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**COMMITTEE ON THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE, 380TH MEETING (AM)**

**Israel’s Illegal Practices Entrenching ‘Apartheid One–State Reality’, Speaker Tells Palestinian Rights Committee**

**Delegates Observe International Day of Solidarity with Palestinian People**

Israel’s illegal practices were entrenching a one-State reality of an apartheid nature, the Permanent Observer for the State of Palestine told a meeting commemorating the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People today.

While calling upon the international community to uphold its responsibility to ensure justice for the Palestinian people, he said they remained committed to the agreements concluded since 1993, he said during the commemoration, held under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

“We continue to extend our hand in peace,” he continued, emphasizing that Israel must reciprocate that commitment, recognize the State of Palestine and work towards resolving all final status issues.  Determined to preserve the unity of their land and people, the Palestinian people were also working actively to lift Israel’s inhumane and unjust blockade on the Gaza Strip, he said, adding that continuing settlement activities in the West Bank represented the main obstacle to peace.

In similar vein, General Assembly President Peter Thomson (Fiji) expressed regret at the continuing expansion of Israeli settlements, demolitions of Palestinian homes, arbitrary arrests and detentions and the eviction and displacement of Palestinian families from East Jerusalem.  The pursuit of peace was mired in continuing terror attacks against civilians and brutal acts of violence by both sides, he said, urging both parties to de-escalate tensions, to refrain from violence and provocations and to avoid incitement and polarizing rhetoric that pushed peace further out of reach.

Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson emphasized that the Israel-Palestinian conflict was not merely one of many, but a “long-standing, gaping wound that has fed tension and conflict throughout the Middle East and beyond”.  Sadly, the past 10 years had been a lost decade for Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking, he said, warning that if it continued, a two-State solution could slip out of reach.

Agreeing, Dian Triansyah Djani (Indonesia), Vice-Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, warned that prospects for a two-State solution based on the 1967 borders had not only been steadily eroded, but were in extreme peril.  The international community must move beyond solidarity towards implementing the principles of United Nations resolutions, he emphasized, urging the Security Council to uphold its responsibility to ensure that the Palestinian people could enjoy freedom, independence and protection within their own sovereign State.

He went on to point out that more than 60 per cent of the Palestinian population was younger than 25 years of age, having been born after the signing of the Oslo accords.  “The international community and this Organization have an unpaid debt,” he said, emphasizing: “We owe Palestinian youth the freedom they deserve.”  Israel’s youth were also owed a future without the moral and political burden of an inhumane occupation, he stressed.

Also addressing the Committee were the President of the Security Council and the Chair of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, as well as representatives of Venezuela (on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement), African Union, Organization of Islamic Cooperation, League of Arab States and Just Vision (on behalf of civil society).

Before adjourning the meeting, the Vice-Chair read out a list of Heads of State and Government, Ministers and other representatives of Governments and civil society organizations who had sent messages of solidarity, saying they would be published in a special bulletin of the Division for Palestinian Rights.

Delegations observed a moment of silence to mark the recent passing of Fidel Castro, former President of Cuba.

The Committee will reconvene at a date and time to be announced.

Opening Remarks

DIAN TRIANSYAH DJANI (Indonesia), Vice-Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, recalled that on 29 November 1947, the General Assembly had adopted resolution 181, which had come to be known as the partition resolution.  It called for Palestinian self-determination, independence and sovereignty, the inalienable rights of any people in the world.  However, nearly seven decades later, it was still necessary to express solidarity with the Palestinian people and to call for the overdue fulfilment of those rights, he noted, emphasizing that not only had resolution 181 not been fully implemented, but the Palestinian people had been denied their rights and had endured the cruelty and misery of nearly half a century of foreign occupation.

