



# General Assembly

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

### Summary record of the 257th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 25 July 2001, at 11 a.m.

*Chairman:* Mr. Ka. . . . . (Senegal)

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*The meeting was called to order at 11.15 a.m.*

### **Adoption of the agenda**

1. *The agenda was adopted.*

### **Report by the Chairman on the United Nations Latin American and Caribbean Meeting on the Question of Palestine and the Workshop of Latin American and Caribbean Non-Governmental Organizations on the Question of Palestine, held in Havana from 12 to 14 June 2001**

2. **The Chairman** described his participation in the United Nations Latin American and Caribbean Meeting on the Question of Palestine and the Workshop of Latin American and Caribbean Non-Governmental Organizations on the Question of Palestine, held at Havana from 12 to 14 June 2001, with the theme “Achieving the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people — a key to peace in the Middle East”.

3. The Meeting had consisted of an opening session, three plenary meetings, a non-governmental organizations’ workshop and a closing session. The themes chosen for the plenary meetings had been: the current situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem; the framework of international legitimacy within which a comprehensive solution could be achieved; and the initiatives of regional and international governmental and non-governmental actors in support of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. The highly successful Meeting had been attended by representatives of 45 Governments, 2 intergovernmental organizations, 4 United Nations bodies and 20 non-governmental organizations, as well as special guests of the host country and representatives of the media, universities and institutes. Presentations had been given by 18 experts from Latin America, the Caribbean and other regions, including Palestinians and Israelis. Once again, Palestinian experts from the Occupied Palestinian Territory had been prevented from attending a major event. Owing to the closure imposed by Israel, two speakers from Ramallah and a number of representatives of non-governmental organizations had not been able to leave the Territory to travel to Havana. The Committee’s delegation to Havana had issued a statement deploring their forced absence and denouncing the Israeli policy of closures, collective punishment and constant violations of the human rights of the Palestinians.

4. The panel presentations and the ensuing discussions had led to improved understanding of the current situation in the region, the fundamental issues at stake and the obstacles and complexities facing the parties. The panellists had also outlined the problems that might lie ahead and discussed the framework for an eventual solution. Coverage of the Meeting by the Cuban and international media had been very prominent, and the delegation of the Committee, as well as all participants, had sincerely appreciated the strong support from the Cuban Government for the holding of the Meeting. Some of the invited experts had participated in a television round table also attended by President Fidel Castro, but the most memorable event had been a mass rally in support of the Palestinian people organized by Cuban non-governmental organizations and attended by about 10,000 Cubans.

5. The report on the Meeting would be issued in due course as a publication of the Division for Palestinian Rights, and a summary would be included in the reports to the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly. A copy of the Havana Declaration had been posted on the web sites maintained by the Division.

6. If there was no objection, he took it that the Committee wished to take note of the report.

7. *It was so decided.*

### **Report by the Chairman on the United Nations International Meeting on the Question of Palestine and the United Nations Non-Governmental Organization Meeting in Solidarity with the Palestinian People, held in Madrid from 17 to 19 July 2001**

8. **The Chairman** reported on the United Nations International Meeting on the Question of Palestine and the United Nations Non-Governmental Organization Meeting in Solidarity with the Palestinian People, which he had attended in Madrid from 17 to 19 July 2001. The theme of the International Meeting had been “The road to Israeli-Palestinian peace”. Convening in the city where the Middle East peace process had been officially launched had given participants an opportunity to assess its achievements and shortcomings a decade later and to reaffirm its goals. The International Meeting had consisted of an opening session, three plenary sessions and a closing session. The themes of the three plenary sessions had been: the

Israeli-Palestinian peace effort; the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem; and the road to peace. The Meeting had been attended by representatives of 63 Governments, 3 intergovernmental organizations, 6 United Nations bodies and 37 non-governmental organizations, special guests of the host country and representatives of the media, universities and institutes. The opening speeches had been delivered by Mr. Josep Piqué, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Spain, Mr. Yasser Abed Rabbo, Minister for Information, Culture and the Arts of the Palestinian Authority; Mr. Terje Rød-Larsen, United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, who had read out a message from the Secretary-General; and Mr. Miguel Angel Moratinos, Special Envoy of the European Union to the Middle East Peace Process. Mr. Miquel Nadal, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of Spain, had made a closing statement. Presentations in the three plenary sessions had been made by 14 experts from Europe, North America and the Middle East, including Israelis and Palestinians. For the third time that year, Israeli travel restrictions had prevented a Palestinian speaker, Mr. Rawya Shawa, a member of the Palestinian Council, from attending a major Committee event, in yet another manifestation of the Israeli policy of closures, collective punishment and human rights violations, which had been repeatedly deplored by the Committee.

