



# General Assembly

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

### Summary record of the 407th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 13 July 2022, at 10 a.m.

*Chair:* Mr. Niang ..... (Senegal)

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.*

### **Adoption of the agenda**

1. *The agenda was adopted.*

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

2. **Ms. Abdelhady-Nasser** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that the Committee's continued solidarity with the Palestinian people and the events it organized were vital to raising awareness about the Palestinian plight and mobilizing international action to bring an end to the historic injustice they faced. The year 2022 marked the fifty-fifth anniversary of the Israeli occupation and the seventy-fourth anniversary of the Nakbah.

3. Since the Committee's previous meeting in May 2022, Israeli occupying forces and extremist settlers had continued to carry out violent attacks. To date, in 2022, 70 Palestinians had been killed, including 17 children. Approximately 4,000 Palestinian civilians, including 170 children, were currently being detained by the occupying Power. At the same time, the bodies of as many as 105 Palestinians were being withheld from their families, who were denied the chance to bury their loved ones. Her Government called for the immediate release of all Palestinians being held illegally, whether living or dead.

4. The report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (A/76/871) detailed thousands of human rights violations suffered by Palestinian children in 2021, including attacks on schools and hospitals. Israeli occupying forces had killed 78 Palestinian children and maimed 982. In addition, 637 children had been detained in Israeli prisons, where several had reported ill-treatment. In the report, the Secretary-General had warned for the first time that, should the situation be repeated in 2022 without meaningful improvement, Israel should be listed as a party that committed grave violations affecting children in situations of armed conflict. Her delegation expressed appreciation for the Bureau's engagement with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and urged Committee members to insist on accountability for crimes against Palestinian children and their families.

5. Palestinian land and property continued to be seized and destroyed and families forcibly displaced as the occupying Power continued to construct settlements, particularly in and around East Jerusalem, ignoring the resolutions and advisory opinions of the Security

Council, the General Assembly and the International Court of Justice, and violating the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. In Masafer Yatta, 1,200 Palestinians, including over 500 children, faced expulsion from their homes to make way for a military training zone as the occupying Power continued its attempts to ethnically cleanse them from the city. Palestinians in and around East Jerusalem were also living under the constant threat of displacement, especially in Shaykh Jarrah, Silwan, Al Walaja and Kafr Kaddoum. At the same time, provocations, incitement and incursions continued at holy sites, in particular the Aqsa Mosque and Haram al-Sharif. The latest incident had occurred in June, when thousands of Israelis had besieged Jerusalem in the so-called flag march to mark the seizure of East Jerusalem by Israel in the 1967 war and the city's continued occupation and annexation. In the Gaza Strip, over 2 million Palestinians continued to suffer the dire humanitarian and socioeconomic impact and psychological trauma of the illegal 15-year blockade. And yet, no actions had been taken to hold Israel accountable for its inhumane acts. In the West Bank, Israel continued to impose a racist, discriminatory permit regime only on Palestinians.

6. The harsh realities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory had led international, Israeli and Palestinian human rights organizations to declare that Israel was imposing an apartheid regime on the Palestinian people. Her delegation urged Member States and the international community to recognize and directly address that fact, despite any discomfort regarding the use of the term. Under international law, including the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid, States were politically, legally and morally obligated to take collective action to bring an end to the war crimes and crimes against humanity being perpetrated against the Palestinian people. In that connection, her Government rejected the accusations of antisemitism made against anyone who opposed the illegal and inhumane policies and practices implemented by the occupying Power. It also rejected attempts to impose upon the United Nations the working definition of antisemitism adopted by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance. The definition was clearly meant to silence debate and hamper accountability measures aimed at halting the human rights violations and grave breaches perpetrated by Israel.

7. Her delegation urged the Committee to appeal for practical collective efforts to promote accountability so that Israel could not remain exempt from the rule of law and a political pathway could be opened towards a just,

secure and peaceful future for the Palestinian and Israeli peoples. Member States should continue to hold Israel accountable, including through legal means in courts, such as the International Criminal Court. At the same time, they should share their efforts with the international community to encourage more countries to uphold their responsibilities in that regard.

8. It had been 75 years since the General Assembly had passed resolution 181 (II), stripping the Palestinian people of their homeland and denying their rights to self-determination and freedom, as well as the right of return for millions of Palestinian refugees. As the region continued to be deprived of peace and security, it was time to follow through with the commitment to achieve the two-State solution, on the basis of the pre-1967 borders, before that solution was no longer an option. Her delegation called on all bodies of the United Nations to address the root causes of the conflict in order to achieve a just solution in accordance with international law, the Arab Peace Initiative and the relevant resolutions, including General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

9. She thanked those States that had made contributions or commitments to support the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) at its recent pledging conference. Nevertheless, a funding shortfall remained. Resources must be mobilized to guarantee the continuity of the Agency's services and, by extension, its stabilizing role in the region. The Agency's mandate must also be renewed by the broadest majority possible in the forthcoming seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly.

