

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

Introducing the Report of the Committee to the General Assembly
Agenda item 37: Question of Palestine

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Statement by

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Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour for me, in my capacity as Rapporteur of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, to present to the General Assembly the Annual Report of the Committee, contained in document A/65/35. Allow me to summarize each section of the report.

The report covers, in **Chapters I through III**, the Committee's mandates and objectives as well as its general perspective on the events that have taken place in the course of the year.

In particular, the Introduction to the Report refers to the origins of the Committee which this year we are marking its 35th Anniversary since its establishment in 1975. It is to be noted that throughout its existence the Committee, through its reports has continued to stress that a comprehensive, just and lasting solution of Palestine, the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, must be based on the relevant U.N. resolutions and a series of essential principles, most importantly:

- the withdrawal of Israel, the occupying Power, from the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967 including East Jerusalem and from the other occupied Arab territories;
- respect for the right of all States in the region to live in peace within secure and internationally recognized boundaries; and
- the recognition and exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian People.

Moreover, the Committee has consistently supported a peaceful solution of the question of Palestine welcoming among other initiatives the 1991 Madrid Peace Conference and the Quartet's Road Map.

Under **Chapter IV**, the report reviews the situation relating to the question of Palestine as monitored by the Committee during the year and contains a detailed factual account of events that have taken place in the reviewed period. An important development to be particularly mentioned is the Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations which saw the critical role undertaken by the United States in May 2010 to facilitate indirect talks between the parties. This Chapter also gives in some detail the grave situation persisting on the ground especially in and around Gaza and the daily difficulties being faced by the population in the occupied territory as a result of restrictions, illegal settlements activities, demolitions, increased violence by Israeli settlers, the continued construction of the wall in the West Bank including in and around Occupied East Jerusalem, and the acute water shortage.

Chapter V reviews the action taken by the Committee, including the Chairman's participation in General Assembly and Security Council debates, statements issued by the Committee and its Bureau, and the continued dialogue between the Committee and intergovernmental organizations.

The Chapter also reports on the mandated activities carried out by the Division for Palestinian Rights as well as on international meetings and conferences organized by the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights with the main objective to raise international awareness of the various aspects of the question of Palestine and international support for the rights of the Palestinian People and the peaceful settlement of the Question of Palestine. In this respect, it is important to note the convening last February in Malta of the International Meeting in Support of the Israeli-Palestinian Peace which was co-organized for the first time with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean; the Seminar and Meeting of Civil Society held in Vienna in March of this year; the International Meeting and Public Forum held in Istanbul last May; and the African Meeting held in Rabat in July of this year.

This Chapter V also highlights the increase in the close cooperation which exists between the Committee and Intergovernmental Organizations, with Civil Society Organizations, and with Parliaments and Inter-Parliamentary Organizations.

Of special mention in this Chapter is the active and valid involvement of the UN Division for Palestinian Rights in the research, monitoring and publications programme including dissemination through the Internet. The expansion and development of user-friendly measures of UNISPAL, including through the incorporation of additional multimedia content and RSS and Twitter feeds, continue to improve and facilitate the use of modern technology in the transmittal of information to the international community at large the unstinting efforts being undertaken by the United Nations and the Committee on the question of Palestine.

Chapter VI provides an overview of the work done over the year by the Department of Public Information in pursuance of General Assembly resolution 64/18 of 2 December 2009 and in the implementation of its special information programme on the question of Palestine. This Chapter also provides information on the valuable coverage given by the DPI in the past twelve months to raise awareness to the question of Palestine especially through the UN Radio and the United Nations News Centre, the organization of the annual International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East which this year was held in Lisbon (July), the training programme for young Palestinian journalists, the digitization of documents of the UNISPAL, and the dissemination of information and organization of outreach activities.

