



# General Assembly

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## Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

### Summary record of the 363rd meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 2 September 2014, at 10.30 a.m.

*Chair:* Mr. Tanin (Vice-Chair) ..... (Afghanistan)

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*In the absence of Mr. Diallo (Senegal), Mr. Tanin (Afghanistan), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.*

### **Adoption of the agenda**

1. *The agenda was adopted.*

### **Update on developments since the previous meeting of the Committee**

2. **The Chair** announced that the term of Abdou Salam Diallo as Permanent Representative of the Republic of Senegal to the United Nations would end on 4 September 2014. Mr. Diallo had expressed his deepest appreciation for the cooperation and support he had received during his tenure as Chair of the Committee, which had been marked by several important milestones, including the expansion of the Committee's membership; the strengthening of the Bureau; the revitalization of the Working Group on cooperation with civil society; greater cooperation with partners; and the declaration of 2014 as the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. The Committee had resolutely supported the State of Palestine's application for full membership of the United Nations, and, in view of the non-action of the Security Council, the change of its status to non-member Observer State.

3. Since its previous meeting, the Committee had held its annual Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People at the United Nations Office at Nairobi on 1 and 2 July 2014, on the theme of "Fostering active international solidarity with the Palestinians — Solidifying the economic underpinnings of an independent State".

4. On 9 July 2014, a special Committee meeting had been held to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice.

5. On 11 and 21 July 2014, the Bureau had issued statements condemning the Israeli military assault on the Gaza Strip.

6. On 22 July 2014, the Security Council had held an open debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, at which the outgoing Chair had delivered a statement on behalf of the Committee.

7. On 26 August, the Working Group of the Committee had heard a briefing on the upcoming extraordinary session of the Russell Tribunal on Palestine, which would be held in Brussels on 24 and 25 September 2014 and would discuss the Israeli war crimes committed in Gaza during the latest military assault.

8. Lastly, on 31 August 2014, Israeli authorities had declared nearly 1,000 acres of land near Bethlehem in the West Bank to be so-called "State land". The seizure of such a large area of land risked opening the door to further settlement activity by the occupying Power, which — as the Committee, the General Assembly and the Security Council had all stated — was illegal under international law and was completely contrary to the pursuit of a two-State solution. The Committee therefore condemned that measure.

### **The situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and developments in the political process**

*Statement by Ms. Hanan Ashrawi, member of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization; member of the Palestinian Legislative Council*

9. **Ms. Ashrawi** (Member of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization; member of the Palestinian Legislative Council) said that the Committee had candidly and outspokenly condemned the impunity of the Israeli occupation. Its deliberations challenged the international community's failure to hold Israel accountable for its unilateral annexation of Palestinian land, its attempts to undermine Palestinian institutions and its encroachment on Palestinian holy sites, such as the Haram al-Sharif. The international community had done nothing to prevent Israel's actions, which were a direct affront to international law. The two-State solution was disappearing because Israel had been allowed to behave with impunity based on its claims to special status. The international community owed it to the Palestinian people to rectify the historical injustice of the Nakba by imposing a just peace that addressed the root causes of the conflict. Its current passive and reactive stance could only lead to more political instability, conflict and terrorism in the region and around the world.

10. The inhabitants of Gaza and the international community were still coming to terms with the scale of destruction wreaked by the recent Israeli aerial assault. In addition to the numerous deaths of Palestinian civilians, which had seen more than 90 extended Palestinian families completely wiped out, many people had been left with permanent disabilities and emotional scars. That human tragedy had been compounded by the destruction of vital basic infrastructure. While the primary goal of the current, indirect ceasefire talks, brokered by Egypt, was to end the conflict and prevent more deaths, it was vital that the siege of Gaza should be lifted, with crossing points reopened to allow humanitarian relief and building supplies to enter Gaza. As long as the Israeli army maintained its stranglehold on Gaza in the name of self-defence, it would be impossible to end the violence. Israel sought to further decrease the chances of peace by deepening the rift between the West Bank and Gaza. Palestinians must be able to move directly and freely between and around those two areas, and have access to their territorial waters and arable land. She called on Israel to respect its commitment to hold and participate in talks on maritime access, airports and the exchange of prisoners.

11. Israel had presented the recent war as a conflict between the Israeli army and Hamas, but it was in fact the struggle of an occupied people against the occupying Power, which continued to annex and settle Palestinian public land that should be enjoyed by Palestinians. The Israeli Government was wilfully and deliberately taking more land in the West Bank, purportedly in response to the deaths of three Israeli settlers, even though, in the immediate aftermath of that crime, 19 Palestinians had been killed and the suspects' homes destroyed without due process.

