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COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE
RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 254th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 21 November 2000, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. KA (Senegal)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.55 a.m.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

1. The agenda was adopted.
2. The CHAIRMAN informed the Committee of various recent developments. A high-level meeting had been held at Sharm el-Sheikh on 16 and 17 October, co-chaired by the Presidents of the United States and Egypt, and attended by the King of Jordan, the Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization, the Prime Minister of Israel, the High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union, and the Secretary-General of the United Nations. The event had resulted in commitments being made regarding three principles: to end the violence, to establish a fact-finding committee, and to resume peace negotiations.
3. The tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly had resumed on 18 October to consider illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory. At the conclusion of the debate, the General Assembly had adopted A/RES/ES-10/7.
4. On October 22, the Extraordinary Arab Summit Conference of the League of Arab States had concluded its work in Cairo and adopted a final declaration on the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem, which asked the United Nations to consider establishing an international force to protect Palestinians living under Israeli occupation and to investigate the causes of the violence.
5. On 7 November, the General Assembly had discussed agenda item 36: Bethlehem 2000 and, following a debate, had adopted resolution 55/18 without a vote. The same day, the President of the United States had announced the formation of a five-member fact-finding committee to look into the causes of the current crisis.
6. Lastly, on 12 November, the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) summit meeting in Qatar had held a special session on the situation in Occupied Palestinian Territory and approved a resolution that denounced Israel for using excessive force to quell the Palestinian uprising and called for the establishment of a United Nations peace-keeping force to protect Palestinians.

CONSIDERATION OF THE DRAFT RESOLUTIONS ON THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE

7. The CHAIRMAN said that the four draft resolutions to be submitted to the General Assembly under agenda item 41: Question of Palestine had been discussed and approved by the Bureau, which was recommending them for approval by the Committee as a whole. The drafts had been updated to reflect recent developments in the region and in the peace process.
8. The first three draft resolutions referred to the work of the Committee, the Division for Palestinian Rights and the Department of Public Information and only minor changes had been made in each document.

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9. Several changes had been made to the form and content of the fourth draft resolution entitled: Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine. Two preambular paragraphs had been added, which expressed the Committee's concern over recent events in Occupied East Jerusalem and in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and the third and fourth operative paragraphs had been updated.

10. He took it that the Committee approved the draft resolutions as modified.

11. It was so decided.

DEVELOPMENTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS AND THE SITUATION IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY, INCLUDING JERUSALEM

12. Mr. AL KIDWA (Observer for Palestine) said that the previous day there had been a new and extremely dangerous escalation of the Israeli campaign against the Palestinian people. Helicopter gunships and warships had been used to launch massive bombardments against the Gaza Strip. About 50 Israeli missiles had hit locations in the Palestinian Authority, and the air raids had killed at least one person and injured 70. Civilian casualties were relatively low, because the population had anticipated the Israeli action, which was reminiscent of the air raids on Gaza and Ramallah of 12 October 2000 and threatened to escalate the exceptionally dangerous situation in the whole region.

13. The Israeli campaign, which had started on 28 September 2000, had already caused more than 220 deaths among the Palestinian population and left several thousand injured, almost one third of whom were children.

14. Since 25 October, the Observer Mission of Palestine had repeatedly called on the Security Council to take action to put an end to the Israeli campaign of terror and provide impartial international protection to the Palestinian civilian population in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and East Jerusalem. However, the Council had not acted since the adoption of its resolution 1322 (2000) of 7 October.

15. The previous Friday, his Mission had circulated a draft resolution to members of the Security Council which, if adopted, would establish a United Nations unarmed, military monitoring force of about 2,000 observers, to be deployed throughout the territory occupied by Israel since 1967, with the aim of contributing to the safety and security of Palestinian civilians under Israeli occupation, ensuring the freedom of movement of Palestinian persons and goods and freedom of worship. On the same day, the Security Council had mandated the Secretary-General to consult the parties concerned on the modalities for the establishment of such a force.

