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

Summary record of the 327th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 11 November 2010, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Zahir Tanin (Vice-Chair) (Afghanistan)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

1. *The agenda was adopted.*
2. **The Chair**, summarizing some of the activities and developments that had taken place since the Committee's previous meeting, said that the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Central Committee of Fatah had suspended direct peace talks with Israel pending the freezing of settlement-building in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The decision had been supported by the Follow-Up Committee of the League of Arab States responsible for overseeing the Arab peace initiative.
3. India and South Africa had been appointed as new non-permanent members of the Security Council and would undoubtedly contribute, in that capacity also, to a solution for the Palestine question. In that connection, the Security Council had held a briefing in October 2010 on the Middle East situation, at which the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, had called for continued restraint with regard to settlement-building and cautioned against unilateral actions by either party.
4. On 21 October 2010, however, Mr. Robert Serry, the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, had expressed alarm at reports of renewed settlement construction in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and had reiterated the United Nations strong support for negotiations. In an address to the Foreign Relations and Defence Committee of the Knesset on 1 November 2010, the Special Coordinator had, inter alia, stressed the importance of women's participation in peace talks — a subject taken up in an opinion piece by him that had been published the previous day.
5. In November 2010, reports had been received of a sharp increase in settler violence against Palestinian civilians in the West Bank. The Special Coordinator continued to condemn such violence and had called on Israel to ensure law and order.
6. In recent days, plans to construct over 1,300 Jewish housing units in East Jerusalem and 800 homes in the West Bank settlement of Ariel had been announced. He recalled that settlement-building was illegal and contrary to international efforts to promote

direct Israeli-Palestinian negotiations on permanent status issues.

7. Turning to the subject of training, he said that two staff members of the Foreign Ministry of the Palestinian Authority were participating in the annual training programme in New York and nine Palestinian journalists had just started the programme for Palestinian broadcasters and journalists run by the Department of Public Information. He wished the trainees every success.

The situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and developments in the political process

8. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for Palestine) said that the training programmes were concrete evidence of the international community's willingness to support the building of infrastructure needed for the establishment of an independent Palestinian State. He hoped that such a State would be established in the very near future and become a full member of the United Nations during the tenure of the newly appointed non-permanent members of the Security Council.
9. He said that the situation in the Occupied Palestine Territory remained grave, despite some easing of the Gaza blockade. More supplies were now getting into Gaza, but they mainly consisted of food and medicines. Much needed reconstruction materials were entering in quantities so small as to be negligible, with the result that the prospects for recovery remained elusive. For example, after a very tedious process, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) had received approval to bring in construction materials for only 2 out of the 100 schools that were needed. He called for an immediate end to the blockade and a significant increase in the quantity of reconstruction materials allowed into Gaza. He furthermore drew attention to the need to allow exports to leave Gaza in order to support economic recovery and a return to some semblance of normality.
10. With regard to settlement-building, it should be borne in mind that the moratorium on settlements had not applied to projects already under way in the West Bank, especially East Jerusalem, when the measure took effect. Moreover, when the moratorium ended, settlement-building had intensified, particularly at Jabal Abu Ghnaim and the Ariel settlement,

underscoring Israel's determination to defy the appeals of 191 States Members of the United Nations, the entire Security Council and the Middle East Quartet for a settlement based on the relevant resolutions and the road map to Mideast peace. Israel had clearly opted for settlements over peace and therefore bore the entire responsibility for the breakdown of the peace negotiations. In that connection, his delegation had sent letters to the President of the Security Council, the President of the General Assembly and the Secretary-General, requesting action to bring Israel into compliance with United Nations resolutions. He intended to meet with the President of the Security Council to discuss ways of preventing Israel from acting above the law and ending the impasse in the political process. Together with other States and organizations, his delegation would explore the options, including through the Security Council, if the United States proved unable to bring Israel into compliance with the global consensus.

11. **The Chair** said that he wished to welcome Ms. Amira Hass, a well-known journalist with the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz*, who was the first and only Israeli journalist to have lived in the Occupied Palestinian Territory for more than a decade, reporting on Israeli policies and the daily lives and hardships of Palestinians. Ms. Hass had received several awards for her work, including the UNESCO Guillermo Cona Press Freedom Prize, the Press Freedom Hero Award, the Bruno Kreisky Human Rights Award and the Anna Lindh Award. He expressed appreciation to Ms. Hass for her willingness to share her experience and assessment of the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem.

12. **Ms. Hass** said that Israel pursued a policy of imposing facts on the ground in a piecemeal fashion that appeared to be random but was in fact systematic and premeditated. With each measure or military order or decree, the occupation authorities advanced political goals according to a schema whose pattern became clear only with the passage of time. Those few concessions that Israel gave appeared to the outside world to represent progress; in fact, they served to mask the wider picture that was the Palestinian plight.