12. The Palestinian people remained undaunted and would not tolerate an open-ended occupation or an open-ended peace process, both of which were a violation of international law and international humanitarian law. The State of Palestine would therefore continue to pursue a multilateral approach, including efforts to accede to international conventions and such bodies as the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice, as an alternative to the flawed peace process. A request had also been submitted to the Swiss Federal Council, as depositary of the Geneva Conventions, to hold urgent consultations with the High Contracting Parties with a

view to convening a conference to discuss Israel's non-compliance with the Fourth Geneva Convention. In that connection, the United Nations Human Rights Council had announced that an independent commission of inquiry would be established to investigate purported violations of international humanitarian and human rights laws in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. She urged Israel to cooperate with that Commission.

13. The priority in the aftermath of the recent conflict was to rebuild Gaza, but in the long term, steps must be taken to prevent a future Israeli assault. That would require not just the demilitarization of the zone, but an end to the occupation. The State of Palestine had sent envoys to the United States of America to present its views and request that a deadline should be set for an end to the Israeli occupation. It was coordinating with the League of Arab States to request a Security Council resolution to that effect. Letters had also been sent to countries whose nationals had fought for the Israel Defense Force asking governments to hold those individuals to account.

14. Because Israel had reneged on its commitments, the functions of the Palestinian Authority and its relationship with Israel, including cooperation on security and economic issues, would be redefined. Steps would also be taken to further reconcile the political authorities in Gaza and the West Bank. Political institutions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory would be strengthened and opened up to more women and youth. The Palestinian Liberation Organization and its institutions would be reinvigorated and reformed, and the policy of non-violent popular resistance would be pursued. It would continue to press for divestment from settlements and the boycott of their products in order to bring international pressure to bear on Israel.

15. She was grateful for the support of donors, aid agencies and other stakeholders, in particular the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). She hoped that a full and thorough investigation would be conducted into the deaths of UNRWA staff in Gaza and that those responsible would be held to account.

16. The recent Israeli operation had helped to debunk many of the myths and stereotypes surrounding the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The coverage of the situation in Gaza via social media had increased

international solidarity with the Palestinian cause. More than 300 holocaust survivors and their descendants had signed a letter to the Israeli Government condemning the genocide in Gaza, and many Latin American countries had recalled their ambassadors from Tel Aviv. On the whole, coverage of the situation had been relatively balanced and had exposed the fallacy that a military assault would resolve the situation in Gaza. In truth, there was no military solution; the conflict could be resolved only through the liberation of Palestine.

17. **The Chair** said that the Committee had repeatedly condemned the ongoing Israeli military operations in the Gaza Strip and called upon Israel to cease all such operations throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory. It strongly supported the Human Rights Council fact-finding mission to determine accountability for the heinous acts committed recently, including the indiscriminate bombardments.

18. The Committee also welcomed the efforts of the President of Egypt, the Secretary-General and other international and regional leaders, which had led to the recent announcement of an open-ended ceasefire. The Security Council should put its full weight behind that ceasefire and call for the crippling blockade of Gaza to be lifted. International efforts towards the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the Gaza Strip should go hand in hand with groundwork for progress on peace negotiations. In that regard, President Abbas' initiative to extend international protection to the Palestinian civilian population deserved consideration.

19. **Mr. Alhakim** (Observer for Iraq) asked how the Palestinian leadership intended to capitalize on the international momentum and goodwill towards the Palestinian cause, specifically in the United States of America and Europe, following the Israeli atrocities in Gaza.

20. **Mr. Khan** (Indonesia) said that his delegation welcomed the recently concluded ceasefire in Gaza and commended the Egyptian Government for facilitating the negotiations. The people of Gaza deserved the utmost respect for their courage and perseverance in the face of the Israeli operations. His country would continue to work with other friends of the State of Palestine, including the Committee, to help the Palestinian people realize their right to self-determination.

21. The recent Israeli aggression underscored the urgent need to push for a fair, credible and results-oriented peace process. In that connection, he urged the Committee to call for the Quartet to be reconfigured, with the United Nations in particular playing a more prominent role. The Palestinians' request for an international protection system should be examined and humanitarian support for the reconstruction of Gaza stepped up. Lastly, he asked what further practical steps the Committee could take to promote the Palestinian cause within the United Nations.

