

UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE  
PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF SOLIDARITY WITH THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

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By Doug Hostetter

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Mr. Chairman, Mr. President of the General Assembly, Deputy  
Secretary-General, President of the Security Council, Ambassador  
Kohona, Ambassador Mansour, Excellencies, Sisters & Brothers:

I would like to congratulate the Chair and all of the newly elected  
members of the Bureau, and let you know that the Israel-Palestine  
NGO Working Group and civil society organizations around the world  
pledge to stand with you and the people of Palestine as you give  
leadership and guidance to 2014, the International Year of Solidarity  
with the Palestinian People.

I want to thank the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable  
Rights of the Palestinian People for the invitation to participate as a

civil society representative in today's first meeting of the Committee in this International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

The Israel Palestine NGO Working Group is composed of NGOs accredited to the UN, but who are also directly involved in humanitarian, development and peace work with the people of Palestine. For 15 years the Working Group has been a strong advocate for a just and lasting peace while also serving as a dynamic bridge between grass roots work in Israel-Palestine and the United Nations community. The Working Group maintains that a just settlement of the conflict would be in accord with all international, humanitarian, and human rights laws, conventions and agreements. We support the centrality of the United Nations and Security Council resolutions 242, 338, and 446. According to these resolutions and international humanitarian law, a just settlement would include, but not be limited to, the following principles:

- Uphold the rights of all civilians to feel secure within their own borders
- End the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza
- Uphold the rights of refugees and displaced persons
- Reaffirm East Jerusalem as part of the occupied Palestinian Territories
- Reaffirm the application of international law to Israel-Palestine

Each member of the Working Group engages in a variety of activities in solidarity with the Palestinian people that range from standing with Palestinian partners on the ground to calling for a boycott of products made in illegal settlements, to encouraging divestment from corporations that benefit from the occupation. Together the group provides educational events within the UN community that

advocate for peace. Many of these events provide an opportunity for the voices of our Palestinian partners to be heard.

I would like to encourage the Bureau to actively include civil society organizations in the implementation of events for the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. Although some civic organizations are aligned with particular governments or ideologies, many of us in civil society believe that all people were created in the image of God, and we give our allegiance and service to a global humanity, especially those who have been oppressed or deprived of their basic human rights. The Israel-Palestine NGO Working Group and other civil society organizations are able to say out loud, the prohibited truths that are seldom mentioned in polite company of diplomatic forums or the halls at the United Nations where the power and influence of one permanent member of the Security Council seems to stifle both debate and action on this issue.

It is unconscionable that the Fourth Geneva Convention, adopted in 1949, ratified by 194 countries and declared to be customary international law by the Security Council in 1993, states clearly in Art. 49. "Individual or mass forcible transfers, as well as deportations of protected persons from occupied territory to the territory of the Occupying Power or to that of any other country, occupied or not, are prohibited, regardless of their motive." This Convention is seldom mentioned as the world seems to stand by as Israeli occupying forces demolish Palestinian homes in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and is attempting to move 70,000 Bedouins from their homes and lands in the Palestinian desert.

It is unconscionable that the Security Council is muted by the use of the veto while Israel expands its population in the occupied Palestinian territory despite the fact that Art. 49. of the Fourth Geneva Convention clearly states "The Occupying Power shall not deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies."

It is unconscionable that the United Nations and the majority of the world remains silent while Israel has imposed a land, sea and air blockade of Gaza since 2007, in punishment for Hamas winning the Palestinian Legislative election in Gaza, despite the fact that the Fourth Geneva Convention clearly states that collective punishment is a crime of war.

Yesterday was the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. a civil rights leader here in the United States. He would have been 85 years old yesterday had he not been assassinated. Although Dr. Kings voice is now silent, his vision and his dream have inspired generations of people around the world. The goal of the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People echoes the dream about which Dr. King spoke in his speech at the “March on Washington” 50 years ago this past August, “I dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will **not** be judged by the color of their skin, but the content of their character.” Dr. King had more than a dream, he also had a challenge to each of us, “History will have to record that the greatest tragedy of this period of social transformation was not the strident clamor of the bad people, but the appalling silence of the good people. . . Human progress is neither automatic nor inevitable . . . Every step toward the goal of justice requires sacrifice, suffering and struggle; the tireless exertions and passionate concern of dedicated individuals.”

I call on the Bureau to join with the Israel-Palestine NGO Working Group and civil society organizations around the world in the tireless, passionate struggle for dignity and justice for all of the people of Palestine and her neighbors.