



**CHAIR OF
THE COORDINATING BUREAU
OF THE
NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT**



Statement by H.E. Mrs. Ileana Núñez Mordoche, Chargé d'Affaires a.i. of Cuba, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, at the General Assembly debate on agenda item 16: "Question of Palestine"

New York, 24 November 2008.

Mr. President,

I have the honour to address the General Assembly, on this important occasion, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people is a special opportunity for the international community to renew and reaffirm its support of this heroic people's efforts to exercise its inalienable right to self-determination and to achieve independence and freedom. Today, we recall that the Palestinian people have for more than 60 years suffered from statelessness, dispossession and dispersal in exile, awaiting fulfilment of their right to return, and have for more than 40 years suffered under a brutal foreign occupation, denied their inalienable human rights. On this occasion we must reaffirm our commitment, on the basis of the Charter, the rules and principles of international law and United Nations resolutions, and must pledge to redouble our efforts to bring an end to this injustice by exerting the necessary efforts to resolve the question of Palestine in all its aspects, including a just resolution for the plight of the Palestine refugees, and to achieve the peace and justice that are long overdue.

Mr. President,

Regrettably, over the past year, the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, continued to deteriorate and to be marked by deadly violence, instability and high tensions. The toll of human lives, injured, displaced, homeless, impoverished and those without access to basic needs in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, especially in the besieged Gaza Strip, continues to increase at an alarming rate. The poverty rate is currently at 65.8% in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, reaching a total of 80% of the population in the Gaza Strip, where the majority of the population is dependent on food aid for survival and nearly 50% are unemployed.

The Non-Aligned Movement expresses its grave concern about the constant deterioration of the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, particularly as a result of the excessive and indiscriminate use of force by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian civilian population and its many other illegal policies and practices, including its inhumane and destructive measures of collective punishment against the Palestinian civilian population. Israel's collective punishment measures constitute a grave breach of international humanitarian law, violate virtually all of the human rights of the Palestinian people and have devastated their socio-economic conditions, amounting to a dire humanitarian crisis.

In this regard, Israel continues to impose closures, including by completely sealing-off the Gaza Strip, obstructing the movement of persons and goods, including food, medical, fuel and other essential humanitarian supplies. It also continues to impose a humiliating and discriminatory network of hundreds of checkpoints and roadblocks throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory,

seriously fragmenting and undermining the contiguity and integrity of the Territory and completely isolating East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank; causing serious damage to the Palestinian economy and the society as a whole. Moreover, it continues to arrest and detain thousands of Palestinian civilians, imprisoning them under inhumane conditions and subjecting to all-forms of ill-treatment, and continues to carry out intense military raids and incursions in Palestinian population centers, causing extensive loss of life and injury to Palestinian civilians, including children, and the deliberate and widespread destruction of property and land.

NAM condemns the prolonged Israeli military occupation of the Palestinian Territory since 1967 and expresses grave concern over such distressing developments and continued deterioration of the situation in the recent period. For four decades, Israel has been unrelentingly violating international law, including international humanitarian and human rights law, in its actions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, causing immense suffering to the Palestinian people and obstructing all efforts to promote the achievement of a just and lasting peace settlement.

In addition to the above-mentioned illegal practices and measures, for four decades, Israel has carried out deliberate and unlawful policies and practices aimed at altering the demographic composition, character and nature of the Palestinian land and at de facto annexing that land, particularly via measures such as the confiscation of large areas of Palestinian land, implementation of its illegal colonial settlement policy and, since 2003, its illegal construction of a Wall in the West Bank, including in and around East Jerusalem. Israel continues to pursue to these illegal policies and measures to this day in total disrespect for and in contravention of international law, including in particular the Fourth Geneva Convention, U.N. resolutions and the 9 July 2004 Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice.

NAM expresses its grave concern that, even under the peace process, Israel continues and has accelerated its unlawful settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, especially in and around East Jerusalem. Moreover, NAM is alarmed by the the rising incidence of Israeli settler violence, harassment and intimidation against Palestinian civilians, their properties and agricultural land, and calls upon the occupying Power to take all necessary measures to bring an end to settler violence and lawlessness and to hold the perpetrators of crimes against Palestinian civilians accountable for their actions.