22. **Mr. Çevik** (Turkey) said that his delegation welcomed the announcement of the open-ended ceasefire, which was a significant step towards ending the violence and restoring calm in Gaza. As part of the ceasefire agreement, Israel had agreed to open a number of border crossings to allow some of the necessary construction materials and urgent humanitarian aid to enter Gaza, which he hoped would mark the beginning of the end of the blockade. His country would continue its humanitarian efforts, particularly through UNRWA and the World Health Organization (WHO) projects in the State of Palestine, and to promote a sustainable ceasefire that would meet the legitimate demands of the Palestinian people.

23. Israel's recent annexation of Palestinian land in the West Bank was therefore a matter of deep concern. His Government had condemned the annexation publicly and had called upon Israel to reverse the decision with immediate effect, so as not to compromise the precarious ceasefire or undermine efforts to achieve a lasting peace and the two-State solution.

24. **Ms. Rubiales de Chamorro** (Nicaragua) said that the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) had sent humanitarian aid to Gaza and that young Nicaraguans had mobilized in support of the people of Gaza. The President of Nicaragua had spoken to the Secretary-General, insisting on a forceful response from the United Nations.

25. The peace process and the Israeli occupation could not continue to be open-ended; but as long as the permanent members of the Security Council failed to put pressure on Israel to end its massacres, the violence in the region would continue. The Committee should therefore focus its calls for action on the Security Council. Only the international recognition of the State

of Palestine and its borders would bring peace to the Middle East.

26. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that Ms. Ashrawi would be meeting with members of the Security Council, senior United Nations officials and the media to outline the Palestinian leadership's future plans in the aftermath of the criminal war that had started in the West Bank and intensified in Gaza. The Palestinian leadership would send envoys around the world to share its views, explain its plans and seek the full diplomatic, political and legal mobilization of the international community to advance the cause of the Palestinian people, bring an end to the occupation and realize the two-State solution on the ground, a task that was becoming increasingly difficult.

27. **Mr. Munir** (Pakistan) said that, while the ceasefire had brought a welcome end to 50 days of intense violence, only a two-State solution could bring sustainable and viable peace and stability in the region. That goal would require a focused and time-bound peace process premised on an end to the siege of Gaza and settlement activity. The recent Israeli announcement of further land seizures was therefore unacceptable and should be rescinded immediately. Despite the objections of certain permanent members, the Security Council had a clear responsibility to urge the Israeli Government to refrain from such actions.

28. **Mr. Raja Zaib Shah** (Malaysia) said that his delegation welcomed the long-term ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas of 26 August 2014 and recognized the constructive role of Arab countries in brokering the agreement. Violence was never the answer to any conflict; peace could only be achieved through negotiations and diplomacy. His delegation would therefore continue to support the Palestinian people and their leadership in their endeavour to establish the framework for an independent and sovereign Palestinian State.

29. **Mr. Atlasi** (Observer for Morocco) said that his Government had condemned the recent Israeli aggression in Gaza and sent medical equipment and aid. As Chair of the Al-Quds Committee, King Mohammed VI had spared no effort to help the Palestinian people and to halt the Judaization of Jerusalem. His delegation continued to call for a two-State solution on the basis of the pre-1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as the capital of an independent State of Palestine.

30. **Mr. Wright** (Director, United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees Representative Office, New York) said that 13 UNRWA staff members had been killed in Gaza during the recent conflict. The attacks on UNRWA schools had led to the deaths of 42 people and injured many more. It had been a traumatic and testing time for the Agency, which had done what it could in extremely difficult circumstances. At the peak of the recent conflict, UNRWA facilities had provided shelter to some 292,000 people. A quarter of UNRWA schools in Gaza were currently occupied by some 58,200 displaced people, a number equivalent to the total number of people displaced during Operation Cast Lead in 2008-2009. Many of those people had been left homeless and were expected to stay on the school premises for a considerable time. As a result, when the school year started on 14 September 2014, a quarter of UNRWA school facilities would not be available, and many of the schools would have to operate a double-shift school system.

31. The Agency had launched an emergency appeal for \$295 million. He thanked those delegations that had already contributed to that appeal; however, much remained to be done. The immediate priority was to meet the basic needs of the people of Gaza, namely to provide food, water and non-food items. The needs were overwhelming and the damage far exceeded that of the last major conflict of 2008-2009. The Agency was working with other United Nations agencies to prepare for future reconstruction work. A conference on the topic would be held in early October 2014. Many individuals had also made contributions to UNRWA, often on an ad hoc basis, something that appeared to reflect the general public's serious concern at the events in Gaza. He hoped that those concerns would contribute to a better and more favourable situation for the people of Gaza in the future.