16. The Secretary-General had met with him and with the Israeli representative to the United Nations the previous day. He had informed them about his recent meeting with former Senator George Mitchell with regard to the fact-finding committee announced on 7 October. The full committee would be meeting the following Sunday. His Mission had expressed grave concern about the delay in announcing the fact-finding committee and the fact that the Committee had still not started its work. It had also stated that it saw an evident distinction between the work of the fact-finding committee and the attempt to establish an

observer force. Although the activities of the two bodies would be complementary, they were legally and politically separate and distinct. His Mission had informed the Secretary-General that it was extremely important that protection should be provided to the Palestinian civilian population in the form of uniformed, military United Nations observers. The time factor was important as deaths, injuries and destruction were increasing throughout Occupied Palestinian Territory.

17. There was a feeling in the region that the events of 20 November might have been a turning point. Egypt had recalled its Ambassador to Israel, and later in the day there would be an urgent meeting of the Arab Group, as a result of which it was expected that the Group would send another letter to the President of the Security Council reiterating its request for an immediate formal meeting of the Council.

18. Accordingly, the Observer Mission of Palestine hoped that the Security Council would convene very shortly and that Member States would have another chance to express their position with regard to Israeli actions against the Palestinian people and the peace process. There was no contradiction between that kind of meeting and the need to allow the Secretary-General sufficient time to conclude consultations. His Mission was calling on the Security Council to bring the exercise to an end by 27 November.

19. An urgent meeting of the Organization of the Islamic Conference would be held later in the day, and the Arab Group would be asking for an urgent meeting of the Co-ordination Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement. He would be reporting on the situation to both meetings.

20. He had two additional points to raise. First, certain parties had contended that the Arab Group had been calling for a vote of the Economic and Social Council on the draft decision regarding Commission on Human Rights resolution S-5/1, on grave and massive violations of the human rights of the Palestinian people by Israel. That was decidedly untrue. The resolution had financial implications which had needed to be assessed. In recent days, the Observer Mission of Palestine had been engaged in trying to reach a reasonable compromise, one which would enable the Council to avoid taking another position on the merits of the resolution, while at the same time taking the necessary action regarding the financial implications. Since a compromise had been impossible to achieve, there had been no choice but to proceed with a vote on the draft decision. That vote would take place the following day. Accordingly, he called on the members of the Council to lend their support to the cause of Palestine once again.

21. Secondly, he commended Switzerland for the courageous memorandum it had recently issued, in its capacity as depositary of the fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, recalling the decision, adopted at the Conference of High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention on Measures to Enforce the Convention in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem, the previous year, to consider reconvening that Conference in the light of the evolution of events. The memorandum sought the views of the High Contracting Parties on the goals of such a Conference, drawing attention to the relevant paragraphs of

resolution ES-10/7. The Government of Palestine urged all its friends to respond positively to that memorandum by the deadline of 31 December 2000. It was extremely important for the High Contracting Parties to reconvene the Conference, with the aim of ensuring respect for the fourth Geneva Convention.

22. The CHAIRMAN said that the situation described by the Observer for Palestine was indeed grave. On behalf of the Committee, he said that he deplored the disproportionate actions carried out as collective punishment against the civilian population of Palestine and believed that such actions violated the terms of the fourth Geneva Convention and of humanitarian law. He strongly hoped that negotiations to ensure the protection of Palestinian civilians would rapidly conclude, and that the efforts of the Secretary-General would yield favourable results. Among other international efforts worthy of note was the ministerial mission from the Organization of the Islamic Conference, which was expected to arrive in New York in the next several days to meet with the permanent members of the Security Council with a view to establishing protection measures for Palestinian civilians and to ensuring the return of calm to the region. Again on behalf of the Committee, he offered his condolences to all families that had been victimized by events in recent weeks.

OTHER MATTERS

23. The CHAIRMAN announced that on 29 November a meeting would be held in observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. He urged all Members and Observers to send high-level delegations to that important event.

The meeting rose at 11.45 a.m.