

**UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL MEETING
IN SUPPORT OF THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN
PEACE PROCESS**

Ending the occupation and establishing the Palestinian State

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

PLENARY II

**The Palestinian Authority programme of ending the occupation
and establishing the Palestinian State**

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Fellow delegates.

Before I begin can I say I cannot possibly cover all the points I would like to make on conditions in West bank and Gaza in 15minutes so please forgive me. This is a swift overview only.

I wanted to start with some good news, difficult to find but there is a bit! I remember being told by our UK government, in an answer to a question I had asked about the future for people in the Occupied Territories that the answer lay in their economy and that an employed and prosperous people would be happy.

Tony Blair was dispatched as the Quartet's envoy to oversee the process and we waited.

We waited a bit more.

There is some improvement.

28 out of 36 companies are reporting profits in 2010 and there has been an increase in the number of trucks leaving the West Bank with exports. Private sector credit from the banks was up to \$1.56bn by the end of Jan 2010, from \$1.18bn at the end of Dec 2008.

Unemployment of both men and women is down slightly over the last year. President Abbas, has passed a new law banning trade in settlement products, which is helping.

All trade and commerce is however hampered by the checkpoints and difficulty of movement within and out of the West Bank.

I refer you to the Palestine Economic Bulletin May 2010 for more detail.

A Martian may beam in and assume that everything is OK then?

The people in the West Bank are not starving and they have good hospitals and schools even if they do take days on occasions to access them, and they are often short of supplies, power and water.

They have a good academic and cultural life despite the hardship and restrictions.

BUT,

I am sure most of you know the frustration and humiliation Palestinians suffer every day of their lives because of the checkpoints, the settler only roads, the arbitrary arrests, children included; the questioning, the searches; not to mention the land grabbing, uprooting

of trees, destruction of crops sometimes by sewage from settlements and the chronic shortage of water which is controlled by the Israelis.

One of the incidents I always remember was in Bethlehem a few years back, when they could expect water through their taps every now and then, I travelled up the road to a settlement where there were sprinklers on the lawns there, and watering garden olive trees, which had been transported from, destroyed Palestinian fields.

One of the most worrying aspects of the occupation is the treatment of children. It is terrifying enough to have a member of your family arrested and imprisoned, and cut off from the family for years, but the children themselves have been arrested, taken to detention centres and beaten up.

A recent report from 'Defence for Children International', tells us there were 335 Palestinian children detained in Israeli prisons at the end of April 2010, including one 16 year old girl, and 32 between 12 and 15 years old.

In a review of 100 sworn affidavits collected from Palestinian children detained in the Israeli military court system in 2009, the following treatments were reported.

Beaten or kicked	69%
Verbal abuse	50%
Threats and inducements	49%
Solitary confinement	14%
Threat of sexual assault	12%
Sexual assault	4%
Confessed during interrogation	81%
Signed confession in Hebrew	32%

WE have all heard of demonstrations against the bulldozers and new settlement building all over the West bank, and especially in East Jerusalem which is now forbidden territory to residents of Bethlehem a few miles away.

The demonstrations are always peaceful, but always run the risk of action by the occupation soldiers. This week in Al-Ma'asara, after a peaceful demo last week, there was a similar gathering this week.

The people were subjected to tear gas, stun grenades and high velocity projectiles. Several people were taken to hospital and arrests were made---of course.

Many other attacks as well as air strikes and extrajudicial arrests are reported regularly by OCHA-Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

This sort of thing is a regular event for Palestinians who are merely protesting against actions by Israelis, which are acknowledged by the international community as ILLEGAL but some how never TAKE ANY ACTION TO STOP THEM.

If we turn our attention in this very sketchy overview, to GAZA, the situation is much much worse.

The only good thing that one can say about Gaza is that once inside that open prison—for that is what it is---, is that there is no harassment from Israeli soldiers or settlers. It's a very minor improvement however.

Truckloads of food and essential supplies fluctuate at the whim of the Israeli border control.

What supplies, and when they come in is controlled completely by them and as you know, VERY LITTLE reconstruction has taken place since the war because construction materials are severely restricted not allowed.

Essential repairs to the power station and sewage works are held up because of delays and bureaucracy by the Israelis, which have to be interpreted as deliberate.

