



# General Assembly

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

### Summary record of the 352nd meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 20 May 2013, at 10.30 a.m.

*Chair:* Mr. Diallo . . . . . (Senegal)

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

### **Adoption of the agenda**

1. *The agenda was adopted.*

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

2. **Mr. Erakat** (Member of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Chief Palestinian Negotiator), said that official Israeli statistics showed that a total of some 16,000 settlement units had been completed since Prime Minister Netanyahu had taken office in 2009 the number of settlers had risen from 495,700 in January 2009 to 544,815 at the end of December 2012, an increase three times the Israeli natural population growth rate of 1.7 per cent. Following the adoption of General Assembly resolution 67/19, 11,500 new housing units had been approved and settler violence had increased by 315 per cent. The current situation could be equated to apartheid: the freedom of movement of Christians and Muslims was restricted, justified by racism and bigotry under the guise of security.

3. Each May, Palestinians commemorated the Nakba. Sixty-five years on, Israel continued to act with impunity. Although the 13 million Palestinians had every right to be angry given the difficulties they faced, their ultimate goal, regardless of where they lived, was to see Palestine on the world map once again.

4. After much preparation and hard work, which had begun in December 2012, the instruments of accession by the Palestinian Authority to the United Nations conventions, treaties and specialized agencies were finally ready. Palestine was doing all it could to facilitate the efforts of the United States Secretary of State to achieve peace based on the two-State solution and 1967 borders. Success meant freedom; failure meant a worsening of the unjust apartheid in the West Bank.

5. Israelis and Palestinians were not better or worse than each other; they were different. Yet, negotiators from either side had not come to the table out of compassion for the other, but because of the mutual realization that the natural growth of the metrics of interest required both parties to take the requisite decisions to achieve peace. Palestine had accepted the

right of Israel to exist on 78 per cent of historic Palestine, with its own State on the remaining 22 per cent of land. If Israel accepted the two-State solution, which Palestine saw as the only possible solution, it would be willing to entertain minor modifications. Palestine coordinated with neighbouring Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, essential partners who shared security and water concerns. In recognizing Palestine as a non-member State, the international community had made a major step towards restoring Palestine to the world map, and also acknowledged its importance for security and peace. Palestine would be a State where accountability, transparency, democracy, women's rights and the rule of law were upheld as institution-building continued under its President and Prime Minister.

6. The success of the peace process was also essential for the United States, which had cardinal interests in the region. Its borders were no longer solely with Mexico and Canada; with more than 100,000 American citizens in the Middle East, those borders also extended to Turkey, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, China and Pakistan. There were two prerequisites for the safe return of Americans: peace between two States of Israel and Palestine; and democracy in the Arab world. It was time to redefine Western-Arab relations, which had long been based on fear and suspicion. He therefore urged all nations to contribute to the peace effort by voicing their support for the two-State solution. It was important to realize that the Arab region was on the verge of a system collapse and chaos — not unlike the situation in Europe in 1849 — against which peace and democracy were the only safeguards.

7. Compared to Israel with its large defence forces and nuclear weapons, Palestine — with no ground, sea or air forces, no economy and its people fragmented — was at a significant disadvantage in negotiations. One option available to Israel was to “live and let live” in accordance with the two-State solution. The second option was a secular democratic State; that option would, however, require engaging in talks with Palestine. While Palestine saw the major religions not as threats but treasures and valued holy places, and would uphold reconciliation and tolerance, Israel wanted a Jewish state stretching from the River Jordan to the Mediterranean. Despite the concessions made by Palestine, Israeli rhetoric continued to focus on defensible borders. Yet the Jordan Valley represented

no major threat: over 80 per cent of the land and water had been appropriated by the Jewish Settler Council — in an area where there was not a single settlement — generating some \$600 million in profits from vast agricultural operations and a gross national product of \$31,000 per capita, which immensely outweighed the per capita income of refugees in his own constituency of Jericho. The third option was to maintain the status quo, yet that option no longer appeared viable for purely demographic reasons.

