



**Statement**

by

**H.E. Dr. Nawaf Salam  
Permanent Representative of Lebanon  
to the United Nations**

**at the  
Security Council**

**The situation in the Middle East  
including the Palestinian question**

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Let me start by welcoming you, Mr. President, we are honored that you are presiding over the Council meeting, and allow me to congratulate the new members that have joined the Council recently.

I wish as well to express our thanks to Mr. Fernandez-Taranco for his comprehensive briefing, and stress the leading role the UN should play in the resolution of the Middle East conflict. In this regard, we commend the recent visit of the Secretary-General to Lebanon, the first trip in his new term, in which he reaffirmed his commitment to Lebanon's sovereignty and security, to the aspirations of the Arab peoples, and to peace and stability in the region.

Lebanon associates itself with the statement made on behalf of NAM (Non-Aligned Movement) and to be made on behalf of the OIC (Organization of Islamic Cooperation) and the Arab Group.

**Mr. President,**

The Quartet statement of September 23<sup>rd</sup> reiterated the obligations of both parties and called upon them to refrain from provocations. Yet, in less than one week, that's from this date, 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.

In the past 4 months, Israel has managed to expand its settlement activities at an unprecedented rate; in November 2011 the Israeli Government announced plans for the construction of 2000 housing units in the settlements of *ma'aleh adumim* and the *gush etzion bloc*. At the same time, and in another unilateral prejudgment on the outcome of any negotiation, the Israeli Prime Minister declared that these new areas "will under any future agreement remain part of Israel".

Recently, this past December, the Israeli Government announced another 130 new units in the settlement of *gilo*, as well as plans to construct a "tourist complex" in the Silwan neighbourhood of occupied East Jerusalem. This month the Israeli Government issued three new tenders for construction of yet another 300 settlement units in occupied East Jerusalem, in the settlement of *pisgat ze'ev*, and *har homa*.

**Mr. President,**

According to the latest Human Rights Watch Report, just published yesterday, as of November 1<sup>st</sup>, Israeli authorities had demolished 467 Palestinian homes and other buildings in the West Bank including East Jerusalem, displacing 869 people. This rate means that Israel will have forcibly displaced more Palestinians in 2011 than during any year since the United Nations started collecting cumulative figures. The Israelis have also uprooted and burned hundreds of olive and almond trees in Ramallah, Bethlehem and Hebron.

In East Jerusalem Israeli bulldozers demolished a Palestinian-owned structure in order to establish a parking lot for settlers in the Silwan neighbourhood, and razed a playing field belonging to a Palestinian college for the purpose of establishing a so-called Israeli national security college in Al-Sawwanah.

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. OCHA reported that during 2011 five Palestinians, including two children were killed, and over 1,000 injured by Israeli settlers or security forces in incidents directly or indirectly related to settlements. This January, a settler shot and killed a 15-year-old boy near the Palestinian village of Safa.

OCHA further reported that in 2011 Israeli illegal settlers vandalized over 10,000 Palestinian olive trees, while Israeli occupation forces destroyed 90 water structures throughout the West Bank.

OCHA also notes that 90% of Israeli police investigations into incidents of settler violence during the past six years were closed without any indictment, and in her last briefing to the Council, the UN Coordinator for Humanitarian Affairs, Ms. Valerie Amos, reported that settler violence in 2011 has increased by 40% from 2010 and 65% from 2009.

**Mr. President,**

This is the reality of the of the Israeli settlement activities, a reality that stands in complete violation of the principles and provisions of international law; the same principles and provisions that this Organization was established to protect and defend as stated in its Charter.

The Security Council in resolution 446 reaffirmed that the Fourth Geneva Convention applies to the Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967. The said resolution also determined that “the policy and practices of Israel in establishing settlements in the Palestinian and other Arab territories occupied since 1967 have no legal validity and constitute a serious obstruction to achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East”.

This Council reached that conclusion tens of years ago, and dozens of General Assembly resolutions has reiterated that settlement activity in the Arab territories occupied in 1967 are illegal, illegitimate, and constitute an obstacle to peace.

Furthermore, the July 2004 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the wall also concluded that “the Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian Territory (including East Jerusalem) have been established in breach of international law”.

Do we need here to remind as well that the Road Map, put forward by the Quartet and endorsed by the Security Council in resolution 1515 (2003), requires Israel to freeze “all settlement activity including natural growth”? It also requires Israel to “immediately dismantle ... settlement outposts erected since March 2001”.

These are the principles and provisions of international law and UN resolutions on settlements. However, these are the same principles and provisions that Israel has continued to ignore and challenge, to the point where the number of settlers in East Jerusalem and the West Bank now exceeds 517,000.

**Mr. President,**

A lasting peace in our part of the world needs to be a comprehensive and just peace based on the principles of International law and UN resolutions. Accordingly, it will also require that Israel withdraw fully from the occupied Syrian Golan to the line of June 4, 1967, and from the remaining occupied parts of southern Lebanon.

Thank you.