13. Israel sought to maintain the status quo while redrawing the political and geographical map in furtherance of its own aims and ambitions. That map was being created piece by piece, without any public acknowledgement that its creation was in fact a policy

goal. The first step had been to separate the Gaza Strip from the rest of the Occupied Territory under a strategy designed to foil the two-State solution as the world had understood it, based on the 1967 borders. In that connection, the Gaza blockade was not, as claimed, a measure to punish Hamas but rather the culmination of a policy that had begun in 1991 with the imposition of permit requirements for Gazans wishing to visit the West Bank. An equivalent system had been in effect during apartheid in South Africa. It was not just a question of the movement of goods and exports; the real issue was fragmentation of the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

14. In the West Bank, that fragmentation was clearly visible from the manner in which land was allocated to the Palestinians and the very limited autonomy granted to those in the enclaves in areas A and B, where the prospects for development were furthermore remote. The same kind of policy had been imposed in Jerusalem and had intensified, especially in the past 20 years. The truth of the matter was that it was easier for a Palestinian to get into Australia or the United States of America than into Jerusalem. Such policies continued to be applied against the backdrop of the so-called peace process.

15. Many Israelis deluded themselves that a situation where security substituted for peace was in their own best interests. It was a situation that allowed Israel to retain control over water resources, which would otherwise have to be allocated equitably under a two-State solution. The creation of settlements furthermore served to compensate for the shrinking of the Israeli welfare state — a process which had begun in the 1970s — while Israelis in a disadvantaged situation viewed the settlements as a chance for a better life and thus were encouraged in the mistaken belief that the maintenance of the status quo was in their best interests.

16. Israel also profited from the status quo, using the occupation and the permanent state of low-intensity as a laboratory for testing the latest military and security equipment and technology, both of which were lucrative businesses in a world that was preoccupied with quelling social unrest. Moreover, Israeli politicians had a vested interest in the status quo; many of them were formerly employed in, or were closely linked to, the military and security industries.

17. Countless United Nations resolutions, the international condemnation of Israeli practices,

Palestinian efforts to achieve peace and international financial aid for the Palestinians had been used to sustain the occupation and further its goals. International financial aid had been particularly harmful, as it had been employed to create a dual infrastructure in the West Bank, one for the Palestinians and one for Israeli settlers, thus serving Israeli objectives. International aid had also helped Hamas maintain its rule in the Gaza Strip, thereby perpetuating the schism between the Palestinian factions. Israel's ultimate aim was not a two-State solution, but a multi-State solution that would see the creation, alongside Israel, of a Palestinian State in Gaza and several enclaves in the West Bank.

18. The situation, however, had the potential to explode, because the majority of Palestinians could not continue living under the status quo. The artificial economic boom in the West Bank, from which only the Palestinian elite benefited, was based on an influx of aid. Meanwhile, ordinary Palestinians were struggling to make ends meet. The current situation in the West Bank was reminiscent of the situation that preceded the second intifada in 2000. Yet any use of force by the Palestinians would be self-defeating and could lead to chaos in the region. The only alternative was a coordinated campaign of civil disobedience against the Israeli occupation and the apartheid system.

19. Another disturbing development was the acceptance by the Israeli public of extreme right-wing policies calling for the mass expulsion of Palestinians from Israel and the West Bank to Jordan. Right-wing groups persisted in their attempts to provoke Palestinians, both in Israel and the West Bank, into committing desperate acts, thereby justifying further Israeli military action.

20. Israel was mistaken if it thought the region would tolerate its policies, which were based on military superiority. Those policies in fact endangered Jewish existence in the region. It was incomprehensible that Jewish groups did not grasp that and allowed the Israeli authorities to continue their policies. Israel had missed a golden opportunity for peace in the 1990s, when the Palestinians accepted the two-State solution, effectively saying that, although Israel had been created by a colonial movement, they accepted its existence because they recognized that Zionism had been a response to persecution. However, Israel's ongoing colonization efforts told the Palestinians, and the rest of the world, that it was nothing more than a colonial entity.

Consideration of draft resolutions on the question of Palestine

21. **The Chair** drew attention to four draft resolutions entitled, respectively, "Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People", "Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat", "Special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat" and "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine", which were to be submitted to the General Assembly under agenda item 37, entitled "Question of Palestine". They were based on the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session, but had been updated to reflect recent developments on the ground and in the political arena. The draft resolutions had been discussed and approved by the Bureau, which recommended them for approval by the Committee.

22. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to approve the four draft resolutions.

23. *It was so decided.*

Other matters

24. **The Chair** reminded delegations that the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People would take place on 29 November 2010 and invited all members of the Committee and observers to be represented at the commemorative meeting to be held on that occasion, if possible at the ambassadorial level. He also urged all Committee members and observers to participate actively in the debate on agenda item 37, "Question of Palestine", in the plenary Assembly, and requested them to encourage non-members to do the same.

25. **Mr. Gokcen** (Observer for the Organization of the Islamic Conference) said that, in the spring of 2011, the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) would organize an event in support of the Palestinian people. The event would follow the modality of the Committee's panel discussions. OIC would welcome any support and guidance that the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights could offer. He also called on the Special Envoy to OIC of the United States of America and academic and civil society institutions to lend their support.

The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.