NAM condemns all such illegal actions by Israel, the occupying Power, and calls for their immediate cessation. Israel must cease all settlement activities and all other illegal policies and practices infringing upon and violating the human rights of the Palestinian people. Moreover, NAM believes that such illegal Israeli actions, including ongoing military attacks, have seriously undermined the functioning of the Palestinian Authority and have undoubtedly contributed to the growing polarization in the Palestinian society. In this regard, NAM expresses hope for the speedy restoration of Palestinian national unity, which is important for the achievement of their legitimate national aspirations and goals, and calls upon all concerned parties to exert the necessary efforts to promote reconciliation and unity.

Mr. President,

NAM underscores the severity of the critical situation being faced by the Palestinian civilian population in the Gaza Strip due the suffocating siege and closure of all its crossings by Israel, the occupying Power. Such unlawful collective punishment of the Palestinian civilian population has caused the further deterioration of socio-economic conditions, leading to the widespread of incidence of poverty and hunger, and has caused the humanitarian situation to continue to deteriorate to deeply disturbing levels. In this regard, it is incumbent upon the international community to demand that Israel respect all of its obligations under international law, including

humanitarian and human rights law, and cease all such illegal and inhumane practices against the Palestinian civilian population in Gaza.

Israel has clear responsibilities as an occupying Power and it must not be absolved of them and there is no pretext that can justify its violation of its obligations and responsibilities. It must comply with its legal obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention, which is applicable to the entire Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and, in this connection, it must be emphasized that the Gaza Strip clearly remains a part of the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

NAM thus reiterates its calls upon Israel, the occupying Power, to halt all of its violations and grave breaches of international law and to scrupulously abide by international humanitarian law by which it is bound as an occupying Power.

In this regard, the Movement calls for the opening of all crossings to allow for the movement of persons and goods and the unfettered access and movement of humanitarian personnel and supplies, including those of the United Nations agencies on the ground. Moreover, NAM calls for Israel's fulfilment of its responsibility to repair all of the damages caused to the infrastructure of the Gaza Strip.

Today, we also call upon all States and the international community as a whole to continue to urgently provide economic and financial assistance to the Palestinian people during this critical period in order to alleviate the current financial and humanitarian crisis they continue to face.

Mr. President,

The NAM member countries, once again, call upon the Security Council to take on its Charter responsibilities, take the necessary actions to implement its own resolutions and take the necessary steps to compel Israel to respect international law and end its occupation and all illegitimate and illegal practices in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem.

It is unacceptable that the Security Council, which is mainly responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security, continues failing to fulfill its permanent responsibility regarding the Palestinian question until it is resolved in all its aspects on the basis of international law.

The unilateral measures applied by Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, are a serious threat to the possibility of achieving a negotiated agreement in the form of the two-State solution on the basis of the 1967 borders, and thus threaten the prospects for peace.

In this regard, the NAM expresses concern that little progress has been made in the peace process, which was re-launched following the Annapolis Conference in November of 2007 and the resumption of direct, bilateral negotiations between the Israeli and Palestinian sides. Despite ongoing negotiations and meetings between the two sides, the process continues to be obstructed and undermined by Israel's continuing pursuit of illegal policies and practices in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and its disrespect for the commitments it has undertaken in the peace process. NAM calls upon all concerned parties, including the Quartet, to exert the necessary efforts to promote the peace process towards the achievement of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace.

Mr. President,

On this occasion, as we gather once again to address the question of Palestine more than sixty years since its inception, NAM reaffirms its support for the just cause of the Palestinian people and their efforts to realize their legitimate national aspirations.

NAM will continue to support the Palestinian people and its leadership in order to bring an end to the Israeli occupation that began in 1967, in accordance with the rules and principles of international law and relevant UN resolutions. We reaffirm our unwavering commitment to a just and peaceful solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and to the realization by the Palestinian people of their inalienable rights, including their right to self-determination and sovereignty in their independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Thank you very much, Mr. President.