

Permanent Observer Mission  
of Palestine  
to the United Nations



البعثة المراقبة الدائمة  
لفلسطين  
لدى الأمم المتحدة

Statement by Mr. Yousef N. Zeidan, Adviser, before the Third Committee, on Agenda item 68:  
Elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, 66<sup>th</sup> Session of the  
United Nations General Assembly, New York, 31 October 2011 (Check Against Delivery)

Mr. Chairman,

The Committee has convened once again to discuss the scourge of racism that continues to be prevalent throughout the world causing great injustice and inequality. The many speakers who spoke earlier in this debate depicted the horrors as a result of racism and racial discrimination. In this regard, my delegation calls upon the international community to take firm, effective and decisive action to eliminate racism and all forms of intolerance whenever and wherever they occur.

Unfortunately, Mr. Chairman, the Palestinian people have not been spared from this sinister experience, as the scourge of racism against the Palestinian people has continued since 1948 by Israel which is most visible by its discriminatory policies and practices, particularly its most favored and longest practice: the expulsion of indigenous Palestinians from their homeland and to replace them with Jewish settlers.

Mr. Chairman,

Today, my delegation would like to focus on the everyday life of Palestinians living in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. Since 1967, every Israeli Government has institutionalized colonial and apartheid-like policies for the purpose of serving one objective, which is to control as much land with the least amount of Palestinians by any means possible.

For 44 years, Israel, the occupying Power has been engaged in grave breaches of international law, international humanitarian law and human rights law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, illegally attempting to Judaize Jerusalem and its surrounding neighborhoods. Over 500,000 Jewish settlers have been illegally transferred by the occupying Power to nearly 225 Israeli settlements built on confiscated Palestinian land throughout the Occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, in grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Israel continues to build settlements and evict Palestinians and replace them with settlers to this very moment, even when the international community is attempting to push the peace process for a two-State solution, which remains elusive due to Israel's preference to entrench its occupation rather than genuinely seeking a peaceful solution.

Moreover, the calculated and discriminatory policies of Israel, the occupying Power, target Palestinians in every aspect of their life, from residency, water, electricity, roads, education, construction, tax collection, marriage and citizenship laws, identification cards as well as access to holy places.

Mr. Chairman,

Through you, I ask the committee to imagine for one moment that they are a Palestinian man or women living in the Old City of Jerusalem. And, for just one moment, imagine that their family and

they hold temporary residency in the city of birth of their great grandparents, their grandparents, their parents and all their siblings. Imagine that they cannot be absent from their city for more than two years or their residency will be revoked. Imagine that their daughter does not receive the same education as her Jewish neighbor or imagine that they cannot build a chicken coup in their yard, let alone a new level on their existing home for their newly married son. Imagine they are forced to pay taxes to an artificial municipality, which hopes to eventually evict them and their family and replace you with illegal settlers from another. Imagine that they have to show their identification card, which states their religion every time they want to enter or exit their own town. Imagine that they have relatives who were born in the very home they live in, but are barred from the city. The reasons, Mr. Chair is simply because they are a Christian or a Muslim Palestinian named Joseph or Ya'koub and not a Jewish Yossi or Jacob.

Sadly, there is no end to the discrimination of Palestinians by Israel, including even barring them from entering Holy Jerusalem to celebrate Easter at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher or Eid al Adha at the Al Aqsa Mosque. They even are not even permitted to take the shortest road to a nearest hospital in Jerusalem, and are rather forced to take the longer road to a further hospital in Ramallah because they are not Jewish cannot access the settler roads which weave throughout the occupied West Bank including East Jerusalem.

Mr. Chairman,

Having said the above, my delegation believes it to be important to recall the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms for Racial Discrimination of 1996 as well as the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid of 1973, which criminalizes actions taken by one group "for the purpose of establishing and maintaining domination by one racial group of persons over any other racial group of persons and systematically oppressing them". Israel's persistent violation of these conventions is ample proof of its intention to continue its apartheid-like policies at the expense of an entire people, and ultimately at the expense of peace.

This belligerency and impunity has also translated into violence. In recent years we have seen a rise in settler attacks against Palestinian civilians, property, and crops. Most worrying are the increasingly cowardly hate crimes committed against Palestinian mosques, churches, and cemeteries – in which Israeli settlers, under the cover of night and protection of Israeli occupying forces, burn these sacred places leaving behind hateful slurs and slogans in the ashes.

Mr. Chairman,

There is a great need for resolve and political will to rid the world of its gravest shortcomings: racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and all related intolerance. Our collective future, which we all agree must be one of tolerance and cultural understanding, depends on translating our efforts into effective action. Mr. Chairman, this same political will must also be mustered to finally bring an end to Israel's occupation all of its racist and discriminatory actions and measures. In this regard, Israel, the occupying Power, must be compelled to fulfill its obligations under international law and relevant United Nations resolutions and allow the Palestinian people to realize their inalienable rights, including their right to self-determination, so that their children can grow and live in a free and tolerant State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman

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