9. The panel presentations and ensuing discussions had afforded participants a better understanding of the current situation in the region, the status of the peace process, the fundamental issues at stake and possibilities for resolving the impasse. The Meeting had received extensive media coverage, including separate interviews with many of the speakers.

10. In the general remarks presented at the close of the Meeting, participants had expressed their strong conviction that: the recommendations contained in the Mitchell report and the subsequent United States-brokered ceasefire agreement should be swiftly implemented, as a whole; the excessive use of force by Israel, the closures and the economic blockade of Palestinian population centres, the incursions into Palestinian-controlled areas and all other illegal measures of collective punishment should be brought to an immediate end; in view of the excessive use of force against Palestinian civilians and continued Israeli illegal settlement activity, the High Contracting Parties

to the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War should expedite the reconvening of the Conference of High Contracting Parties; and an international presence must be established to protect innocent civilians and monitor the implementation of agreements and understandings. In that connection, the Security Council should fully discharge its responsibilities under the Charter. Participants had also discussed the role played in the peace process by the sponsors, including the European Union, the United Nations, regional organizations and other interested international actors and had stressed their importance and the need for close coordination among them, particularly during the current critical period.

11. The United Nations Non-Governmental Organization Meeting in Solidarity with the Palestinian People, held immediately after the International Meeting, had been characterized by the broad participation of civil society and the adoption of a statement and plan of action.

12. The Committee's delegation had been received by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Spain and had expressed its deep appreciation for the active and constructive role played by Spain in the peace process. A copy of the general remarks and of the UNISPAL statement and plan of action of the non-governmental organizations was posted on the UNISPAL and NGO network web sites maintained by the Division for Palestinian Rights.

13. **The Chairman** said he would take it that the Committee wished to take note of the report.

14. *It was so decided.*

#### **Developments in the Middle East peace process and the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem (continued)**

15. **The Chairman** said that the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem, remained critical. The occupying Power continued to use excessive force, carried out extrajudicial killings of Palestinian activists, pursued its stifling economic blockade, refused to freeze settlement expansion and proceeded with its illegal policies in contravention of United Nations resolutions and other international legal instruments. The Mitchell report had provided a way out of the impasse and both parties had in theory accepted it. However, the Government of Israel had

rendered it ineffective in practice through its insistence on a piecemeal implementation of the relevant recommendations, starting with a period of complete “quiet” of which it wanted to be the sole judge. International pressure must intensify and international monitoring should be introduced if the parties were ever to disentangle themselves from the spiral of violence and resume confidence-building measures and meaningful negotiations.

16. The Committee had continued to have an international presence in support of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the search for peace in the Middle East. As Chairman of the Committee, he had attended the Joint Meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Committee on Palestine of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Non-Aligned Movement Security Council Caucus in Pretoria, on 3 and 4 April; the International Media Encounter on the Question of Palestine organized by the Department of Public Information in Paris on 18 and 19 June; and the 74th ordinary session of the Council of Ministers and the 37th ordinary session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity, in Lusaka, from 5 to 7 July.

17. **Mr. Jilani** (Observer for Palestine) expressed his delegation’s appreciation to the Government of Cuba and the Government of Spain for hosting the Latin American and Caribbean Meeting and the International Meeting, respectively, and in particular, to President Fidel Castro for his personal support.

