



General Assembly

Distr.: General
26 September 2001

Original: English

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

Summary record of the 258th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 18 September 2001, at 11.30 a.m.

Acting Chairman: Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla (Vice-Chairman) (Cuba)

Chairman: Mr. Fall (Senegal)

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The meeting was called to order at 11.45 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

1. *The agenda was adopted.*

Expression of sympathy in connection with the recent terrorist attacks on the United States of America

2. **The Acting Chairman**, on behalf of all the members of the Committee, expressed sympathy to the Government and people of the United States of America in connection with the recent terrorist attacks on that country.

3. *At the invitation of the Acting Chairman, the members of the Committee observed a minute of silence.*

Election of the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

4. **The Acting Chairman** nominated Mr. Papa Louis Fall, Permanent Representative of Senegal to the United Nations, for the office of Chairman.

5. *Mr. Fall (Senegal) was elected Chairman by acclamation.*

6. *Mr. Fall (Senegal) took the Chair.*

7. **The Chairman** said that since its creation more than a quarter of a century earlier, the Committee had become more active and its voice had grown stronger. While its mandate remained the same, the context in which that mandate had to be discharged had changed radically. In the Middle East, periods of acute crisis had been succeeded by moments of optimism. Currently, the peace process was in an impasse. In the light of the recent escalation of violence in the Occupied Territories, there was a pressing need for strong international action to bring the main parties to the conflict back to the negotiating table. The Committee must contribute to that process. As Chairman, he would strive to ensure that it did.

8. He was convinced that the Israelis and Palestinians would soon begin substantive talks aimed at achieving a just, comprehensive and lasting political settlement to the conflict, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the land-for-peace principle. The State of Israel and the future State of Palestine each had the right to exist and

develop in peace and security; the peace process, when it resumed, must proceed on that basis. While the Committee sought to contribute to the establishment of conditions conducive to the resumption of the peace process, it also condemned the acts of violence and terrorist attacks committed against civilians, whether Palestinian or Israeli and reiterated its appeal to the sponsors of the peace process, the Security Council and the entire international community to ensure the security of the Palestinian people and all the champions of peace in the region.

9. **Mr. Al-Kidwa** (Observer for Palestine) thanked the Government and people of Senegal for their unwavering support for the Palestinian people.

Developments in the Middle East peace process and the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem

10. **The Chairman** recalled that, in response to the escalation of the situation, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem, the Security Council had held a debate on 20 and 21 August. The representative of Cuba, addressing the Council in his capacity as Acting Chairman, had put forward the Committee's position with regard to those developments. He had also addressed a letter to the Secretary-General (A/ES-10/106-S/2001/819) reiterating the Committee's concern about the dangerous situation in the region. He was to be commended for the exemplary manner in which he had steered the work of the Committee since the departure of its previous Chairman.

11. **Mr. Al-Kidwa** (Observer for Palestine) thanked the representative of Cuba for his work as Acting Chairman of the Committee. The Security Council had had a serious debate, in which 49 speakers had taken part. Many speakers had harshly criticized Israeli actions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including the closure of the Territories, the imposition of collective measures and the commission of extrajudicial executions. At the same time, they had expressed outrage at the bombings carried out in Israel. Regrettably, the debate had not led to any specific action. The Council had decided not to vote on the draft resolution submitted by his delegation, one permanent member having stated that it would veto any such initiative.

12. He condemned unequivocally the recent heinous terrorist attacks on the United States of America and wished to express sympathy to the families of the victims and to the American Government and people. The Palestinian position with regard to those tragic events was very clear: it would support all international efforts, in particular those conducted within the framework of the United Nations, to bring the perpetrators to justice, to prevent a recurrence and to jointly combat international terrorism.

13. Regrettably, the Israeli side appeared to have taken advantage of the shift in the focus of international attention for, in the period from 11 to 17 September 2001, Israeli occupying forces had killed 24 Palestinians and tanks had entered several Palestinian cities, causing panic among the population. In addition, it had cancelled important high-level meetings between the two sides and had sought to impose new conditions for the holding of the meetings. Israeli statements against the Palestinian leadership had undermined attempts to build a united international front against terrorism.

14. However, President Arafat's firm stance against international terrorism at last appeared to have brought about a shift in the Israeli position. According to information from Tel Aviv and Washington, Israel was about to announce the cessation of all offensive military action against Palestinians; that would be a very positive step. It was to be hoped that the two sides could overcome the immediate difficulties on the ground, leading to the resumption of serious negotiations on the agreed basis, and that, with a more determined international effort, a settlement would speedily be achieved. The Palestinian side, for its part, remained committed to the negotiations.

15. Clearly, the international community must proceed with caution and reflect further before deciding on what action to take in response to the recent tragic events in the United States of America. It was to be hoped, however, that a fresh vision would emerge, both at the global level and in the Middle East.

The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.