

We would like to thank the Chairman of the “Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories” Ambassador Palitha Kohona for his valuable introductory statement. Our thanks also go to the Special Committee and the Secretariat for the reports under this item.

We welcome the recommendations of the Special Committee, and align ourselves with the statement made by Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

**Madame Chair,**

20 years after the Madrid Peace Conference, and 18 years after the Oslo Interim Accords, and 8 years after the Roadmap, the Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu only reiterates his resounding four “NOs”; that is: (1) No freeze on settlements; (2) No return to the 1967 borders; (3) No negotiations over the future status of Jerusalem; and (4) No right of return for the Palestinian refugees.

It is clear that a durable solution to the Palestine question requires genuine negotiations on final status issues; however, faced with Netanyahu’s NOs, the Palestinian people had to continue their legitimate struggle to realize their inalienable right to self-determination, through seeking membership for the State of Palestine at the United Nations.

The admission application should be considered solely on the basis of its objective merits and in accordance with article 4 of the Charter, as clearly stipulated by the 1948 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

The admission application should not be subordinated to the course of the negotiation process. The question of the recognition of Palestinian Statehood cannot and should not be subjected to the outcome of negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis. Otherwise, the occupying Power would be granted a right of veto over the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people; a right that the General Assembly has recognized as inalienable one since 1974.

**Madame Chair,**

The latest Quartet statement of 23 September 2011 reiterated the obligations of both parties and called upon them to refrain from provocations, yet in less than one week the Israeli authorities approved a plan to build 1,100 housing units in the settlement of Gilo, on land originally expropriated mainly from the Palestinian village of Beit Jala, and in less than one month the same Israeli authorities approved a plan for the construction of 2,610 units in the settlement of Givat Hamatos, on land illegally annexed from Beit Safafa and Bethlehem, further encircling East Jerusalem and cutting it off from the rest of the West Bank.

Needless to add that since September 23<sup>rd</sup> itself, Israel has demolished Palestinian residences and farms in the regions of Qalqiliya, Kafr ad-Dik and Tubas. The Israelis have also uprooted and burned hundreds of olive and almond trees in Ramallah, Bethlehem and Hebron. In addition, armed settlers have physically assaulted and injured Palestinian civilians, including many children, as documented by reports of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

Settlement building is certainly not a “trivial issue” as Mr. Netanyahu claims, but indeed a unilateral action that undermines the “2 States solution”. In fact, in addition to evictions and house demolitions, residency revocations, land confiscations and building of the infamous apartheid Wall, settlement building is part of a campaign that is eating-up Palestinian land and aiming to change the identity and legal status of East Jerusalem.

It is clear today that the Israeli government chooses settlements and the illegal blockade of the Gaza Strip over peace. No peace can be imagined as long as Israel continues to impose its collective punishment of Gazans through its blockade and frequently bombing them and killing them under the pretext that they are “terrorists”. After all for the Israeli army Palestinians don’t have the right to life. The presumed easing of the blockade yielded very limited results and the responsibilities of the occupation power remain even if the blockade is eased.

**Madame Chair,**

It must be really powerful to be an Israeli soldier as there is almost nothing that you can’t do. You can go out and target civilian areas and kill without distinction between civilians and armed forces. You can destroy homes. You can administratively detain Arabs even children for unlimited periods. You can even unleash the fury of you settlers to terrorize Palestinians, desecrate their religious sites and uproot their trees.

The Israeli practices constitute a flagrant violation of international humanitarian law, particularly the system of protection of civilians enshrined in the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 and the Hague Rules of war and occupation of 1907.

**Madame Chair,**

Lasting peace is that which includes Syria and which requires Israel to comply with SC resolution 497 (1981) and withdraw fully from the occupied Syrian Golan to the line of 4 June 1967, pursuant to SC resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973).

In this context, Lebanon stresses the invalidity of any action by Israel aimed at changing the legal, material and demographic status in the occupied Syrian Golan, including the tender sale of land and all acts of construction and expansion of settlements, which constitute a flagrant violation of international law and SC resolutions and the Fourth Geneva Convention.

Building a wall to cordon off the occupied Syrian Golan and cut off the “valley of screams”, where separated Syrians in the occupied Golan came to communicate with family members outside the occupied territory is only another evidence of the cruelty of the occupation and its practices.

Lebanon condemns the restrictions on access to water for agricultural use by the Syrians in the occupied Golan, and the denial of their family visits to the Syrian Arab Republic, and the Israeli brutal practices against them in occupation prisons.

**Madame Chair,**

In his statement before the General Assembly, Palestinian President Abbas said “... we extend our hands to the Israeli government and the Israeli people for peace-making. I say to them: Let us urgently build together a future for our children where they can enjoy freedom, security and prosperity”.

The Israeli government responded last week and in an attempt to punish the Palestinians for UNESCO membership, by announcing its intention to accelerate settlement activities, including the construction of at least 2,000 new settlement units in Occupied East Jerusalem, and to freeze the transfer of Palestinian tax monies.

**Madame Chair,**

Palestine is an occupied State, and the Palestinian people, as we can conclude from the reports before us, is a people whose rights are violated on a daily basis, and it will remain the duty of the international community to help put an end to this occupation and these violations.

To those still reluctant to join us in such an endeavor, allow me to say:

Don't blame the victims, but support their quest for dignity.

To reap Peace, invest in justice.

Recognize the state of Palestine.

Help it achieve independence.