

H.E. Mr. Palitha T.B. Kohona (Permanent Rep.  
of Sri Lanka)

**Message from the Chairman of the Special Committee to Investigate  
Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People  
and other Arabs of the Occupied Territories on the Occasion of the  
International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.**

New York and Geneva, 30 November, 2009

Distinguished colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

Building peace and ensuring security, is fundamental to international diplomacy and has been an essential concern in United Nations discussions over the past six decades. While the world has avoided a global conflict, many unresolved disputes and conflicts remain around us, challenging the values and aspirations of humanity. The Palestinian issue, which is at the core of Middle East instability undoubtedly, has been one of the key items of concern in contemporary international politics. However, the full implementation of the UN Security Council Resolutions and the General Assembly Resolutions on the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people remains far from realization, and it is a matter of utmost disappointment, for us.

This year's International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People comes at a critical time, when the hopes for a viable peace in the Middle East and a lasting solution to the Palestinian issue seem somewhat distant and bleak. The extensive harm caused to civilian lives and property during the Gaza war early this year has shaken the confidence and trust among the Parties to the conflict, thus hindering any meaningful negotiations soon. The deteriorating humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian Territories and the continued Israeli siege only has added to the misery of the civilian population and has stalled the momentum achieved during recent peace initiatives. However, the continuing efforts at different levels, to revive the dialogue between the parties to the conflict engender hope, that the stage for peace can be set up again. We truly should join our hands in support of an independent and viable Palestine State that co-exists with the State of Israel, in peace and security.

During this year alone, several UN-mandated bodies presented reports following investigations on different aspects of the situation in the occupied territories, including the Forty-First report of the 'Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and other Arabs of the Occupied Territories', which I presented to the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (fourth Committee) two weeks ago. All these reports corroborated each other regarding the dire humanitarian situation in the occupied territories. The extensive discussions held in different UN fora following the presentation of these reports echoed in no uncertain terms, the need for an expeditious resolution of the Palestinian question.

Among others, the Special Committee was particularly concerned over the continued violations of the human rights in the occupied Palestinian Territories. Operation Cast Lead by Israel reportedly killed over 1200 Palestinian civilians in Gaza; many of them were women and children. The sanctions and blockade imposed by Israel precludes rebuilding the lost livelihoods of the Palestinians. Prospects for economic development and trade remain grim, creating a society afflicted with dependency. Continued reliance on humanitarian assistance will therefore be inevitable. Stringent restrictions on the flow of humanitarian assistance and other vital daily supplies into the Gaza strip have contributed to worsen the poverty and the living conditions of the Palestinian population. Their rights to a decent living and the full enjoyment of other basic rights such as access to health, education and shelter are at stake.

The Special Committee observed that the human rights situation in the West Bank and East Jerusalem too, remain precarious. Numerous road blocks, check points and permission systems have constrained the freedom of movement to a great extent. Illegal Israeli settlement activities, settler violence and the construction of the separation wall in contravention of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, is a serious threat to the viability and contiguity of a future Palestinian State. Israeli security measures are often in excess of legitimate security concerns. The Arbitrary imposition of administrative, legal and judicial measures, in defiance of International law, the Fourth Geneva Convention and International Humanitarian Law have brought undue suffering to the Palestinian population in the occupied territories.

No peace solution is viable, nor is it bound to last, unless couched in a process that seeks to redress injustice and afford equal protection and rights to all the people. On this solemn occasion, the international community, ought to renew its commitment, within the mandates and capacities of our respective governments and organizations, to ensure that the Palestinian people are accorded their inalienable rights as citizens of a sovereign member of the UN family.

Thank you.