grave violations of human rights in the OPT triggered by the separation wall and associated "closures". These include right to property, work, health, education, private and family life, and human dignity. Socio-economic development of communities and integrity of family units, due to security screening and searches at checkpoints, have also been adversely affected.

Prof. Dugard has said earlier this year that targeted killings and extrajudicial executions were illegal under international humanitarian law and fail to meet the minimum requirements of Israel's own Supreme Court.

A number of recent UN reports, especially by WFP, FAO, UNRWA and OCHA have described the plight of the Palestinian people, highlighting food insecurity, "unconscionable" levels of poverty among Palestinian refugees in Gaza, and encroachment by the Israeli infrastructure in the West Bank fragmenting Palestinian communities.

Mr. President,

The continued occupation of the Golan has stifled economic activity there and has led to the impoverishment of the people of the Golan.

The Secretary General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, Prof. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, has expressed his firm condemnation of Israeli's violation of the Syrian airspace on 6 September 2007, considering it a flagrant violation of the international laws.

The OIC would like to draw to the attention of the Council to the plight of the Arab detainees in Israeli prisons, including the prisoners from the Occupied Syrian Golan.

Mr. President,

There is broad acknowledgment of the difficult and deteriorating human rights and humanitarian situation in the OPT, the Golan and other occupied Arab Territories. In this context, the OIC calls upon the Council to seriously consider the full and effective implementation of resolutions adopted by its regular and special sessions. While the only response to the serious situation faced by the people of the OPT and the Golan is the end of occupation, the human rights and humanitarian situation can be improved somewhat with the implementation of the resolutions adopted by the Council.

The OIC also calls on the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights should take a lead role in ensuring the implementation of Council resolutions. In view of the seriousness of the issue, there should be continuity in the personnel working on this issue, especially in view of the fact that the mandate holder may change.

We also call for the implementation of the recommendations of the High Level Mission for Beit Hanoun as well as those made by Professor Dugard. We also look forward to regular updates by the High Commission on the implementation of resolution S-2/1 of the Council.

The OIC insists that the Arab detainees in Israeli prisons should be released forthwith.

The OIC remains committed to work with our partners in finding the most effective methods of implementing resolutions of the Council on the OPT and other occupied Arab Territories.

Thank you, Mr. President.