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

Summary record of the 403rd meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 30 August 2021, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Niang (Senegal)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.30 p.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. **Ms. Abdelhady-Nasser** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that the Committee's continued solidarity with the Palestinian people and support for their just cause was more important than ever. During the forthcoming seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly, the Committee should engage with the international community to mobilize the action needed to uphold international law, implement the relevant resolutions and ensure accountability for the violations perpetrated by Israel, the occupying Power, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. Accountability was essential in order to reverse the downward trajectory of the situation on the ground and ensure the protection of the Palestinian people, the realization of their inalienable rights, including to self-determination and freedom, and the achievement of a just, lasting and comprehensive solution.

3. The continued occupation, colonization and annexation of Palestinian land by Israel, its oppression of and discrimination against the Palestinian people, including refugees, and the imposition of apartheid policies and practices deprived the Palestinian people of all fundamental rights. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic had worsened an already critical situation, in particular in the Gaza Strip. In letters to the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Secretary-General, her delegation had detailed the escalating intensity of the crimes and violations perpetrated by Israeli occupying forces and extremist settlers. Palestinian men, women and children continued to be attacked, killed, injured, arrested, detained and imprisoned by the occupying Power, with many enduring physical and psychological mistreatment amounting to torture. The killing of children had become routine practice, with the occupying forces emboldened by the lack of accountability and by constant incitement from right-wing politicians and Jewish extremists, yet the Secretary-General and his Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict continued to hesitate to list Israel among those States violating child rights.

4. Palestinian land and property continued to be seized and destroyed and families forcibly displaced as

the occupying Power pursued its efforts to drive the Palestinian people out of their homeland. Palestinian families in the Shaykh Jarrah and Silwan neighbourhoods of occupied East Jerusalem faced expulsion from their homes as extremist Jewish settler organizations continued their attempts to ethnically cleanse them from the city.

5. Settlement construction and expansion of the wall continued unabated, in breach of international law, United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), and the advisory opinion rendered by the International Court of Justice on the Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Palestinians protesting the colonization and annexation of their land continued to be attacked with lethal force, as evidenced by the number of civilians, including children, killed in Bayta, in the occupied West Bank, as they defended their village from Israeli settlers. Provocations, incitement and incursions also continued at holy sites in occupied East Jerusalem, in particular the Aqsa Mosque and Haram al-Sharif, where the occupying Power was violating the historic and legal status quo and disrespecting the custodianship of Jordan and the Islamic Waqf authority over the site, endangering its sanctity and risking a dangerous religious confrontation.

6. In Gaza, Israel persisted with its occupation, blockade and military siege. Israel had violated the ceasefire agreement of 21 May 2021 from the outset and continued to punish the Palestinian civilian population in Gaza and impose suffocating restrictions. Once again, Israel had responded to civilian protests at the Gaza border fence with excessive and indiscriminate force. The previous week, Israeli occupying forces had used live fire against protesters, injuring at least 51 civilians, including 22 children.

7. The General Assembly and the Committee had long recognized the illegality of the abnormal, inhumane and immoral situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the need to bring it to an end. Over 70 years had passed since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 181 (II) partitioning Palestine and leaving the Palestinian people to a miserable and unjust fate. It was time to take responsible and serious collective action by implementing the relevant United Nations resolutions, ceasing any support enabling the continuation of the illegal occupation, including any engagement with the illegal settlement enterprise, and supporting the investigation by the International Criminal Court into crimes perpetrated in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

8. She called on those Member States that were not members of the Committee to support its efforts and to consider working with it to advance shared principles and goals through peaceful, diplomatic means, in a spirit of dialogue, collective responsibility and action, as the path to a just solution to the Palestine question. There was longstanding international consensus, repeatedly reaffirmed by the General Assembly and the Security Council, on ending the Israeli occupation, achieving the two-State solution on the basis of the pre-1967 borders in accordance with international law and the relevant resolutions, realizing the rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to self-determination and independence, and securing a just solution for Palestine refugees on the basis of General Assembly resolution 194 (III). The Committee must continue to work with the Secretary-General and all relevant United Nations bodies, including the Office of the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), as well as civil society groups and intergovernmental organizations, including the League of Arab States, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the African Union, to make real progress towards a more just and peaceful future. Securing a just solution would bring peace and stability to the Middle East and beyond.

Consideration of the draft report of the Committee to the General Assembly (A/76/35)

9. **The Chair** recalled that the draft report of the Committee had been circulated by the secretariat prior to the meeting.

10. *The draft report was adopted.*

11. **The Chair** requested all Governments and organizations to cooperate with and support the Committee in carrying out its tasks, including the implementation of the recommendations contained in the report, and to support the Palestinian people in the realization of their right to self-determination. The two-State solution, in which Israel and Palestine lived side-by-side peacefully and the State of Palestine emerged sovereign and independent based on pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, was the only viable option for a just and peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine.

12. In accordance with the established practice, the adopted report would be transmitted to the Secretary-General for submission to the General Assembly.