8. Democratization in the Middle East was under way — it would be a painful, costly and bloody process. Some Arabs remained politically blind, refusing change. The international community should therefore ask what must be done to ensure that those in favour of human rights and democracy prevailed. The time had also come for United States policymakers to shift their focus from what the Israeli Prime Minister could achieve to what was necessary for peace.

9. With regard to internal politics, the continued coup d'état in Gaza remained a concern. After Hamas had defeated his party, he had implored the new Prime Minister — to no avail — to act in the interest of all Palestinians, with responsibility and accountability, and fulfil the obligations of government instead of serving party interests. Reconciliation was only possible via the ballot box; President Abbas had therefore announced imminent presidential, legislative, and Palestinian National Council elections. It was a difficult but necessary transition for Palestinians; the mistakes of the past should not be ignored. It was important to build better institutions and encourage accountability, transparency and respect for human rights, especially women's rights. The coming weeks were crucial not only for Palestine but for the wider region. He hoped that the international community would support the peace initiative and impress upon Israel that there were consequences to its policies and actions. In order to defeat the forces of extremism as represented by Al-Qaida and which had nothing to do with Islam, the Israeli occupation of Palestine must end, for it was that continued occupation that threatened peace, security and democracy in the Middle East.

10. **The Chair** said that the Committee would continue to appeal to the Security Council and the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 to take concrete measures to hold Israel accountable for its serious breaches of international law, in particular article 49 of the aforementioned

Convention. The Committee called on States that had recognized Palestine in the United Nations to establish diplomatic relations with it and would also support any steps taken by the State of Palestine to participate fully, effectively and constructively in the work of the United Nations, including by signing relevant treaties and conventions.

11. **Mr. Dabbashi** (Observer for Libya) said that despite the wise efforts of the Palestinian Authority to restore rights peacefully, the occupying Power stubbornly failed to comply with its obligations. Just as all States must exert additional efforts to support the Palestinian people, the Security Council must confirm the status conferred by General Assembly resolution 67/19 and in order to bring about peace, end racial segregation, and spare the region a catastrophic war that could cause unprecedented devastation. It was therefore important to bring pressure to bear on the Israeli authorities without delay.

12. The Palestinians had demonstrated a clear spirit of compromise, unlike Israel. All Arabs shared in the Palestinians' struggle and hoped for their return to their legitimate lands. The time had come for reason, justice and a commitment to restoring the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

13. **Mr. Khan** (Pakistan) said that his delegation endorsed the call for renewed international focus to resolve the long-standing situation and correct the historic injustice. While the engagement of the United States was welcome, the Quartet and the Security Council must also play their role. Resumption of the peace process required clear benchmarks and deadlines. The Arab-Israeli conflict could be sustainably resolved only through the establishment of an independent, viable and contiguous state of Palestine based on pre-1967 borders, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. The major concession proposed by the Arab League in that regard should be appreciated. The goal of two States, living side by side in peace and security, must be pursued single-mindedly and all Security Council resolutions relating to Palestine, including Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), must be fully implemented: Palestinian detainees must be released, religious freedom restored, and settlement activity, the financial stifling of the Palestinian Authority and the culture of impunity must end. He asked whether recent diplomatic efforts had improved the prospects for engagement with the Israelis compared to 2012, or

whether the situation on the ground was deteriorating and thereby shrinking the room for diplomacy.

14. **Mr. Reyes Rodríguez** (Cuba), reiterating the firm support of Cuba and the majority of countries in Latin America and the Caribbean for the Palestinian cause, said that Cuba would continue to support Palestine, whose strength lay not in its military or economy, but in the nobility of the principles and ideals it resolutely defended. Support from the international community and the Committee in particular for the efforts of the Palestinian authorities to that end had been evidenced at the well-attended meeting of the Committee in Caracas at which a clear plan of action had been sought. He would be interested to hear more about the real possibilities to be gained by supporting the efforts of the United States Secretary of State.