32. **Ms. Ashrawi** (Member of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization; member of the Palestinian Legislative Council) said that the Committee had sent a clear, heart-warming message to the Palestinian people that it was not alone and that there were principled and courageous individuals, countries and organizations that were willing to stand up to injustice and violence. The Palestinian leadership understood that it needed to seize the initiative and adopt a more multilateral course of action in line with international law in order to ensure that future negotiations were meaningful and

effective. Peace talks should not be an abstract, open-ended process; rather they must be credible, substantive, grounded in reality, abide by international law, and have an impact on the ground. Future negotiations should perhaps be held under the auspices of an organization such as the United Nations, rather than the United States Government. The latter had hardly been even-handed in the past; its bias had hamstrung negotiations since 1991, and the flaws in the Declaration of Principles were well-known. The United Nations was already a member of the Quartet, but there was much debate between Member States on the question of Palestine. Many Member States had complained that despite the participation of the United Nations in the Quartet, the will of the majority of the international community was not taken into consideration. While it was amazing that there was still international commitment to a negotiated settlement, there also had to be credible talks with genuine engagement, founded on a clear timeline and objectives, that would end Israeli violations, including settlement activities, and the annexation and transformation of Jerusalem.

33. She was grateful to the Al-Quds Committee and its Chair for their efforts. Unless the very dangerous and clear Israeli violations of international law within Jerusalem were curbed, the character, demography and geography of the city would be irrevocably changed. Jerusalem was cut off from the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory by the apartheid wall, army checkpoints and Israeli settlements. Palestinians could not enter Jerusalem unless they held city residency cards, which were now being revoked as part of the ethnic cleansing of the city. The issue of Jerusalem and the surrounding areas required the Committee's urgent attention.

34. The ongoing settlement activity in the West Bank continued to undermine the two-State solution, which was already a painful compromise, as it would leave the State of Palestine with just 22 per cent of the territory of historical Palestine, barely enough for the State to be viable. In order to build a thriving and independent economy, the State of Palestine must be protected from economic pressure and blackmail until such time as it controlled its own resources. In the meantime however, it was vital to re-establish all links between Gaza and the West Bank, and to provide Gaza with all the necessary aid. The blockade meant that Gaza, with its dense population and lack of resources,

could not survive without the West Bank. Noting that Turkey had pledged to send a floating power generator to Gaza, she said that such tangible projects were extremely valuable but must be implemented swiftly. According to recent estimates, it could take up to 20 years to fully rebuild Gaza. The reconstruction process would therefore require significant international efforts in all sectors, particularly infrastructure. She therefore urged all Member States to support UNRWA and other United Nations agencies working in Palestine, including WHO and the United Nations Development Programme.

35. With no solution in sight, the ripple effect of violence and insecurity would continue to destabilize the region and the world. In order to give effect to all the talk of peace, human rights and the rule of the law, the international community must recognize the State of Palestine as an independent State among equals and extend international protection to its people.

#### **Report on the United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People, Nairobi, 1 and 2 July 2014**

36. **Mr. Khan** (Indonesia) said that the theme of the 2014 United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People, held on 1 and 2 July 2014 at the United Nations Office at Nairobi, had been "Fostering Active International Solidarity with the Palestinians — Solidifying the Economic Underpinnings of an Independent State". Thirteen expert speakers from Palestinian and international civil society organizations, the private sector, local governments and United Nations agencies, funds and programmes had addressed the Seminar, which had been attended by representatives of over 20 Member States, three intergovernmental organizations, civil society organizations and Nairobi-based organizations who had participated actively in the discussion.

37. Speakers at the opening session had remarked on the significance of holding the Seminar in Africa, a continent that had overcome colonization and oppression to achieve political independence and rapid economic growth. It had been noted that Kenya was collaborating with the Palestinian people through bilateral education, trade, culture, youth, sports and tourism agreements, which would help to improve the quality of life in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and strengthen the bonds of friendship and cooperation between Kenya and the State of Palestine.

38. In his message to the Seminar, read by the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Nairobi, the Secretary-General had condemned the violence of June and early July, saying that there could be no justification for the deliberate killing of civilians, and calling on Israeli and Palestinian leaders to work together to return to the negotiating table. Even before the intense and tragic violence of the summer, the Secretary-General had expressed his concern at the negative trends in the West Bank, including the killing of Palestinians, the repercussions of Israeli military operations, continued settlement activities and the demolition of Palestinian homes and property, as well as the indiscriminate firing of rockets from Gaza.