He went on to note the negative effects of the Israeli occupation on all aspects of Palestinian life, saying it denied them quality treatment, basic rights as well as their economic, social and cultural rights.  Israel’s occupying forces continued to carry out summary executions, night raids, arbitrary arrests and prolonged detentions without trial.  The confiscation of Palestinian lands continued in the occupied West Bank, amid daily demolitions and unprecedented rates of illegal settlement construction.  Prospects for a two-State solution based on the 1967 borders had not only been steadily eroded, but was in extreme peril, he warned.  Freedom of movement remained severely obstructed by a network of roadblocks and checkpoints, threatening the integrity of Palestinian territory and undermining development.  Gaza had endured three deadly and destructive conflicts in the past six years, in addition to an illegal blockade, which Israel continued to impose in collective punishment of the entire Palestinian civilian population living in that enclave.

More than 60 per cent of the Palestinian population was younger than 25 years of age, having been born after the signing of the Oslo accords, he pointed out.  “The international community and this Organization have an unpaid debt,” he said, emphasizing: “We owe Palestinian youth the freedom they deserve.”  Israel’s youth were also owed a future without the moral and political burden of an inhumane occupation.  The international community must move beyond solidarity towards implementing the principles of United Nations resolutions, ending the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and making peace a reality, he said, urging the Security Council to uphold its responsibility to ensure that the Palestinian people could enjoy freedom, independence and protection within their own sovereign State.  The Committee intended to implement an intensive programme of activities in the course of 2017 as an international year to end the occupation, with a view to reaching a just and lasting solution to the conflict, he stressed.

PETER THOMSON (Fiji), President of the General Assembly, expressed regret at the continuing expansion of Israeli settlements, demolitions of Palestinian homes, arbitrary arrests and detentions, and the eviction and displacement of Palestinian families from East Jerusalem.  It was a situation about which the United Nations was gravely concerned and that must be rectified urgently, in strict compliance with international law, he emphasized.  Building lasting and sustainable peace in the Middle East was fundamental to realizing the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and to ensuring that they enjoyed dignity, opportunity, prosperity and equality.  Nevertheless, the pursuit of peace was mired in continuing terror attacks against civilians and brutal acts of violence by both sides, he said.

He went on to note the devastating humanitarian consequences of the ongoing blockade of the Gaza Strip, which had left many Palestinians dependent on international aid.  “These actions do not contribute to the realization of peace,” he declared.  “Rather, they serve to increase tension, undermine hard-won trust and contradict the aim of achieving a two-State solution, with the establishment of a State of Palestine that lives side by side with the State of Israel in peace and security.”  He urged both parties to de-escalate tensions, to refrain from violence and provocations and to avoid incitement and polarizing rhetoric that pushed peace further out of reach.  The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was an important tool for realizing the inalienable rights of Palestinians and ensuring that they would benefit from the transformative potential of the Sustainable Development Goals.

FODÉ SECK (Senegal), President of the Security Council, noted that at least 238 Palestinians and 30 Israelis had lost their lives since violence had resumed in 2015, recalling that the Council had condemned all violence and terrorism, regardless of the perpetrators.  On 2 July, it had held a review of the Middle East Quartet’s report, which pinpointed serious threats to peace and presented interesting recommendations on realizing a two-State solution.  The Quartet had appealed to both sides to strive towards the abatement of tensions and to undertake the measures necessary to stymie violence and protect civilians and their property.  Noting that 70 per cent of the population in the Gaza Strip was in need of assistance, he said that despite all efforts, three quarters of homes in the enclave still required rehabilitation and reconstruction, partly because only 30 per cent of contributions pledged during the Cairo donor conference had been upheld.  The Palestinian people were in a very difficult situation as a result of the occupation and also due to the decrease in humanitarian assistance provided by the international community.  Commending the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), he called on States to continue supporting its efforts and applauded Canada for its contribution of Can$ 25 million.

JAN ELIASSON, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, emphasized that the Israel-Palestinian conflict was not just one of many conflicts, but a “long-standing, gaping wound that has fed tension and conflict throughout the Middle East and beyond”.  While the State of Palestine had been admitted to the United Nations as a non-member Observer State in 2012, and had been recognized by 137 States, sadly, the past 10 years had been a lost decade for Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking, he said, warning that if it continued, a two-State solution could slip out of reach.