The last Chapter VI of the Report contains the **Conclusions and Recommendations of the Committee**, in which among other things the Committee expresses its opposition to the resumption of the illegal construction in Israeli settlements in the West Bank. The Committee also expresses its concern over the continued construction of the separation wall and the impunity with which Israel's legal obligations, as confirmed by the ICJ Advisory Opinion, have been flouted. It calls upon the international community to take the required action to ensure respect for, and compliance with, the ICJ's ruling, the Fourth Geneva Convention and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

The Committee expresses its serious concern about the situation in Occupied East Jerusalem, including the acceleration of settlement construction and expansion, demolitions of houses, revocations of residency rights, eviction of Palestinian citizens, settler extremism and threats to Jerusalem's holy sites and historical heritage. The Committee reiterates its position that Israel's dangerous and provocative policies in East Jerusalem are prone to spark negative reactions on the ground, in the region and by Muslims worldwide, leading to violence and even armed conflict. The Committee also reiterates that East Jerusalem is an integral part of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and a negotiated solution of the question of Jerusalem, based on international law, is essential to resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and crucial for a durable peace in the whole region.

The Committee further reiterates its condemnation of the continued Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip as a severe form of collective punishment of the entire population of Gaza. The Committee also reiterates its condemnation of the firing of rockets and mortar rounds by Palestinian militants from Gaza and reiterates its call for the release of Israeli corporal Gilad Shalit.

The Committee urges Israel to open all of the border crossings with the Gaza Strip for the flow of humanitarian aid, import and export of commercial goods, including reconstruction materials, and movement of persons in accordance with international humanitarian law, the November 2005 Agreement on Movement and Access and Security Council resolution 1860 (2009).

The Committee acknowledges the value of internal investigations into the Israeli military offensive against Gaza of 2008-2009 and the Free Gaza Flotilla incident of May 2010 and their follow-up. At the same time, the Committee calls for a comprehensive, credible and independent investigation into the violations of international law committed and demands follow-up action. It also appeals to all the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention to fulfil their obligations in accordance with common Article 1, which requires the High Contracting Parties to respect and to ensure respect for the Convention in all circumstances.

The Committee welcomed the resumption of the direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians on all permanent issues and notes the important role played by the United States, Egypt and Jordan. The Committee also stresses the importance that these negotiations are based on the relevant Security Council resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference and the Arab Peace Initiative, and that regional partners are directly involved in them. In this respect, the continued support by the international community, in particular by the Quartet and its individual members, is key to moving forward the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations on all permanent status issues.

The Committee supports the Palestinian State-building efforts by advocating sustained and generous donor commitment, highlighting the actual needs on the ground and providing the Palestinian Authority with the opportunity to present its assessment to the wider international community.

The Committee, while remaining concerned that the divisions among the Palestinian factions profoundly affect the legitimate Palestinian national aspirations for statehood and peace, also calls for invigorated efforts by all Palestinian factions to help reconcile their positions on the basis of the prevailing consensus on the need to achieve the two-State solution, which would lead to the exercise by the Palestinian People of its inalienable rights.

The Committee will focus its programme of international meetings and conferences for 2011 on widening international support for the permanent status negotiations and on contributing to the creation of a favourable international atmosphere for their conduct in good faith. The Committee will aim to mobilize increased international scrutiny of the developments on the ground, in particular the halt of all settlement activities in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and an end to all other illegal Israeli policies and practices in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The Committee also aims to support global campaigns to challenge Israeli impunity and promote the concept of Israeli accountability for its actions towards the Palestinian people. It will pay special attention to highlighting the plight of the most disadvantaged Palestinians, such as the Palestine refugees, the Palestinians living in Gaza and Palestinian political prisoners. The Committee aims to contribute to efforts towards ending incitement on both sides, provide a venue to have the narratives heard and reconciled and promote peace education with the help of civil society. It will pay special emphasis on the inclusion and empowerment of women and their organizations in this process.

The Committee will undertake to further develop its cooperation with parliamentarians and their umbrella organizations, since it considers that lawmakers have a special responsibility to ensure that their Governments actively promote and support the realization of the two-State solution, and ensure respect for international law, in accordance with their international obligations.

Finally, the Committee will promote the continuation of Civil Society initiatives in support of the Palestinian people and would encourage them to work closely with their national Governments and other institutions with a view to gaining their full support for the work of the United Nations, including the activities and programmes of the Committee, on the Question of Palestine.

In closing, I would like to express the hope that the Annual Report of the Committee I just presented will be of assistance to this General Assembly in its deliberations on the Question of Palestine.

Thank you, Mr. President.