

*Permanent Observer Mission
of the State of Palestine
to the United Nations*



البعثة المراقبة الدائمة
لدولة فلسطين
لدى الأمم المتحدة

Statement by H.E. Ambassador Dr. Riyad Mansour, Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations, Tenth Emergency Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly, 13 June 2018: Check against delivery

Mr. President,

I thank you for convening this important meeting in response to the urgent request to resume the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly to address the severe protection crisis that continues to be faced by the Palestinian people under Israel's occupation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and particularly at this time in the besieged, blockaded Gaza Strip.

We appreciate the seriousness with which this request has been carried forth, upon the initiative of the Arab Group and the OIC, and are deeply grateful to all the countries supporting this principled effort, including by co-sponsorship of the draft resolution that is now before the Assembly.

This initiative represents a genuine effort to address the recent escalation of violence and worsening conditions on the ground. It is firmly based on the belief that, by upholding shared responsibilities, in line with the Charter, international law and relevant UN resolutions, we can contribute to the efforts to defuse tensions, de-escalate the situation, deter further violence, and protect civilian lives.

Mr. President,

Our decision to approach to the Assembly was prompted by the Security Council's failure to act due to the veto cast on 1 June by a permanent member, which prevented adoption of the draft resolution that had been submitted by Kuwait and supported by a majority of Council members with a view to advancing the consideration of measures to guarantee the safety, well-being and protection of the Palestinian civilian population under Israel's occupation.

On the heels of that regrettable vote, we somberly marked, last week, the 51st anniversary of Israel's occupation of Palestinian and Arab territories in 1967, and were reminded again of the decades of failed attempts to bring an end to this occupation, to realize the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including to self-determination and freedom, and to establish a just peace based on the longstanding international consensus enshrined in the relevant UN resolutions.

This illegal, belligerent, military occupation is the primary source and root cause of the recurrent and emergent crises we face, and is the stark backdrop for our continued appeals to the international community for assistance and intervention. As the occupation intensifies in its brutality – witnessed every single day in the oppression, intimidation and humiliation of Palestinian men, women and children by the Israeli occupying forces and extremist settlers – and as the dangerous political impasse persists, the need to protect our people under this occupation remains urgent and unquestionable.

While we would have clearly preferred that the Security Council uphold its duties, the negative outcome has only emboldened Israel's impunity, further endangering Palestinian lives. Thus, we have been compelled to continue our efforts in the UN system to secure protection for our people.

We cannot remain silent in the face of the most violent crimes and human rights violations being systematically perpetrated against our people.

Faced with the recent killing 129 Palestinian civilians, including 16 children, and the injury of more than 13,600 civilians by the occupying forces, mainly as a result of lethal assaults against peaceful civilian protesters in Gaza; faced with the inhumane suffocation and collective punishment of 2 million Palestinians under Israel's blockade of Gaza, which has caused humanitarian devastation and brought the situation there to the brink of collapse; faced with the incessant, cruel repression and displacement of our people and the destructive settlement colonization of our land in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, as we are witnessing in these days in Khan Al-Ahmar and Abu Al-Helu, where Palestinian Bedouin families, over half children, are facing the mass demolition of their homes and properties, including schools, and the forced transfer of the entire community; faced with all of this, we cannot suffice with just an outcry or outrage.

It is our duty to address all aspects of this crisis and grave injustice and to alleviate, in any way we can, the suffering of our people, as we have repeatedly committed ourselves to doing through all available, peaceful and legal means. We ask for your invaluable solidarity and support in this endeavor.

Mr. President,

As stated at the outset, the draft resolution before the Assembly is intended to contribute to a de-escalation of the volatile situation, to deter violence against civilians, and to promote consideration of measures to protect Palestinian civilians. This process begins with a request to the Secretary-General to submit a report in this regard, including, *inter alia*, recommendations regarding an international protection mechanism. In the meantime, the Secretary-General and UN Special Coordinator are urged to continue engaging with concerned partners in the efforts to address urgent humanitarian and economic development needs in Gaza in particular, which we strongly encourage all to support.

The draft is rooted in international law and UN resolutions on the Palestine question and on the protection of civilians, as well as of medics, humanitarian personnel and journalists. It addresses all relevant dimensions of the current crisis, including violence on both sides, with an unequivocal condemnation of all acts of violence against civilians. It is a balanced draft, reached after extensive negotiations during the preceding Security Council process and the follow-up consultations and good-faith outreach that has sought the support of all delegations.

We therefore firmly reject the bad-faith attempt to insert an amendment that would radically unbalance the text and shift the Assembly's focus away from the core objective of protecting civilians and upholding international law. We call on all delegations to reject the politicization of this serious issue.

The reality is that this draft constitutes a responsible, yet very modest effort, especially considering the severity, extent and protracted nature of the protection crisis and nightmare being endured by Palestinians, young and old, under Israel's occupation and across over seventy years of this *Nakba*.

We appeal for the support of all delegations, consistent with longstanding, principled positions on the Palestine question and the historic efforts of the international community to ensure the application of international law to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and to advance the achievement of a just, lasting, comprehensive and peaceful solution. Moreover, we urge engagement by all concerned States in the efforts to remedy the prevailing crisis, including by support to UN agencies on the ground working day and night to meet humanitarian needs, particularly UNRWA, and by sharing relevant proposals with the Secretary-General in support of the fulfillment of his mandate.

We urge that everything possible be done to uphold the collective obligation to protect civilians in all circumstances, including Palestinian civilians, and to avert the further destabilization of the situation, with a view to the salvaging the prospects for peace, to which we remain committed and for which we have not yet lost all hope.

I thank you, Mr. President.