15. **Mr. Çevik** (Turkey) said that the recent visit by the United States President and the efforts of the Secretary of State had given some momentum to the peace process and the two-State solution. His delegation welcomed any initiative to bring peace and stability to the Middle East. Palestinian reconciliation was essential to the process and Turkey therefore welcomed and supported the efforts to that end under the leadership of President Abbas.

16. **Mr. Erakat** (Member of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization and Chief Palestinian Negotiator) said that Palestine was currently awaiting the resumption of negotiations and reiterated that it had not imposed any conditions, but was strictly respecting the articles of the Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and the Road Map with respect to the release of prisoners. Israel continued to state that it had no negotiating partner, but it was avoiding its obligations under those agreements. The United States Secretary of State had recently held a number of bilateral discussions and was working along political, economic and security lines; those aspects were all inexorably intertwined. He reiterated his call on the international community to support those efforts. Israel should not abuse its position of power to flout international obligations; it had to choose between its settlements and peace. The situation had changed, not necessarily for the better, and the time was right for resuming talks, yet he feared that even if the most esteemed and impartial personalities were to represent Palestine, Israel would label them as extremists and reject them as negotiating partners.

17. **Mr. Loulichki** (Observer for Morocco) said that the deterioration of the situation in Jerusalem, caused by Israeli aggression, and the desecration of sacred Muslim and Christian sites would spread to the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory and increase tension in the region. Through the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Al-Quds Committee, which was chaired by the King of Morocco, his Government had condemned such provocation and called on the international community to enable a two-State solution. It had confidence in the good offices mission of the United States of America, which it hoped would lead to peace in accordance with international agreements. It called on the United Nations to make every effort to establish a viable Palestinian State with Jerusalem as its capital by the end of 2013.

18. The Palestinian people had endured war, deprivation and hardships; the Security Council should now take a stand to support peace, which was in the interests of all. Israel should approach the United States good offices mission in a positive spirit; Arab States had already shown that they supported peace. The Committee should work more effectively to make the dream of an independent Palestine a reality.

19. **Mr. Percaya** (Indonesia) said that his Government and people shared the suffering of the Palestinian people and would work with them to alleviate it, particularly by helping women and children. His delegation had no doubt that the Palestinians would eventually establish an independent State, and had worked with other States to build capacity for that eventuality. He asked whether a high-level meeting or special session of the General Assembly could be convened to address the problem of settlements, since all other efforts to halt their construction had failed.

20. **Mr. Erakat** (Member of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Chief Palestinian Negotiator) said that, with the preparations for the accession of Palestine to the United Nations specialized agencies and conventions complete, a series of measures including a high-level meeting of the General Assembly were needed to counter Israel's settlement activities and its revocation of the residency of Palestinians in East Jerusalem. His Government would make every effort to defend its people's dignity and rights, including by applying for full membership of the Security Council. The status quo was unsustainable and creative thinking was required. The world was divided not into

pro-Palestinian and pro-Israeli camps but between those desiring peace and those opposing it. Only if the international community united to support the two State solution could the region be prevented from falling into the hands of extremists. The opportunity provided by the United States good offices mission must not be missed. Failure was not an option; the Palestinian people stood to gain most from peace and to lose most from further conflict.

#### **Report on the Committee meeting in Caracas, 17-18 April 2013**

21. **Mr. Reyes Rodríguez** (Cuba) said that the Government of Venezuela had hosted a Committee meeting in Caracas from 17 to 18 April 2013 on the granting to Palestine of non-member observer State status by the United Nations, at which the Caracas Declaration in Solidarity with the Palestinian People and the State of Palestine had been adopted.

