



Bangladesh

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Statement by
Mr. Md Touhid Hossain
Foreign Secretary
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
at
the plenary of the 63rd session of the UN General Assembly
on Agenda Item 16: Question of Palestinian
New York, 24 November 2008

Mr. President,

Let me begin by thanking you for scheduling this very important meeting on the occasion of the observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people. While reaffirming our full solidarity with the Palestinian people and lending our unwavering support to their legitimate struggle for self-determination, Bangladesh stands firm in its position on the Arab-Israeli conflict for achieving a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

Mr. President,

Bangladesh delegation aligns itself with the statement made by Cuba on behalf of NAM. Given the importance of the matter, we would, however, like to highlight some of the points that are of particular concern to us.

Mr. President,

The people of Palestine have been under the illegal Israeli occupation over the last four decades. Their fundamental rights to self-determination and to have a sovereign State remain unrealized. The situation in the occupied territories continues to be in a state of despair. Millions are living in refugee camps in abject poverty, hunger, disease and malnutrition. Bangladesh is deeply concerned over the continued sufferings of the Palestinian people and the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the occupied territories.

Mr. President,

Israel has continued to violate international humanitarian law, by committing systematic human rights violation against the Palestinian people. The situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, has remained critical. The blockade in the Gaza Strip is yet another example of Israeli violation of international humanitarian law. Indiscriminate closures enforced by Israel are impeding access of humanitarian assistance to the occupied territories, halting commercial activities and causing loss of thousands of jobs. This has brought the economy on the verge of an irreversible collapse. Not only has it restricted access to basic necessities of life, it is also destroying the social fabric of the Palestinian people by causing widespread displacements. We demand immediate withdrawal of all restrictions on the movements of Palestinian civilians.

The continued expansion of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories and construction of the separation wall threaten to derail the ongoing peace negotiations. With the unabated construction of the wall, ignoring the ICJ Advisory opinion, the occupied territories are increasingly being fragmented into smaller parts, which will seriously affect the viability of a Palestine State. Bangladesh reiterates its call for immediate dismantling of the wall.

Mr. President,

My delegation draws attention to the fact that Israel, being a signatory to the relevant provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention which stipulates the responsibilities of an occupying power, cannot legally or morally absolve itself of its responsibilities to guaranteeing the basic human rights for the people under its occupation. The General Assembly and the Security Council in their resolutions adopted over the years have reconfirmed this obligation of Israel to ensure basic human rights of the Palestinian people. Bangladesh believes that full and sincere implementation of the relevant UNGA and Security Council resolutions can only resolve the Palestinian crisis.

Mr. President,

The situation of the occupied territories have further deteriorated during the last year in the face of relentless violence, destruction, torture, killing, curfew, closures, systematic violation of human rights and legal norms by the Israeli forces. The concerted Israeli actions to subdue the resistance of the Palestinian people in the form of collective punishment have broken all known international humanitarian norms. As mentioned in the Secretary General's latest Report, the situation on the ground in Israel and the occupied territories, including East Jerusalem, hampered political efforts to achieve the vision of two states living side by side in peace and security.

Mr. President,

We concur with the Secretary General's observation that with the launch of the Annapolis process and regular bilateral negotiations between Israel and Palestinians, new hopes for the achievement of a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine have emerged. Bangladesh is ready to play supportive role in this collective endeavour to achieve a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. But unless the two parties join the process with all sincerity and genuine political willingness, the process, like many other attempts in the past, will only raise some optimism before crushing to yet another letdown.

Mr. President,

The just and legitimate struggle of the Palestinian people for self determination and freedom from foreign occupation enjoys the strong support and solidarity of the entire international community. We welcome all recent regional and international efforts, including the revival of the Arab Peace Initiative and the Conference on Middle East hosted by the United States in Annapolis last year. We welcome the commitment to the establishment of the Palestinian State, and the agreement to start final status negotiations to resolve all core issues including borders, refugees, settlements and Jerusalem. To be fair, these issues must be resolved on the basis of the previous agreements, especially the relevant UN and Security Council resolutions, the principle of land for peace, the Madrid Peace Conference terms of reference, the Quartet's road map, and the Arab Peace Initiative. This will entail complete Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem. We are hopeful that a Peace Treaty would be realized in near future, without further delay and then implemented quickly and earnestly. Delay and obstruction would only exacerbate the situation and make the prospects for peace bleaker.

Mr. President,

The Secretary General's report reflects the dire humanitarian situation in the occupied territories. The international community must exercise its clout to ensure full compliance by Israel of its obligations to all the occupied territories. Israel must also end policies and actions that seek to change realities on ground that could prejudice final settlement, including the integrity and viability of the future Palestinian state. The discussions in Annapolis also recognized the crucial importance of addressing all aspects of the Arab-Israeli conflict in order to achieve comprehensive peace. We hope to see tangible progress on these parallel tracks to reach a just and durable resolution of the conflict.

Mr. President,

A lasting and sustainable resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, including the issue of Palestine which is the core to the long-lasting crisis, must be our collective strategic objective. All Member States must pledge complete commitment to this objective, and throw their full moral, diplomatic, political and economic support for its early realization. We strongly believe that this would not only help stabilize the other simmering situations in the region but also have a resounding positive impact on regional and international peace and security as a whole.

Mr. President,

In closing, we would like to underscore that Israeli activities in the occupied territories remain as a matter of grave concern for us. We express our full solidarity with the Palestinian people and reiterate our steadfast support to their legitimate and inalienable rights to a sovereign and independent State with Jerusalem as its capital.

I thank you, Mr. President.