18. As for developments in the Middle East, hours earlier, Israeli occupying forces had carried out yet another act of State terrorism, in which a Palestinian civilian had been assassinated by a ground-to-ground anti-tank missile fired at him while he was driving his car. Such policies had met with the unanimous condemnation of the international community. On 5 July 2001, the Secretary-General had issued a statement describing such policies as contrary to international law, in particular human rights law, and to general principles of law, and bound to aggravate the crisis of confidence between the parties and make an already fragile situation even more precarious. The occupying Power pursued its bloody military campaign against the Palestinian people, despite the ceasefire agreement, making even further incursions into areas under Palestinian control, stationing additional troops, including tanks and heavy weaponry, around

Palestinian towns and cities and destroying homes, farms, orchards and infrastructure. On 19 July, illegal Israeli settlers had brutally shot and killed three Palestinian civilians, including a three-month-old baby. Such crimes were committed under the full protection of the Israeli occupying forces. In short, Israel was deliberately escalating tensions in order for its Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, to avoid implementing the Mitchell recommendations.

19. The Group of Eight proposal to send international observers to the Palestinian territory would guarantee objective and effective monitoring of the implementation of the Mitchell recommendations. The proposal should not be construed as merely broadening the role of the United States Central Intelligence Agency in monitoring the ceasefire, as Israel argued. Indeed, there was a growing consensus that Mr. Sharon and his Government were not interested in pursuing peaceful negotiations. Increasingly, Mr. Sharon was viewed as a proponent of war, killing and targeted assassinations that could well thrust the entire region into a broader confrontation. That sentiment had been voiced by a number of leaders in the region, most recently by President Mubarak of Egypt. Like the other participants in the recent Meetings, his delegation hoped that the peace movement in Israel and other supporters would call for the immediate resumption of peaceful negotiations, and that the permanent member of the Security Council which had exercised its veto would allow the Council to dispatch international observers as soon as possible. Already, the delay in doing so had cost many lives. It was also important for the Security Council to endorse the Mitchell recommendations, in line with its primary responsibility of maintaining international peace and security.

20. In conclusion, he paid a tribute to the Chairman, who would soon be retiring, for his courageous and wise leadership of the Committee and his landmark achievements, including the modernization of the records of the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine.

#### Other matters

21. **Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla** (Cuba), Vice-Chairman of the Committee, **Mr. Farhâdi** (Afghanistan), Vice-Chairman of the Committee, and **Mr. Balzan** (Malta), Rapporteur of the Committee, thanked the Chairman

for his devoted service to the Committee and excellent leadership of the Bureau.

22. **Mr. El Atrash** (Observer for the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya), **Mr. Tankoano** (Observer for the Niger), **Mr. Siddiqui** (Pakistan), **Mr. Maiga** (Mali), **Mr. Maso** (South Africa), **Mr. Medrek** (Observer for Morocco) and **Mr. Chaouachi** (Tunisia) praised the Chairman's hard work and achievements in representing the Committee.

23. **The Chairman** thanked the members of the Committee and, in particular, the Bureau for their support and expressed appreciation to the staff of the Division for Palestinian Rights and the Palestine and Decolonization Section of the Department of Public Information. He was also grateful to those Governments that had hosted regional meetings on the question of Palestine.

24. Over the past five years, the Committee had achieved greater visibility within the United Nations. It had acquired two new members: Namibia and South Africa. Through its efforts, the draft resolutions on the question of Palestine had gained broader support in the General Assembly. The Bureau's periodic meetings with the Troika of the European Union, which he had initiated, had been instrumental in that regard. He also noted with satisfaction the Committee's fruitful cooperation with the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the League of Arab States. At the request of President Arafat, the Committee had played the leading role within the United Nations in promoting the Bethlehem 2000 Project. The draft resolution on the Project had enjoyed the support of every Member State. The Committee's visit to Gaza had been a historic event: the first occasion on which a United Nations committee dealing with the issue of Palestinian rights had travelled to the Occupied Territories.

25. He had carried out his duties as Chairman of the Committee with conviction because he sincerely believed in the just cause of the Palestinian people. He had also been fortified by his Government's commitment to the attainment of a peaceful solution in the Middle East and its belief that, while the Israeli people had the right to live in peace within secure, internationally recognized borders, the Arab peoples and the Palestinian people must also be able to exercise all their rights, including the right to self-determination, an outcome that could be achieved only with the ending of the occupation.

26. The lack of progress in the final status negotiations was disappointing, while the deterioration of the situation in the Occupied Territories was a cause for concern. International pressure for the resumption of the talks must be brought to bear. The Committee, for its part, must build on its achievements, and he trusted that the members would give his successor every assistance.

*The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.*