10. **The representative of South Africa** said that his Government rejected the apartheid laws to which the Palestinian people were subjected and continued to be dismayed by the daily oppression, displacement and dispossession they faced. Their dignity and human rights must not be negotiable. His Government also expressed concern about the Security Council's continued failure to fulfil its responsibility to protect the Palestinian people. The Committee and the international community as a whole must universally condemn Israeli practices and hold Israel accountable for its actions.

#### Update on the activities of the Committee

11. **The Chair** congratulated Ecuador and Malta, which were members of the Committee, on their election as non-permanent members of the Security Council. He said that since the Committee's previous meeting, held in February 2022, the Bureau had met with Member States from the Middle East, the Middle East Quartet

and members of the Security Council to reinvigorate efforts to resume the Middle East peace process. The Bureau had also met with the Permanent Representatives of Brazil, Gabon and Ghana. On 28 February, the Division for Palestinian Rights had held the annual briefing for new delegates on the Committee's mandate and programme of work.

12. He had delivered a statement at the forty-eighth session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, held on 22 and 23 March in Islamabad. A strategic partner in the implementation of the Committee's mandate, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation had provided funding to print booklets and produce the exhibits displayed at United Nations Headquarters for the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

13. On 23 March, on the margins of the sixty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the Committee had held a virtual meeting on the impact of forced displacement on Palestinian women, which had been live streamed on United Nations Web TV and social media platforms. The all-women panel had included residents of the Shaykh Jarrah and Silwan neighbourhoods of East Jerusalem. On 30 March, the Bureau had met with the President of the General Assembly to discuss ways to further highlight the question of Palestine.

14. On 20 April, a Bureau delegation had participated in a special briefing on the situation in Palestine convened by the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries caucus of the Security Council. On 25 April, the Vice-Chair of the Committee had delivered a statement during the Security Council's quarterly open debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. On 27 April, the Committee had convened a virtual event entitled "Al-Khalil/Hebron: a case study for the impact of Israeli settlements on Palestinian rights under occupation".

15. In May, a Committee delegation had visited Ireland to discuss ways to leverage the country's strong support for Palestinian rights in the future. The Bureau had met with the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Defence, and with parliamentary parties. In cooperation with the Irish Centre for Human Rights of the National University of Ireland Galway, the Committee had organized a closed-door seminar in Dublin to discuss legal strategies to address the protracted Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory. It had also commissioned a legal study in that connection. On 11 May, the Bureau had issued a press statement condemning the killing of Al-Jazeera journalist Shireen

Abu Aqleh, who had been covering an Israeli military operation near the Jenin refugee camp in the West Bank. Her death had deprived the international community of an experienced correspondent who exposed the continuous violations of Palestinian rights by the occupying Power.

16. On 16 June, the Committee had facilitated a virtual conversation on apartheid, international law and the Occupied Palestinian Territory with the former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al-Hussein, and the Secretary General of Amnesty International, Agnès Callamard. They had discussed the findings in the organization's 2022 report entitled "Israel's apartheid against Palestinians: cruel system of domination and crime against humanity". In a video message, the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of South Africa had drawn analogies between apartheid South Africa and the current situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. On 22 June, a Bureau delegation had met with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict to discuss concrete actions to respond to the rampant violations of the rights of Palestinian children by Israel, including the use of live ammunition.

17. **The representative of Türkiye** said that the Palestinian issue was being overshadowed by other conflicts on the international agenda and encouraged the Committee to ensure that the plight of Palestinians remained a priority. To that end, his delegation invited the Committee to host future events at its new offices, which included a 150-person auditorium. As Chair of the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA, Türkiye warned that the Agency would need up to \$100 million to maintain operations. The Committee should consider organizing an event to raise awareness about the Agency's financial problems in order to mobilize much-needed support.

