

**REPORT BY**

**H. E. MR. ABDOU SALAM DIALLO**

**CHAIRMAN**

**COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS  
OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE ON THE**

**UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL MEETING  
ON THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE**

**UNITED NATIONS OFFICE**

**Vienna, 7 and 8 March 2011**

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to report to the Committee on the United Nations International Meeting on the Question of Palestine held at the United Nations Office at Vienna on 7 and 8 March 2011. The theme was *"The urgency of addressing the plight of Palestinian political prisoners in Israeli prisons and detention facilities"*. It was the first ever Meeting, held under the Committee's auspices, dedicated to this issue, which has important human rights ramifications, and is key to peace efforts.

The turnout at the Meeting was overall good. It was attended by representatives of 45 Governments, Palestine, 2 intergovernmental organizations, in addition to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean, as well as three United Nations system entities, 13 civil society organizations, and two media organizations.

The Committee was represented by a delegation composed of Ambassador Zahir Tanin of Afghanistan, Vice-Chairman of the Committee; Ambassador Pedro Núñez Mosquera of Cuba, Vice-Chairman of the Committee; Ambassador Saviour Borg of Malta, Rapporteur of the Committee; Ambassador Riyad Mansour of Palestine; and myself, Chairman of the Committee and Head of the delegation.

The Committee delegation was gratified that at the opening session, Minister Qaraq made an important keynote presentation highlighting the plight of the Palestinian political prisoners in Israeli detention, as well as the strategies adopted by the Palestinian Authority in this regard. He spoke of the need to internationalize the issue of prisoners and to treat them where appropriate as Prisoners of War, including the possibility of referring their status to the International Court of Justice. His address set the tone for the Meeting, and the themes he raised were echoed by many participants.

In the ensuing plenary sessions, presentations were made by 15 experts. The Meeting, among other things, looked into the current situation and conditions of imprisonment of Palestinians in Israeli prisons and detention facilities, including the situation of women and minors. It discussed legal aspects of the arrests and detentions by the occupying Power. The Meeting also considered the issue in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian political process.

During the two days of deliberations, the participants noted with concern that the conditions of detention were often extremely poor, and in some cases, life-threatening. Israel continued to practice torture and other forms of mistreatment against Palestinian detainees, who have drawn attention to their situation through hunger strikes, the most recent in January 2011. The participants drew special attention to the situation of the Palestinian women and minors, as well as of the physically and psychologically vulnerable prisoners, who were reportedly subjected to mistreatment and deprived of adequate health care. The participants noted the devastating effect of detention on Palestinian prisoners and their families. The participants stressed the urgent need for reintegration of former prisoners into society.

The participants expressed grave concern at Israel's widespread use of administrative detention, without charges, trial or a right of defence. Participants called on Israel to apply the Third and the Fourth Geneva Conventions, and meet minimum international standards for due

process. They called on the High Contracting Parties to the Geneva Conventions to act to ensure the respect of their provisions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

The participants underscored that the issue of Palestinian prisoners had a major impact on the Palestinian society and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In that context, the release of a substantial number of Palestinian prisoners, as well as the immediate release of the imprisoned legislators would constitute a positive step towards the resumption of the political process. Many participants felt that peace cannot be complete without the release of all Palestinian prisoners. The continued stalemate in the political process, and the continuing settlement construction, remained a cause for serious concern.

The Meeting concluded with the issuance of the Concluding Statement of the Organizers, which has been made available to you.

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would also like to say a few words about other engagements of the Committee delegation during its stay in Vienna in connection with the Meeting. On 7, 8 and 9 March, the delegation met with:

Mr. Maxwell Gaylard, Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

Mr. Sergio Piazzi, Secretary-General of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean.

Mr. Yuri Fedotov, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and Director-General of the United Nations Office at Vienna (UNOV).

Mr. Issa Qaraqe, Minister for Prisoners' Affairs of the Palestinian Authority.

Ms. Ann Clwyd, MP, President of the Middle East Committee of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).

Amb. Stefan Lehne, Political Director of the Ministry for European and International Affairs of Austria.

These meetings allowed us to explore ways to:

- Re-launch the political process, with a view to a permanent settlement of the question of Palestine;
- Reinforce the institutional capacities of the Palestinian Authority;
- Ensure respect for the human rights of the Palestinians, particularly those of the political prisoners (including women and children);
- Upgrade the level of the diplomatic representation of the State of Palestine across the world, particularly in Europe.

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to inform you that in accordance with established practice, the report of the Meeting will be issued, in due course, as a publication of the Division for Palestinian Rights. Comprehensive information about the Meeting has also been posted on the “Question of Palestine” website maintained by the Division.