

ORGANISATION OF ISLAMIC COOPERATION
GENERAL SECRETARIAT

ORGANISATION DE COOPERATION ISLAMIQUE
SECRETARIAT GENERAL



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**STATEMENT BY
PROF. EKMELEDDIN IHSANOGLU
SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE OIC
ON THE
INTERNATIONAL DAY OF SOLIDARITY WITH
THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE
29 NOVEMBER 2011**

THE UNITED NATIONS – GENEVA

Your Excellency Mr. Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, Director General of the United Nations Office at Geneva,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we meet here today to affirm the international community's solidarity with the Palestinian people in their just struggle to regain their inalienable rights, I am pleased to express the deep appreciation of the OIC and its Member States to the United Nations and its agencies and committees for their role in promoting the Palestinian cause and for their constant support and backing of the Palestinian people in their just struggle to regain their inalienable national rights. I mention here in particular the efforts made by the United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and Your Excellency's outstanding efforts in this regard.

The International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People comes this year at a time when the Palestinian cause is going through extremely difficult times as a result of the continuing Israeli violations of the international law, the political stalemate due to the obstinacy of the Israeli government and its refusal to abide by the terms of reference which form the basis of the peace process.

As part of its persistence on the path of settlement, Israel has accelerated settlement building activities in the West Bank, including the occupied East Jerusalem and has given settlers a free hand to wreck havoc on the Palestinian territories. This year has witnessed a sharp increase in settlers' violence and aggressions, which have gone beyond killing and harming Palestinians to destroying their crops through removing and burning thousands of olive trees, inundating agricultural land with wastewater, destroying the environment and stealing natural wealth and resources. Israeli settlers have also continued their aggressions against mosques in the West Bank by burning and desecrating them.

In fact, settlement cannot be separated from the continuing construction of the Apartheid wall, which aims to establish new realities on the ground hindering the establishment of a contiguous Palestinian State in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The Wall is usurping large areas from the Palestinian territories to facilitate the movement of settlers and make further encourage settlement expansion. This is in addition to its destructive impact on Palestinian land and people incarnated in the isolation and displacement of Palestinian citizens from their homes, destruction of their properties, bulldozing their crops, cutting off fruitful trees and confiscating lands.

At the same time, the Israeli violations of the international law in the occupied East Jerusalem have become more intense. The Israeli occupation authorities are conducting a systematic process of altering the Arab-Islamic identity of the City of Al Quds through their attempts to judaize it, denigrate its sanctities, tamper with its history and change its demographic composition by emptying it of its Palestinian population, seizing their land and homes by force and replacing them with colonial settlers in clear violation of the international law, the international humanitarian law and the Fourth Geneva Convention.

On a parallel track, Israel continues to impose an unjust blockade on the Gaza Strip and prevent the entry of vital goods and the construction materials needed to rebuild what was demolished by its aggression, making thousands of Palestinian families homeless as winter is drawing nearer. Israel's persistence in its blockade requires the international community to act seriously not only to lift the unjust blockade imposed on the Gaza Strip, but also to bring Israel's leaders and officers who are responsible for this blockade to international justice. Now is the time for international justice to take place and for Israel to be subjected to the will of the international community. It is time to compel Israel to respect the provisions of the international law which it has repeatedly violated by acting as a state that is above the law and immune from its rule.

Mr Chairman,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The failure to reach a just solution to the Palestinian cause as the heart of the dispute in the Middle East perpetuates instability in the region and poses a threat to international peace and security. The international community should make serious and strenuous efforts to compel Israel to abide by the terms of reference of the peace process and to respect and implement the agreements and understandings reached in that regard.

All have followed Palestine's endeavour to expand the base of international recognition of it as a free state within the borders of 1967. The OIC has expressed full support and backing for Palestine in obtaining membership of the United Nations. We hold the view that the Palestine's membership of the United Nations is a right that must be fully supported by all justice and peace loving countries of the world. Furthermore, Palestine's right to UN membership does not contradict with its obligations with regard to reaching a peaceful settlement based on United Nations resolutions. We also see it as a factor that would help achieve a peaceful settlement of the conflict in line with the UN resolutions which do not recognize the legality of the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem.

In this connection, the OIC believes that the revitalisation of the peace process such as to reach the aspired goals hinges upon a number of criteria on top of which is ending settlement, which is one of the key obligations that Israel must meet. Israel must also refrain from carrying out all unilateral activities aimed at imposing realities on the ground and anticipating the outcome of negotiations. There is absolutely no meaning for negotiations through which Israel seeks to set the outcome by changing the facts and imposing its will.

The success of negotiations is largely contingent upon the existence of a clear timetable, implementation mechanisms, credible international monitoring and the possibility of fair intervention. There is need to recall here that the

aspired viable solution must be founded on the resolutions of international legitimacy and the terms of reference of the peace process which was launched in Madrid and the Arab Peace Initiative.

In conclusion, I reaffirm the OIC and the Islamic Ummah's solidarity with the Palestinian people in their endeavour to regain their national inalienable rights, including their right of return, freedom, self-determination and the establishment of their independent Palestinian State on their national soil with Al Quds Al Sharif as its capital.

I wish your meeting success in reaching its noble ends.