22. The Declaration urged States which had recognized Palestine through the United Nations to do so bilaterally as well, and called for a global campaign for solidarity with Palestinian prisoners. The members had committed to mobilizing the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council, and to engaging with the Secretary-General, the Middle East Quartet, the League of Arab States, OIC, the Non-Aligned Movement, national Governments and parliamentarians to ensure a comprehensive settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. They would reach out to world leaders, opinion makers, civil society, youth, women, academia, think tanks and the mainstream media, and would make more use of social media. They would ask the General Assembly to declare 2014 the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

23. The Bureau of the Committee had compiled in a single document the action proposals made from the floor during the meeting. The aims of the proposals were to influence public opinion and United Nations Member States, halt the construction of settlements, expand the Committee's membership, raise awareness of the Palestinian question at the United Nations, provide more assistance to Palestine and encourage the holding of Committee meetings in new venues.

24. Much work was needed to implement the proposals, and the Bureau should therefore be strengthened. The Committee should monitor and

report on the implementation. The immersive format of the Caracas meeting should be replicated at future meetings. The work would require more capacity in the Division for Palestinian Rights but would result in a revitalized Committee and greater solidarity with the Palestinian people.

25. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that the Caracas meeting had been a demonstration of solidarity with Palestine. He thanked the Committee and the people, Government and Permanent Mission of Venezuela. The Committee should implement the Caracas Declaration and the action proposals, which would help to advance the Palestinian cause.

26. **Ms. Diaz Mendoza** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that her delegation hoped that Caracas Declaration and the action proposals would assist the Palestinian struggle and would be implemented by the international community.

27. **Mr. Fathalla** (Observer for the League of Arab States) asked how the joint media fund mentioned in paragraph 6 of the action proposals would be financed. In relation to paragraph 8 of the proposals, it was the duty not only of Palestinian communities but of all States to ensure the recognition of the State of Palestine. With regard to paragraph 18 of the proposals, Palestine should circulate data related to the voting patterns not only of Member States but also of non-governmental organizations, civil society and all those capable of exerting pressure in support of the Palestinian cause.

28. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for the State of Palestine), speaking on behalf of Cuba, said that the aim of the fund referred to in paragraph 6 of the action proposals was to revive the spirit of cooperation among the Committee, OIC and the League of Arab States and to ensure that sufficient funds were available to advance the Palestinian cause.

29. With regard to paragraph 8 of the proposals, he agreed that not only Palestinian communities but the international community as a whole which was collectively responsible for ensuring the recognition of the State of Palestine, and believed that General Assembly resolution 67/19 would be implemented in that spirit.

30. His Mission prepared an annual analysis of the voting patterns referred to in paragraph 18 of the proposals, covering the previous five sessions of the

General Assembly, with a view to persuading Member States voting against Palestine-related resolutions to change their positions. His Mission sent copies to the secretariat of the Committee and to the League of Arab States, which forwarded it to the Governments of its member States. His delegation would provide more copies on request.

31. **Mr. Shaanika** (Namibia) proposed an editorial change to paragraph 34 of the action proposals.

32. *The Committee took note of the report and the action proposals.*

**Report on the United Nations International Meeting on the Question of Palestine, Addis Ababa, 29-30 April 2013**

33. **Mr. Grima** (Malta) said that the United Nations International Meeting on the Question of Palestine had been held on 29 and 30 April 2013 in Addis Ababa, with the theme “African solidarity with the Palestinian people for the achievement of its inalienable rights, including the sovereignty and independence of the State of Palestine”.

34. In a message read out by the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa, the Secretary-General of the United Nations had stressed the need for a concerted initiative for peace in 2013 to salvage the two-State solution, had stated that the status quo was unsustainable, and had reiterated that settlement activity in the West Bank and East Jerusalem was illegal.

35. The Chair of the Committee had emphasized that it would continue to call upon the Security Council and the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention to ensure Israel’s compliance with international law. Failure to act would threaten the credibility of the international legal system.

