



**STATEMENT BY
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PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED NATIONS
GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**ON AGENDA ITEM 16: QUESTION OF
PALESTINE**

UNITED NATIONS

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We meet today to consider the Question of Palestine, which remains the oldest unresolved issue before the General Assembly. We have before us the Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the Secretary-General's report on the Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine.

This morning we observed the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. This day is an occasion for renewing our commitment to the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian People, primarily the right to self determination and the right to their independent state and reaffirming our support to a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East. The fact that after all these years the Question of Palestine still awaits a peaceful settlement, weighs heavily on the United Nations. This day should also remind us that the human cost of the Middle East conflict is borne by the Palestinian people. Their suffering will continue until the Question of Palestine is resolved.

The Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip has forced 1.5 million Palestinian civilians into poverty and isolation. The Israeli military offensive almost a year ago further exacerbated the already desperate situation. International efforts to rebuild the Gaza Strip and to assist its civilian population are blocked by Israel. The United Nations has repeatedly called on Israel to lift the blockade, but Israel continues to impose collective punishment on Gaza's civilian population, in contravention of international law. Israel must heed the call of the international community to release its stranglehold on civilian life in the Gaza Strip and to lift the illegal blockade.

Earlier this month, the General Assembly endorsed the Report of the United Nations Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict, and called on Israel and the Palestinian side to undertake independent, credible investigations, towards ensuring accountability and justice. The Secretary-General has been requested to report on the implementation of the resolution before 2 February. The General Assembly will in due course consider the report of the Secretary-General and any further action.

The situation of the question of Palestine is in a critical juncture and need a sustained focus and reinvigoration of the peace process.

The renewed engagement by President Barack Obama to promote peace in the Middle East has the support of the international community. But on the ground, the obstacles to peace remain in place. The continued expansion of Israeli settlements and construction of the separation barrier on occupied territory undermine the peace process and violate United Nations resolutions. Continued Israeli actions to change the status of Jerusalem further endanger the viability of a Palestinian state, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The United Nations has consistently upheld the rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination and will continue to work for a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine on the basis of the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, the Madrid framework, the Road Map and the Arab Peace Initiative. These resolutions and agreements are the building blocks of a Palestinian state and must be implemented. In order to achieve a comprehensive peace in the region, the international community must also work for just and

lasting settlement that ensures the withdrawal of Israel from the Syrian Golan and the territories it occupies in Lebanon.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Paul Badji of Senegal, who will speak in his capacity as Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.