A decade after the Hamas takeover of the Gaza Strip, its people remained separated from the West Bank and the enclave remained “a humanitarian catastrophe”, he said, while condemning that group’s violent actions.  Meanwhile, Israel’s occupation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, had become more entrenched.  “The calls for non-violence and peace are being overwhelmed by increasingly extremist messages,” he noted.  The situation was unsustainable, and the United Nations remained committed to creating the conditions for meaningful negotiations.

RIYAD H. MANSOUR, Permanent Observer for the State of Palestine, noted that 2017 would mark the centennial of the Balfour Declaration as well as the fiftieth anniversary of Israel’s occupation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip.  While Palestinians remained committed to the agreements concluded since 1993, Israel must reciprocate that commitment, recognize the State of Palestine and work towards solving all final status issues.  However, Israel’s actions in East Jerusalem were designed “to alter the character of the city”, he said, while reaffirming the State of Palestine’s respect for the Jewish faith and its followers.  “Our animosity is towards the Israel occupation of our land,” he added.

Israel’s illegal practices were entrenching a one-State reality of an apartheid nature, he continued, while emphasizing: “We continue to extend our hand in peace, and call on the international community to uphold its responsibilities.”  Settlement activities were the main obstacle to peace, he stressed, while calling upon Member States that had not recognized the State of Palestine to do so.  Israel must acknowledge its responsibility for the Nakba, and the United Kingdom must recognize the historical sin of the Balfour Declaration and recognize the State of Palestine, he stressed.

Palestinians were working faithfully for their State to be free and democratic, committed to the rule of law and to non-discrimination against ethnic or religious groups, he said.  Determined to preserve the unity of their land and people, they were working actively to lift Israel’s inhumane and unjust blockade against the Gaza Strip.  The State of Palestine appreciated deeply the efforts of the Secretary-General, the Committee and the entire United Nations system, especially UNRWA, he said, adding that it would pursue its accession to international agencies and conventions in order to safeguard and promote the rights of its people and enhance the pillars and universality of international law.

AMRITH ROHAN PERERA (Sri Lanka), speaking in his capacity as Chairperson of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, recalled that recent testimonies before that body had once again spotlighted the daily violence and humiliation suffered by Palestinian men, women and children, every aspect of whose life continued to be controlled by Israel’s unlawful occupation.  The latest statistics from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) indicated that, as of mid-October, 83 Palestinians had been killed by Israeli security forces in the occupied West Bank and eight in Gaza during the course of 2016.  In addition, Israeli practices had also included State-sanctioned land seizures, retroactive legalization of outposts, demolition of Palestinian homes, denial of building permits and restrictions on movement and access.

“Year after year […] the information received by the Committee has affirmed the trends and patterns of human rights violations associated with the occupation and its inextricable link to settlement enterprise,” he said, stressing that punitive home demolitions constituted a form of collective punishment and a clear breach of international law.  Another emerging issue was that of threats and intimidation against human rights defenders and non-governmental organizations, while the situation of Palestinian detainees - including women and children - remained of serious concern.  Noting that UNRWA’s support and emergency assistance to some 5.2 million Palestinian refugees remained invaluable, he reiterated calls for a just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine and for an end to the suffering of the Palestinian people.  “Both parties to the conflict must create the necessary environment to facilitate peace,” he said, stressing in particular that Israel must protect Palestinian civilians and desist from actions contravening international law.

Statements

HENRY ALFREDO SUÁREZ MORENO (Venezuela), reading a message from President Nicolás Maduro on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, said it was clear after seven decades that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was one of the most pressing crises in the Middle East.  Today’s observance was therefore an opportunity to express solidarity with the Palestinian people and to call for the overdue fulfilment of their right to self-determination.  While acknowledging United Nations efforts for Palestinian the independence, he expressed regret that the situation on the ground had worsened dramatically.

He went on to state that, despite its obligations, the Security Council remained in deadlock as the international community continued to witness Israel’s breaches of United Nations resolutions and international law.  The occupying Power had punished the Palestinian people, committing war crimes.  Also concerning was its expansion of settlements and consequent forcible displacement of civilians and de facto annexation of Palestinian lands.  Such practices could give rise to further destabilization, he cautioned, calling upon the international community to adopt practical measures to block the occupying Power once for all.

