



SPECIAL MEETING TO MARK SIXTY YEARS OF DISPOSSESSION OF PALESTINE REFUGEES

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Closing statement by

H.E. Mr. Paul Badji
Chairman
Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights
of the Palestinian People

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, I would like to express our sincere appreciation to all the participants for their important statements. Our special thanks go to the distinguished panellists for sharing with us their valuable insights and expertise.

The unresolved question of Palestine is without parallel in the history of the modern world insofar as it has impacted the lives of so many millions of people for such a prolonged period of time. The events that unfolded in Mandate Palestine in the first half of 1948 led to the dispossession and deprivation of the entire Palestinian people of their homeland, their property and their identity. The major victims of the Nakba, the Palestine refugees, seem to have moved somehow to the periphery of the attention span of the international community, as an old and semi-forgotten refugee crisis that rarely makes the headlines anymore. The Palestine refugee issue weighs heavily on our collective conscience, as the prevailing situation of the refugees is one that stands out in sharp contrast to the lofty humanitarian ideals that we proclaim our allegiance to, as individuals and as States. Resolving the issue has been given a high priority by the international community in its efforts to find a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine. We simply cannot allow millions of Palestine refugees to continue to suffer forever, locked into a marginalized existence, disempowered, with little dignity or control over their environment, disgruntled, an easy prey for extremists, and a permanent source of regional instability.

The right of return of the Palestine refugees - an inalienable right - is not just a high-minded but unattainable humanitarian ideal, or a bargaining chip, expendable in the context of a future permanent settlement. Neither should the Palestine refugee issue be one of those intractable chronic situations that can only be expected to be deferred indefinitely and managed through humanitarian and security efforts. Workable solutions must be sought, by convincing just a few skeptics, clearing up some of the fog of the convenient misconceptions clinging to the issue, and challenging some of the myopic and complacent views. The situation of the Palestine refugees and the vortex of problems which it entails are not becoming better with the passage of time. This is a problem that demands a permanent solution.

The United Nations' position is that without a just solution to the issue of Palestine refugees in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (1948), a sustainable peace in the entire region will not be achieved. For its part, the Committee will continue to raise awareness of the root cause of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict - the occupation by Israel of the Palestinian Territory. It should be brought to an end on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 252 (1968), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002) and 1515 (2002), and the Arab Peace Initiative, leading to the creation of a Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side in peace and security with Israel.

Before concluding, I would like to inform you that all related documentation to this Meeting will be made available on the web site maintained by the Division for Palestinian Rights of the United Nations Secretariat.

I would like once again to express our appreciation to all the participants.

I now declare closed the Special meeting to mark sixty years of dispossession of Palestine refugees.
