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Statement by

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at

The General Debate of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee
(Fourth Committee) of the 61st Session of the United Nations General Assembly
on

**'Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices
Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs
of the Occupied Territories " [agenda item 32].**

New York, 07 November 2006

Let me begin by warmly felicitating you Mr. Chairman on your skillful steering of the work of the Committee. Our profound appreciation is owed to Ambassador Prasad Kariyawasam of Sri Lanka, Chairman of the Special Committee and members of the Committee Ambassador Ousmane Camara of Senegal (in Geneva) and Ambassador Hamidon Ali of Malaysia for their efforts despite refusal by Israel to allow the Committee to visit the occupied Palestinian Territories.

Mr. Chairman,

Over the past year, some propitious developments like the Palestinian legislative elections, formation of a new Palestinian Government, withdrawal of Israeli Defence Forces (IDF), evacuation of Jewish Settlements from the Gaza Strip and a few settlements in the Northern West Bank accompanied by a significantly decreasing level of violence before and immediately after the withdrawal had raised hopes of amelioration in the plight of Palestinians in the occupied territories. However, such hopes quickly evaporated following Israel's continued adherence to counterproductive policy and practices particularly in the wake of election of the Palestinian Government. This report provides a dismal commentary of such practices and policies and details their devastating effects and the grim realities on the ground.

As the report of the Committee clearly depicts, the human rights situations in the occupied territories have reached a new low following the eruption of unprecedented levels of violence triggered by the launching of massive Israeli offensives in retaliation to Palestine paramilitary operations in June 2006. Israeli actions to subdue the Palestinian resistance, which is their legitimate right, have

broken all known international humanitarian norms. Recent Israeli military operations, mostly targeted against civilians, totally isolated the Gaza strip from the outside world and led to re-occupation of its several parts, took a heavy death toll on Palestinian civilians including women and children and cut off access of emergency humanitarian assistance to the affected population. These attacks also caused extensive damage to Palestinian households, basic utility services, infrastructures and establishments, razed large stretches of agricultural croplands and destroyed water wells and irrigation channels. Even schools and other educational institutions, mosques, cemeteries, health clinics were not spared. The only power plant in Gaza was bombed out of action severely disrupting civic amenities.

Palestinian communities in the West Bank and Arabs in the occupied Syrian Golan were no less in a better situation. Israeli settlement policy, draconian detention laws, use of indiscriminate and overwhelming forces, policy of collective punishment and economic deprivation, land confiscation, restriction on movement and property ownership, enhancement of taxes, evacuation, and exploitation of resources continued unabated in flagrant violation of international law transforming the demography in the occupied territories. As the macabre campaign continues, the Committee apprehends that similar trauma might befall other Palestinian communities very soon.

Mr. Chairman,

It is dismaying to note that signing of the Agreement on Movement and Access in November 2005, failed to improve the situation. Rather heavier restrictions on movement of Palestinian exports, imports, services and people at most of the commercial crossings, raising of additional road blocks and physical barriers, and building of separate routes for Israelis and Palestinians have emaciated the economic activities below subsistence level. Suspension of funding by the major donors and non-payment of taxes and revenues by Israel to the Palestinian Authority has stopped payment of salaries to the Palestinian Civil Servants and shrunk its resource base for sustaining the basic utility networks. Imposition of de facto sanction regime by Israel and tightening of the closure regime are chiefly responsible for the drastic rise in employment and poverty level which is further exacerbating the humanitarian catastrophe.

Despite international condemnation, the Government of Israel continues to construct, in an accelerated pace, the separation wall-- well inside the Palestinian territory and well beyond the green line along planned routes deliberately cutting through heavily populated Palestinian urban areas. This is destroying Palestinian settlements, splitting Palestinian families and communities, and cutting off their access to water sources, their lands, employment, health, education and other social services, and business and city centres. The Israeli policy to create segregation zones is causing incremental confiscation of fertile Palestinian lands,

water sources and natural resources, and further aggravating the encirclement and isolation of the ever-shrinking Palestinian land. These well-orchestrated activities are undermining the territorial integrity and contiguity of Palestinian habitats and eroding a nation's morale. They are serious impediments to the Road Map and to the achievement of a two-state solution. Bangladesh reiterates that the construction of the wall should not only be stopped immediately but segments already built should also be dismantled.

Mr. Chairman,

The phenomenon of foreign occupation must be recognized as central to the issue of Palestine. Israel, the occupying power, cannot legally or morally absolve itself of the responsibilities enshrined in the Fourth Geneva Convention to which it is a signatory. The General Assembly and Security Council resolutions adopted over the years also endorse meeting of these obligations. However, as the report of the Committee demonstrates, Israel is systematically trampling down the basic human rights of the Palestinian people with impunity and in continued brazen disregard for all its obligations.

My delegation remains gravely concerned at the Israeli practices in the occupied territories. We reiterate our full and unflinching support to the cause and legitimate and inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to a sovereign and independent homeland. We therefore, demand full and immediate withdrawal of Israeli forces from the occupied territories. We also call upon Israel to exercise maximum restraint and bring all its grisly policies and practices to a total halt. We maintain that the Road Map drawn up by the Quartet holds the key to a peaceful solution to the conflict. We fully endorse the recommendations of the Committee and urge for their implementation.

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation is particularly disturbed by some of the Committee's observations such as, unprecedented level of anger and misery among the Palestinians and other Arabs in the occupied territories; questioning, perhaps for the first time ever, by the Palestinians of the role of UN in the current crisis; and prevalence of a general feeling that their plight is being neglected by the international community. These reflect the frustration and loss of faith which is not a good sign. Indeed in the recent times there has been some loss of momentum in the exertions of the international community and absence of tangible deliveries. It is high time we re-engage ourselves vigorously in the peace process so that the confidence of the peace-loving peoples, both Palestinians and Israelis, placed on the UN system is vindicated.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.