36. The representative of the State of Palestine had said in the keynote presentation that Israel had breached all of the United Nations resolutions calling on it to meet its responsibilities as an occupying Power. Although Palestinians were facing the same conditions as those endured by non-white South Africans under apartheid, Israel was not being condemned as strongly by the international community as the South African Government had been.

37. During the plenary sessions, it had been pointed out that all settlements were established with

Government support rather than through natural growth. Settlers received free of charge land expropriated from Palestinians. Settlement activity accounted for between 15 and 20 per cent of the Israeli economy. One expert had proposed that the term “occupied territory” should be replaced with the term “occupied country” to reflect the granting to Palestine of non-member observer State status by the United Nations and to draw attention to the plight of the Palestinian people.

38. In East Jerusalem and the West Bank, the residency rights of many Palestinians had been revoked or their homes demolished, and Israelis had established settlements. Palestinians were suffering from depression, anxiety, stress, frustration and post-traumatic stress disorder, and their children were experiencing learning difficulties. The occupation cost Palestine \$7 billion per year.

39. Israel was accountable as the occupying Power under the 1907 Hague Regulations, the Fourth Geneva Convention and Additional Protocol I thereto, and customary humanitarian law. It was bound by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

40. A Namibian expert had emphasized the value of international solidarity in achieving independence. Such solidarity had led to sanctions against the South African Government while it ruled Namibia. Solidarity with Palestine should be expanded in Africa to include university students and young people.

41. A South African expert had said that the anti-apartheid movement in his country had made slow progress for decades, with many Western countries refusing to apply sanctions even when the South African liberation movements had been internationally recognized. When the occupier was strong militarily, economically and diplomatically, as Israel was, strategies to isolate it would yield results.

42. The Observer for the State of Palestine had said that the adoption of General Assembly resolution 67/19 was vital to the Palestinian cause. It was not enough for supporters of Palestine to describe settlements as illegal; Israel must be forced to comply with international law. States should not import products produced in Israeli settlements and should deny entry

to settlers who had committed crimes against Palestinians.

43. All information related to the Meeting was on the Question of Palestine website. A report on the Meeting would be issued as a United Nations publication.

44. *The Committee took note of the report.*

#### **United Nations International Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace, Beijing, 18-19 June 2013**

45. **The Chair** drew attention to Working Paper No. 3 containing the provisional programme for the International Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace, to be held in Beijing on 18 and 19 June 2013. The aim of the Meeting was to provide an update on the main obstacles to the two-State solution, such as Israeli settlements, and the international community's attempts to end such illegal practices. The participants would examine United Nations responses to violations of international law and explore possible ways forward in view of the granting to Palestine of non-member observer State status. They would identify measures to ensure the resumption of negotiations on a two-State solution. Invitations had been sent to international experts, States Members and Observers of the United Nations, parliamentarians, representatives of United Nations bodies, other intergovernmental organizations and civil society, and the media.

46. *The provisional programme was approved.*

#### **Other matters**

47. **The Chair** drew attention to the summary of the fourth session of the Russell Tribunal on Palestine, held in New York in October 2012. The Tribunal had held its final session in Brussels in March 2013 and had produced a summary of all its previous sessions. It was an important initiative which would positively influence the international debate on Palestine.

48. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for the State of Palestine) drew attention to *State 194*, a recent documentary film about Palestinian institution-building and efforts to obtain membership of the United Nations.

49. **The Chair**, speaking in his personal capacity, said that recent unjust criticisms by an Arab parliamentarian of the King of Morocco's presidency of the OIC Al-Quds Committee should be rejected in principle. The defence of the Palestinian cause was a mainstay of Moroccan diplomacy; that role was

currently of particular importance because Morocco was a member of the Security Council. The Al-Quds Committee and the Al-Quds Fund were initiatives of the Moroccan Government for which the King had raised a great deal of money and which were of great social, cultural and economic help to all Palestinians. The Committee could not accept such criticism of a member which was so committed to the Palestinian cause.

*The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.*