

**STATEMENT BY
HIS EXCELLENCY MR. PAUL BADJI
CHAIRMAN
COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE
RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE**

Agenda item 18: Question of Palestine
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29 November 2007

Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Permit me, at the outset, to express on behalf of the Committee our sincere appreciation to all representatives of Member States, Observers, representatives of intergovernmental organizations, United Nations system entities and civil society who participated this morning in the special meeting of the Committee to observe the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. It convincingly demonstrated that the question of Palestine stayed high on the agenda of the United Nations and that the broad support for the exercise by the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights remained strong.

Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before I introduce for your consideration the four resolutions prepared by our Committee under this agenda item, allow me to make some brief remarks as regards the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and developments in the political process.

Today marks the 60th anniversary of the so-called Partition Resolution, General Assembly resolution 181(II) stipulating that independent Arab and Jewish States and the Special International Regime for the City of Jerusalem should come into existence in Palestine. With this historic decision the United Nations also took upon itself the permanent responsibility for the question of Palestine until it is resolved in all its aspects in accordance with international legitimacy.

Since then, the involvement of various United Nations organs and entities has been growing, assuring the Palestinian people that it would not be abandoned by the international community until a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to this burning issue had been achieved. Our Committee, Mr. President, is proud to be an essential part of the United Nations efforts to achieve a peaceful resolution of the question of Palestine and vows to continue its important work, entrusted to it by the General Assembly.

The Committee's position is that the continuing illegal occupation of the Palestinian Territory remains the root cause of the conflict. We emphasize the urgent need for a negotiated solution that will end the occupation, ensure the exercise by the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights and guarantee security for the State of Israel. This settlement must be based on international law, General Assembly resolution 194, Security Council resolutions 242, 338, 1397 and 1515 and other relevant United Nations resolutions, and the principles outlined in the Road Map and the Arab Peace Initiative.

Our Committee is encouraged by the latest diplomatic efforts aimed at revitalizing the peace process. In this connection, we are hopeful that the Annapolis conference will generate the much-needed momentum and lead to effective permanent status negotiations, resulting in a

two-State solution. It is also important that the members of the Quartet and their regional partners assist the parties by engaging themselves in this crucial endeavour.

In the meantime, the Committee is greatly disquieted by the unacceptably difficult situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. It is the Palestinian population in the Gaza Strip who carries the brunt of it, but the Palestinian people as a whole is forced to endure daily hardship and humiliation as a direct consequence of the policies and practices of Israel, the occupying Power.

Settlement construction in the occupied West Bank and the presence of over 400,000 Jewish settlers in the Palestinian Territory violate international law – the facts that are often neglected by major media organizations and are rarely noticed by the public. The Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice concerning the separation wall in the occupied West Bank and around East Jerusalem has never been heeded since it was issued over three years ago. Moreover, for the past four decades, the occupying Power has essentially disregarded its obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention. The human rights of the civilian Palestinian population are routinely violated. Palestinian civilians are frequent victims of Israeli military operations in their towns and villages.

Our Committee strongly condemns any activities indiscriminately targeting civilians, either by the Israeli army or by Palestinian groups firing mortars and rockets at Israeli towns. Such attacks by both sides must be stopped immediately, and those responsible must be brought to justice. At the same time, the Committee is alarmed by Israel's declaration of the Gaza Strip as a "hostile territory" and the introduction of stifling new sanctions, such as reducing the supply of fuel and electricity. These measures are yet another form of collective punishment of the population in the Gaza Strip and are in contravention of international humanitarian law.

The sealing-off of the Gaza Strip, as well as the continuing Israeli incursions into Palestinian population centres and the humiliating system of checkpoints throughout the West Bank have also contributed to the polarization within the Palestinian society. Our Committee has called upon the Palestinian leadership, the leaders of all factions and all Palestinians to unite in support of President Abbas and to resolve their political differences by peaceful means. We are calling for the restoration of the situation in the Gaza Strip to that which existed prior to the June events and for measures to be taken to preserve the territorial unity and integrity of the Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem.

At this critical time, I call upon the Government of Israel, to refrain from all actions that may destabilize the situation further, in particular the disproportionate use of military force, and the settlement activity, including the so-called "natural growth" in existing settlements. Israel must also stop the illegal construction of the West Bank wall. The occupying Power needs to take steps to significantly improve the humanitarian situation of the Palestinians by lifting curfews, easing restrictions on the movement of persons and goods, and resuming the return of Palestinian tax payments.

Our Committee firmly believes that the United Nations should continue to maintain its permanent responsibility towards the question of Palestine until it is effectively resolved in all its

aspects in accordance with international legitimacy. The Committee calls on the Security Council to act decisively in implementation of its own resolutions with respect to the question of Palestine, in particular resolutions 242 and 338. The Committee is also hopeful that, as the principal United Nations organ responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security, the Council will live up to its obligations under the United Nations Charter. The Committee for its part will continue to fulfil its General Assembly mandate aimed at helping the Palestinian people realize its inalienable rights.

Mr. President,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

With regard to the four resolutions to be adopted under this agenda item, I would like to inform you that the co-sponsors have asked for more time to be able to update the language of some of the draft resolutions reflecting the latest political developments. I shall introduce them at a later date to be announced.

Thank you.

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