Update on the activities of the Committee

13. **The Chair** said that since its previous meeting, held in February 2021, the Committee had carried out a significant number of activities, with many events livestreamed on United Nations Web TV and on social media. On 22 April and 28 July, he had addressed the Security Council during its quarterly open debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. He had highlighted the deteriorating situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, called for an end to the illegal policies and practices of Israel, and appealed to the Council to take appropriate action that would lead to a just, comprehensive and peaceful settlement of the conflict in accordance with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

14. On 10 February, the Bureau had met with the President of the General Assembly to discuss how to promote greater cooperation in support of efforts to resolve the conflict, as well as the need for financial support for UNRWA. On 25 February, the Division for Palestinian Rights and the Department of Global Communications had held the annual briefing for new delegates on the Committee's mandate and programme of work.

15. In March, the Bureau had initiated a series of outreach meetings for members of the Middle East Quartet and the Security Council, advocating the reinvigoration of the Middle East peace process. Between March and June, meetings had been held with the European Union, the Russian Federation, China, France, Ireland and Mexico, with further meetings planned. On 10 March, the Committee had held a side event on the margins of the sixty-fifth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, during which speakers had discussed the impact of the occupation and traditional norms on Palestinian women and called for an increase in the number of women in leadership positions and in parliament.

16. On 7 April, the Committee had held an event on delivering critical assistance for Palestine refugees, which had included briefings by the Commissioner-General of UNRWA and the Director of UNRWA Operations in the West Bank. On 28 April, the Bureau had written to the President of the Security Council and issued a press release calling on Israel to comply with its obligations and allow unhindered elections in East Jerusalem. On 10 May, the Bureau had issued a further press statement, expressing concern at the violence in the Aqsa Mosque compound and the subsequent escalation in the Gaza Strip, and calling for Council action to salvage prospects for peace.

17. On 18 May, the Committee had held an interactive panel discussion on international parliamentary support for the question of Palestine, featuring members of parliament from Canada, Chile, France, Portugal, South Africa and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Proposals made during the discussion, which focused on the full implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), had included establishing an international commission to investigate Israeli crimes of “apartheid” and removing tax benefits for companies operating in Israeli settlements. On 20 May, in the context of the escalating situation in Jerusalem and the conflict in Gaza, he had addressed the General Assembly to call for the ceasefire to be upheld and for the rights of the Palestinian people to be respected.

18. On 1 July, the Committee, with support from OIC, had held the annual International Conference on the Question of Jerusalem, on the theme “Forced demographic change in Jerusalem: grave breaches and a threat to peace”. Palestinian, Israeli and international experts and community activists from East Jerusalem had participated in a panel discussion, sharing their daily experiences and highlighting decades-long Israeli policies and actions aimed at promoting Jewish settlement in and Palestinian emigration from Jerusalem.

19. On 3 August, the Committee had held closed consultations with representatives from civil society organizations based in Palestine, Israel and the United States of America on the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and options for cooperation between the Committee and civil society, with a focus on how the international community could hold Israel accountable for violations of Palestinian rights. Recommendations had included the re-establishment of the United Nations Centre against Apartheid. On 19 August, during a meeting with a Committee delegation, the Secretary-General had said that he was counting on the resumption of United States engagement with the Middle East Quartet to reinvigorate the peace process and that there were plans to hold a Quartet meeting at ministerial level during the main part of the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly.

20. The Committee, with funding from OIC, had transformed the exhibits from the 2017 and 2018 International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People into two books, copies of which had been distributed in August to all Member and Observer States and to observer organizations. The books were also available as e-books on the Committee website. In collaboration with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, the Committee had supported the participation of four Palestinian diplomats in a

virtual training course on the workings of the United Nations in Geneva, held in August 2021.

21. At the request of the Bureau, the Division for Palestinian Rights had created a database of the capacity-building activities undertaken by Committee members and observers. The Division had also issued the annual compilations of United Nations reports and resolutions on the question of Palestine and had continued to produce a monthly bulletin on action by the United Nations system and intergovernmental organizations relevant to the question of Palestine, a weekly information note on activities carried out by non-governmental organizations, and a quarterly newsletter outlining Committee activities. Regarding online advocacy and outreach, the Committee had over 20,000 followers on Twitter. Its website received an average of 100,000 views per month, with a large spike in May with 272,000 views, while the mailing list had grown to 9,000 subscribers.

22. With regard to upcoming events, in accordance with the decision to intensify cooperation with civil society and hold consultations with civil society organizations every three to four months, the Committee planned to hold such a consultation in November or December. The Division was also exploring options for a high-level briefing on the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People would take place on 29 November, followed by a plenary meeting of the General Assembly on the question of Palestine on 1 December. Given that the mandates of the Committee, the Division and the special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Global Communications had become biennial, the resolution entitled “Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine” would be the sole resolution under discussion.

Consideration of requests for accreditation of civil society organizations

23. **The Chair** said that the accreditation criteria and the benefits of accreditation were explained on the Committee website. During the accreditation process, organizations explained their activities in support of the resolution of the Palestinian question. Once accredited, organizations could participate in the activities of the Committee. The secretariat regularly received accreditation requests, which were reviewed by the Bureau before being sent to the Committee for approval. In recent months, the secretariat had received requests from five organizations, two of which met the accreditation requirements: Asociación Cubana de la Naciones Unidas and Al-Quds Foundation for Medical

Schools in Palestine. He took it that the Committee wished to approve those requests for accreditation.

24. *It was so decided.*

The meeting rose at 4 p.m.