

Statement by the Bangladesh Delegation on the issue of Palestine,**Human Rights Council, 22 March 2010**

Mr. President,

My Delegation associates itself with the statements made by Pakistan on behalf of the OIC Group and Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Mr. President,

The situation in the Occupied Arab territories remains a permanent concern for my delegation. From all credible sources, what we gather is that the situation is grave and getting worse every day. The Goldstone report provided us with a comprehensive account of violations by Israeli authorities in the occupied territories. The people of Palestine are, indeed, in dire situation due to Israeli blockades, closers, confiscation of land, and demolition of houses. Despite all requests and calls to stop construction of settlements, these activities continue. The settlement is the single most important factor that would make future creation of a viable state of Palestine impossible. The construction of separation walls continued despite the advisory opinion by the International Court of Justice declaring it illegal. The walls have effectively deprives the Palestinian people from enjoyment of their property and access to employment and livelihood, access to natural resources necessary for human survival.

Poverty, hunger, disease and unemployment have risen in occupied territories to alarming levels as a result of deliberate, unlawful policies by the occupying power. Today, 80 per cent of civilians in Gaza live below the poverty line; 80 per cent of the population is dependent on food aid for survival. Without redress, tensions and despair in the Occupied territories would continue to rise and further destabilize the area.

The flickers of hope generated by the international community through peace initiatives quickly disappear due to periodic and deliberate escalation of the conflict by Israel. ~~Entire 1.5 million people who live in the Gaza Strip are being punished for the actions of a few Palestinians. It is often argued that these are actions on self defence. This is a travesty.~~

There is no legal, political, moral or human justification for such actions. One of the basic principles of international law is proportionality of action and that military actions must distinguish between military and civilian targets. Israel is violating this principle on a regular basis, resulting in huge civilian casualties. These actions are illegal and clear breach of the fourth Geneva Convention. These are crimes against humanity and subjected to international criminal law as the Goldstone report has viewed.

While the demand for an independent investigations on the damages incurred the Israeli attacks to Palestinian life and property in Gaza is getting stronger, Israel is opening a new front of aggression in the East Jerusalem to frustrate ~~the~~ efforts to restart the peace process. The actions of Israel to destroy religious and cultural heritages in the Occupied Palestinian Territories are beyond civility and legal norms. The construction of synagogues on Waqf property and the declaration of Al-Haram al Ibrahimy in Hebron and Billal Mosque in Bethlehem as Israel's national heritage are outrageous. The announcement on new settlements in the West Bank angered even its staunchest allies. Condemnations are pouring in from all quarters as it is considered a deliberate attempt against the revival of peace negotiations.

Mr. President,

Occupation of the Palestinian land and Syrian Golan is at the heart of the Middle-East conflict, this must end. We firmly believe that a lasting and viable peace in the region can only be achieved through recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people to have a viable state of their own. It is incumbent upon this Council to take a clear and unequivocal stand on this flagrant defiance of international law, particularly on the violation of fundamental human rights. The Human Rights Council must stand by the oppressed. The Palestinians deserve a life of dignity and the right to enjoy their human rights as much as any other people in the world. We must do more to create an atmosphere conducive to start negotiations for finding a comprehensive resolution. Only a negotiated political settlement can guarantee long-term security and peace in the Middle-East that we all hope to achieve.

I thank you.