An offer by Qatar last week, to restore relations with Israel on condition that they, Qatar could send building materials into Gaza, was rejected by the Israeli government.

Consequently, 18 months after that brutal and disproportionate offensive on Gaza, the people are living surrounded by rubble, many still in tents with schools and hospitals damaged and short of supplies, power and water. Imports of industrial fuel to operate the Gaza Power Plant have declined to 33% of the estimated weekly amount needed All the infrastructure in Gaza is dependent on this.

Commercial and business activity is at an all time low.

Except for the commodities brought in by the tunnels to Egypt the people would be starving and even that source is threatened now by Egyptian action to seal off the tunnels.

Fishing limits are restricted to within the area of sea contaminated by sewage, because there is not sufficient capacity at the damaged sewage works. Fishermen get shot at and /or arrested if they go outside the limits.

When I was in Gaza in January this year with a delegation of 60 parliamentarians from all over Europe—

Did you hear about it, probably not? You would think that 60 MPs visiting Gaza would have made the news, but no. The press do not report things like that

I was particularly looking at the health of the children there.

1400 Gazans were killed, 400 were children, 76 women

Amongst the 4,560 injured there were 1,600 children and 658 women.

60% of the children are malnourished even in the UN schools their main meal of the day is a biscuit and a yogurt or a small sandwich and juice.

Pregnant women are also malnourished and anaemic so their chances of giving birth to healthy babies is reduced.

This is also compounded by methhaemoglobinaemia due to the water being contaminated by sewage as well as diahorroea.

There are of course other reports about chemicals from illegal weapons and depleted uranium but these have yet to be investigated.

All the children display Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, manifested in bed-wetting, behavioural problems, nightmares and lack of concentration. The results of this are demonstrated by failing school attainment levels, something that is of great concern to Palestinians who take pride in their academic prowess.

Neurologists have shown that PTSD changes to the brain are PERMANENT and will stay with most children for the rest of their lives.

There is a generation of Palestinian children growing up to be weak, undernourished and under educated adults, with concentration problems and no prospect of a decent future, with fear, anxiety, bitterness and hatred in their hearts. They are isolated from the rest of Palestine and the wider world because of the totally irrational action by Israel supported by the EU and USA, to refuse to recognise the legitimately elected government of Palestine 4 years ago.

Hopefully one day they will be reunited with their fellow Palestinians in the West Bank who have grown up experiencing humiliation and deprivation.

Witnessing members of their family being beaten up arrested.

Being themselves arrested and subjected to arbitrary detention at the whim of the IDF. Equally angry and frustrated.

I pose the question.

Is it in Israel's long-term interest to allow this to happen?

Israel will never be secure whilst the Palestinians have a memory.

Israelis must understand this more than any nation on earth.

Why, why does Israel pursue these policies, supported as they are by support of the EU and the USA?

Yes words are uttered condemning Israel for its actions, but no ACTION is ever taken to force Israel to comply with International Law, the Geneva Convention and Human Rights legislation.

Why/

Well we know there are strategic and commercial interests, which need protection, and Israel is a democracy and an ally, but surely we would have more security and less propaganda for extremists if we supported the Palestinians.

We also know and I am more aware than most of the power of the Israel Lobby in the USA and UK. Any criticism of the Israeli Government is deemed to be anti Semitic, and politicians like me are harassed and driven out of positions of influence in all sorts of organisations and situations.

Legitimate criticism of the Israeli Government IS NOT anti Semitism, it is criticism of the Israeli Government. Period!!!!

There is much we could do, even without the USA's agreement, but our governments will not.

Arms embargo.

Implementation of the Goldstone Report NOW.

Suspension of the EU/Israel Association Agreement—a very valuable trade agreement for Israel.

BUT NOTHING HAPPENS

Fellow delegates,

I am often reminded of the Pre-amble to the UN Declaration of Human Rights which begins,

“We the people of the United Nations”

We the PEOPLE

May be it is time to take matters into our own hands as we did against South African Apartheid, and support divestment and boycott campaigns against Israel.

If our governments will not act, then we the people of the United Nations must.

Recommended reading,

OCHA Reports.

Reports from Office of Co ordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

UNRWA Reports.

Report of the Campaign to End the Siege of Gaza.

Palestine Economic Bulletin May 2010