18. **The observer for China** said that her country was deeply concerned about the deteriorating situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The continued expansion of Israeli settlements had encroached upon Palestinian land and natural resources, undermining the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and making a geographically contiguous, independent and sovereign State of Palestine ever more elusive. At the same time, the continued violence by Israeli security forces and settlers had resulted in heavy Palestinian casualties, including children. The question of Palestine was a litmus test of international justice and fairness. Piecemeal crisis management could not substitute for a comprehensive and just settlement; limited economic and humanitarian measures could not erase political and

security deficits; and individual national policies could not replace a long-established international consensus and multilateral process, which included the relevant resolutions adopted by the Security Council and the General Assembly. China called on the international community, particularly those States with influence over the parties concerned, to take urgent and decisive action to support the Middle East peace process and promote the two-State solution rather than wait for conditions for dialogue to improve. Equal importance should be accorded to the security concerns of both the State of Palestine and Israel. In addition, States should maintain a consistent position rather than allow the constant reversal of national policies to further complicate the peace process. Her Government firmly supported the just cause of the Palestinian people seeking to restore their legitimate national rights and would continue to work towards achieving comprehensive, lasting peace in the Middle East.

19. **The representative of Malaysia** said that all Member States must continue to support the question of Palestine, particularly those that were members of the Committee and other relevant bodies. Countries should provide financial support to UNRWA wherever possible; even small contributions could have a significant impact for the Palestinian people. He had recently visited the Marka camp, where refugees had expressed gratitude for the assistance they received. At the political level, States must do more than issue statements whenever incidents occurred; they must participate actively in meetings to ensure that the issue remained a priority on the United Nations agenda. Committee members must also collaborate with colleagues in the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Group of 77. Collective statements delivered by those groups must be amplified with individual statements so that support for the Palestinian people was visible. He thanked the delegation of Türkiye for its offer to allow the Committee to use its new facilities.

20. **Ms. Abdelhady-Nasser** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that her Government appreciated the calls for action and engagement to ensure that the question of Palestine remained a priority at the United Nations and for the broader international community. Recent Committee events had been essential to raising awareness about women and forced displacement, the impact of Israeli settlements on Palestinian rights and apartheid in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The Committee was also to be commended for its engagement with civil society, including Palestinian, Israeli and international actors. Continued outreach was essential, particularly with those Palestinian civil society organizations that were being criminalized by

Israel, the occupying Power, in an attempt to diminish their contributions. Following the killing of journalist Shireen Abu Aqleh, it was more vital than ever to amplify Palestinian voices and allow those civil society organizations to be part of international discussions and efforts to promote justice for the Palestinian people.

21. **The representative of Malta** said that his Government would continue to push for a just and comprehensive solution to the conflict, which it would highlight during its term on the Security Council. The financial situation of UNRWA gave cause for concern, given the Agency's role as a stabilizing force in the region. His delegation called on the international community to provide UNRWA with the support it needed to continue to provide Palestinian refugees with essential services.

22. **The observer for Egypt** suggested that the Committee could host events and social media campaigns to support the renewal of the mandate of UNRWA, to be discussed at the forthcoming seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly.

23. **The representative of the secretariat** said that, at the Bureau's request, the Division for Palestinian Rights had begun to increase investments in digital advocacy two years earlier. It had focused on increasing the Committee's reach and developing related skills. As a result, interest in the question of Palestine was clearly growing: the Committee's Twitter followers, newsletter subscribers, YouTube views and website traffic had all increased. He encouraged Member States to engage with and retweet the Committee's Twitter account whenever possible. He also invited Member States to collaborate with the Division to continue to improve the Committee's outreach. While UNRWA was already featured in much of the programming throughout the year, the Division would consider ways to highlight the Agency's work in the run-up to the renewal of its mandate.

24. **The Chair** thanked the delegation of Türkiye for offering to host Committee events at its venue. The Committee must not allow the situation in Palestine to be overshadowed by other conflicts. To that end, it should continue to raise awareness by further highlighting the plight of Palestinian refugees, reaching out to civil society organizations and conducting social media campaigns.

#### **Consideration of requests for accreditation of civil society organizations**

25. **The Chair** said that the accreditation criteria and the benefits of accreditation were explained on the Committee website. During the accreditation process,

organizations explained their activities in support of the resolution of the Palestinian question. Once accredited, organizations could participate in the activities of the Committee. The secretariat regularly received accreditation requests, which were reviewed by the Bureau before being sent to the Committee for approval. In recent months, the secretariat had received requests from 14 organizations, 3 of which met the accreditation requirements: Leonard Education Organization, Law for Palestine and the Hebron Rehabilitation Committee. He took it that the Committee wished to approve those requests for accreditation.

26. *It was so decided.*

#### **Other matters**

27. **The representative of the secretariat** said that the annual International Conference on the Question of Jerusalem, organized by the Committee and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, would be held on 20 July. The theme of the Conference was "Palestinian youth in East Jerusalem under occupation", to highlight the challenges faced by Palestinian youth and their role as agents of change.

*The meeting rose at 11.10 a.m.*