39. The first plenary session had provided an overview of the situation in the State of Palestine as of June 2014, which had subsequently deteriorated as a result of the recent conflict. The blockade of Gaza had entered its eighth year, creating an entirely preventable and man-made crisis that all speakers had described as environmentally, economically and politically unsustainable. Gaza had declined from a well-rounded middle-income economy to a territory where 41 per cent of the population were unemployed and 57 per cent were food-insecure.

40. The situation in the West Bank was less dire, but restrictions on movement continued to affect the economy. Area C, which comprised more than half of the land of the West Bank, was largely agricultural and resource rich, but was inaccessible to Palestinians. The removal of restrictions would have a significant impact on the development of agricultural, Dead Sea mineral exploitation, stone mining, quarrying, construction, tourism and telecommunications businesses. Women's participation in the workforce was particularly low, down to 17.3 per cent in 2014. Conditions for youth were also troubling, with 49 per cent of young men aged 15 to 24 and only 8.8 per cent of young women in employment. For many Palestinians, working for Israeli settlements was not a choice but a necessity.

41. The second plenary session had focused on the Palestinian National Development Plan 2014-2016, entitled "Long-term strategies of the State of Palestine for Economic Development and Growth". Seven pillars, approved by Palestine's Council of Ministers, had guided the development of the Plan, namely: enhanced national ownership; broad participation; results-orientated planning and budgeting; realistic outputs; institutionalized planning processes and

enhanced accountability; a gender-responsive approach; and respect for human rights. As a result of performance evaluations and lessons learned from earlier plans, the Plan had been broken down into four areas: economic development and employment; good governance and institution building; social protection; and infrastructure. The overarching goal was to improve basic services to the Palestinian people, particularly those in the Gaza Strip, but the conditions on the ground would make it extremely difficult to implement the Plan. Other participants had commended the Plan and highlighted its highly participatory approach.

42. The Initiative for the Palestinian Economy, launched under the Office of the Quartet Representative, involved 18 industries, 100 local expert advisers, and an Advisory Board and included some 50 projects across 8 sectors, fully complementing the approach of the National Development Plan and its focus on infrastructure, employment and tourism. The rationale behind the initiative was to empower the private sector. Private financing would be secured whenever possible, and the public role would be limited to loan guarantees and financing for large-scale projects. The main challenge would be achieving the goal of creating 1 million jobs over the following 15 years in order to bring unemployment below 8 per cent and stem the emigration of the best qualified people. If implemented, the initiative was also expected to lead to an increase in tax revenue of some \$650 million.

43. Local, municipal and regional approaches to community development and capacity building had been presented as complementary initiatives to improve transparency, local government services and socioeconomic development while also supporting ongoing State-building efforts. Micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, which constituted the majority of the local Palestinian economy, could benefit directly from such programmes.

44. The third plenary session had focused on the mobilization of international assistance and its effective use for sustainable growth, including a discussion on a new aid paradigm. Representatives from the developing world had expressed doubts that foreign aid would unlock development. Europe and East Asia had experienced transformative economic change in recent decades and, in the case of Asia, had done so with little external aid. Those developments

had created very high expectations of what was possible in a world without colonialism, occupation or exploitation. However, the occupation of Palestine stood in direct contradiction to the sustainable development goals, which could not be achieved while the population was being oppressed. The gross domestic product of the State of Palestine had increased by 1.5 per cent in 2011-2012, which, given that the population had grown more rapidly, meant that Palestinians were poorer year on year. Expanding the Government's economic policy space to promote sustainable development and competitiveness was an important goal, and was critical to breaking the cycle of aid dependency.

45. At the closing session, the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations had said that while the situation was not hopeless, progress would depend on an end to the occupation. The Chair of the Committee had reminded participants of their moral responsibility to fight against the injustice inflicted upon the Palestinian people and show collective solidarity, which should take the shape of concrete assistance for sustainable development and growth.

#### **Accreditation of civil society organizations to the Committee** (working paper No. 7)

46. **The Chair** drew the Committee's attention to working paper No. 7, which contained the applications for accreditation that had been submitted by seven civil society organizations. After reviewing the applications, the Working Group of the Committee had concluded that the seven organizations fulfilled the criteria for accreditation and recommended that they should be accredited.

47. *The requests for accreditation to the Committee received from the Soldiers of Peace International Association (Kenya), Frente em Defesa do Povo Palestino (Brazil), Adalah — The Legal Centre for Arab Minority Rights in Israel (Israel), Palestinian Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign (State of Palestine/Jerusalem), Save Youth Future Society (State of Palestine/Gaza), Youth Vision Society (State of Palestine/Gaza), and Nonviolence International (United States of America) were approved.*

*The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.*