TÉTE ANTÓNIO, Permanent Observer of the African Union, read out a message from Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, the bloc’s Chairperson, expressing regret that the path towards a durable peace remained bleak.  Israel’s occupation and the intensification of its illegal settlement activities had undermined efforts to revive the peace process.  Non-implementation of United Nations resolutions reaffirming the Palestinian right to statehood had compounded the conflict over decades, he said, condemning all acts of violence against civilians and attacks targeting religious sites.

Also expressing grave concern over the critical situation of the Palestine refugees, he called for the opening of all crossing points to allow free movement of persons and goods.  “While we voice here our strong support and unanimous desire to see the conclusion of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, we must never forget that we all have a permanent responsibility towards the Palestinian people.”  Peace could not be achieved without the international community taking a firm and courageous stand to end the occupation and allow Palestinians to exercise their right to self-determination, he stressed.

AGSHIN MEHDIYEV, Organization for Islamic Cooperation, emphasized that the international community must protect the Palestinian people from Israel’s continuing aggression.  Israel’s efforts to alter the Palestinian character of Jerusalem and its attacks on Muslim and Christian holy sites were provocations that risked turning the existing conflict into a religious one.  Moreover, Israel’s settlement policy undermined prospects for a two-State solution and violated international law as well as relevant resolutions.  The plight of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli detention was also unjust and inhuman, he said.

Calling upon the international community to compel Israel to abide by the Fourth Geneva Convention and to respect international humanitarian law, he said Israel’s illegal blockade of the Gaza Strip was another injustice that must end.  The OIC supported efforts for the adoption of a Security Council resolution on Israeli settlement activities, which would make a real contribution towards the realization of a two-State solution, he said, reiterating the organization’s support for the French initiative to convene an international peace conference with the aim of launching a political process under multilateral auspices.

ABDELAZIZ ENANI, League of Arab States, read out a message from Ahmed Aboul Gheit, that bloc’s Secretary-General, noting that today’s date represented a painful memory for the Palestinian people.  General Assembly resolution 181 placed responsibility for ensuring justice for the Palestinian people on Member States and for compelling Israel to heed calls for peace and end its occupation on the permanent members of the Security Council, he noted.  At its 2002 Summit, held in Beirut, the League had presented the Arab Peace Initiative calling for an independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital, he said, recalling that the world had welcomed that initiative.

However, Israel continued to reject that initiative as well as a two-State solution, he said.  Instead, it persisted in demolishing homes, setting up military barriers and imposing an illegal blockade on the Gaza Strip, he continued.  While it committed those and other flagrant violations of international law, the international community was rewarding it by giving it a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the 2019-20 period as well as the chair of the Sixth Committee (Legal), he noted.  Such steps were contradictory and illogical in light of Israel’s disregard for international norms and standards.Palestinians needed the international community’s words to transform into empirical measures to compel Israel to respond to the requirements of peace, he stressed.

SUHAD BABAA, Just Vision, said the tireless work of Palestinian and Israeli human rights defenders, activists, journalists and community organizers striving for rights and dignity had never been easy.  Notwithstanding the daily brutality of the occupation and the second-class existence of Palestinians living in Israel, egregious and unchecked violations of basic human rights by the authorities continued.  There had also been an increase in censorship and attacks on freedom of expression as well as arrests and torture of Palestinians for no more than a Facebook post, and the violent squashing unarmed protests.  Israel’s Government had all but launched a war on anyone who spoke out or sought to protect the inherent freedom, dignity and equality of Palestinians and Israelis alike, she said.  Describing Just Vision’s efforts in nonviolent resistance through a variety of media, including documentary films, graphic novels and magazine articles, she said the international community had failed to take concrete and meaningful action in the face of injustice in Israel and Palestine.  Every day communities and ordinary people put their bodies and lives on the line to demand change in the face of egregious violations of human rights.  The world had a moral responsibility to pay attention to communities in Israel and Palestine that had been experiencing dehumanization for decades.