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

Summary record of the 259th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 10 October 2001, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Fall (Senegal)

Contents

Adoption of the agenda

Developments in the Middle East peace process and the situation in the Occupied
Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem.

Consideration of the draft report of the Committee to the General Assembly,
contained in document A/AC.183/2001/CRP.2

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

1. *The agenda was adopted.*
2. **The Chairman** said that as part of the Committee's 2001 training programme for staff of the Palestinian Authority, two officials from the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation had been with the Division for Palestinian Rights since the start of the current session of the General Assembly, familiarizing themselves with the work of the United Nations and its Secretariat.
3. On 28 September, he had addressed a letter to the Secretary-General (A/ES-10/113-S/2001/920), sharing some thoughts on the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem, since the beginning of the Al-Aqsa intifada.

Developments in the Middle East peace process and the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem

4. **Mr. Al-Kidwa** (Observer for Palestine) said that, as indicated in the Chairman's letter to the Secretary-General, the first anniversary of the Al-Aqsa intifada had just taken place. That intifada had started as a result of Ariel Sharon's visit to the Al-Haram al-Sharif compound in Jerusalem, followed by the bloody military campaign against the Palestinian people, during which the Israeli occupying forces had committed war crimes and acts of State terrorism and violated both international humanitarian law and the Israeli-Palestinian peace agreements.
5. The outcome had been catastrophic for the Palestinian people. In addition to those who had died as an indirect result of the campaign, 670 Palestinians had been killed by direct action and, of the more than 25,000 injured, many had been left permanently disabled. The Israeli occupying forces had used helicopter gunships, tanks and heavy weaponry to destroy Palestinian Authority buildings, and also infrastructure and agricultural lands, while restricting the movement of both people and goods. Furthermore, they had deliberately assassinated specific Palestinians.
6. Despite the suffering, the Palestinian leadership remained committed to the Middle East peace process and to implementation of the Mitchell Committee recommendations, in the hope of reaching a final

political settlement. In that respect, the meeting between Chairman Arafat and Foreign Minister Peres, which had finally taken place at Gaza International Airport on 26 September 2001, had been reasonably successful. However, the following day, the Israeli occupying forces had once again started a cycle of killing civilians, which had continued for several days; about 30 Palestinians had been killed, with no loss of life to the Israelis. Many Israeli officials, including the Prime Minister himself, had made statements that were hostile to any attempt to control the situation and implement the Mitchell Committee recommendations, in an effort to link matters in Palestine to the overall problem facing the international community: international terrorism.

7. There appeared to be members of the Israeli Government who did not want to make progress, believing that it was in their interest to increase tensions and use the international situation to further the Israeli agenda by imposing it on the international community, including the United States of America. That was an extremely dangerous course of action which must be stopped in the interests of peace in the Middle East and a successful outcome to the war against terrorism.

8. However, there were positive signals from some parts of the world, including the United States. President Bush had recently expressed support for a Palestinian State; the previous Administration had taken that position, but it was the first time that a Republican Administration had adopted that stance. In the same way, it appeared that the international community now wished to deal urgently with the situation in the Middle East and establish peace there. It was to be hoped that such signals would have an impact on the position of the Israeli Government and lead to a change in its attitude.

9. Lastly, his delegation had expressed a preference that consideration of the question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East during the current session of the General Assembly should be postponed in view of recent events. However, it hoped that the relevant draft resolutions would be supported by the members of the Committee and of the General Assembly.

Consideration of the draft report of the Committee to the General Assembly, contained in document A/AC.183/2001/CRP.2

10. **Mr. Balzan** (Rapporteur) said that the draft report, which had been approved by the Bureau, covered the various developments in the peace process and on the ground since the Committee's previous report to the General Assembly. The Chairman's letter of transmittal drew the attention of the Secretary-General to the Committee's principal concerns in the current circumstances.

11. Chapter I outlined the Committee's objectives and its general perspective on the events that had taken place during the year, while Chapters II and III summarized the mandates of the Committee, the Division for Palestinian Rights and the Department of Public Information and referred to the organization of the Committee's work during the year.

12. Chapter IV reviewed the situation relating to the question of Palestine as monitored by the Committee during the year, with particular reference to the intifada, as well as Israeli actions and policies and action by the United Nations system.

13. Chapter V reviewed the action taken by the Committee. Section A described action in the United Nations aimed at promoting Palestinian rights, while Section B contained a detailed account of the implementation of the programme of work of the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights.

14. Chapter VI provided an overview of the action taken during the year by the Department of Public Information in accordance with General Assembly resolution 55/54.

15. Chapter VII contained the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee. The Committee would, *inter alia*, emphasize that, more than five decades after the adoption of General Assembly resolution 181 (II), the Palestinian people still had no State of their own and express its readiness to contribute to international endeavours to stop the violence and bring the parties back on the peace track; express grave concern over the policies and actions of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem, and reiterate its position that the problem should be resolved on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973); call for the immediate implementation of the Mitchell Committee

recommendations; express support for the effort to reconvene the Conference of the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention; stress the need for the United Nations to maintain responsibility for all aspects of the question of Palestine and express support for the vital role played by both the Secretary-General and the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process; and urge the international community to contribute generously to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). The Committee would also express appreciation to non-governmental organizations for their contribution, stress the importance of intensifying cooperation with them, and emphasize that it would continue to review its programme in order to make it more responsive to developments on the ground and in the peace process; reaffirm the essential contribution of the Division for Palestinian Rights; and request the continuation of the special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information (para. 105). Lastly, it would call on all States to join it in working for the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine.

16. **Mr. Ahmad** (Pakistan) said that, in a globalized world, the shocks of political and economic oppression in one region could be felt everywhere and could never be mitigated by violence. Support must be given to every initiative to promote peace through peaceful means, within the framework of Chapter VI of the Charter of the United Nations and relevant Security Council resolutions. Occupying forces in Palestine and elsewhere should know that repression only bred further violence, and that the oppression of unarmed people and the killing of innocent people would serve no purpose and must come to an end. Violence had recently manifested itself in an ugly and abominable manner which had been condemned and deplored by the entire world. He called on the international community to root out the causes of injustice and oppression, wherever they existed. His delegation fully supported the Committee's principled position that any settlement of the question of Palestine should be based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973); there must be no selectivity in the applicability and implementation of Security Council resolutions. Lastly, he called for comprehensive implementation of the recommendations of the Mitchell Committee, which afforded the most practicable route to resumption of the peace process.

17. **Mr. Sinha** (India) expressed his delegation's commitment to the cause of the Palestinian people, and to action by both the United Nations and the international community to eliminate terrorism. There should be no selectivity in rooting out terrorism from all parts of the globe.

18. **The Chairman** said he took it that the Committee wished to adopt the draft report for submission to the General Assembly.

19. *It was so decided.*

The meeting rose at 4.15 p.m.