



# General Assembly

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

### Summary record of the 360th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 8 April 2014, at 10 a.m.

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

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.*

### **Adoption of the agenda**

1. *The agenda was adopted.*

### **Report on the United Nations International Meeting on the Question of Palestine and the United Nations Meeting of Civil Society in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace, Quito, 25-27 March 2014**

2. **Mr. Grima** (Malta) said that the United Nations International Meeting on the Question of Palestine had been held in Quito on 25 and 26 March 2014, with the theme “Engaging for peace — the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People”, and had been followed on 27 March 2014 by the United Nations Meeting of Civil Society in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace.

3. In a message read out by the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, the Secretary-General had expressed concern at Israel’s rapidly expanding illegal settlement activity, which risked rendering a two-State solution impossible, and at increasing incidents at Al-Haram Al-Sharif and the recent Knesset debate on a bill to impose “Israeli sovereignty” over the site, which might be perceived as serious acts of incitement in the wider region.

4. The Chair of the Committee had emphasized the crucial role of the Latin American countries in solidarity with the Palestinian people, in particular the wave of announcements of recognition of the State of Palestine by those countries since 2010, which had drawn international attention to the decades-long denial of the Palestinian right to self-determination and independence.

5. The representative of the State of Palestine had referred to that State’s right to accede to all legal instruments and become a member of United Nations entities. The international community bore the collective responsibility of taking the political, diplomatic and legal steps necessary to hold Israel accountable for its actions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

6. In the keynote address, the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs had deplored the continued slow deterioration of the situation on the ground and reminded participants that during the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian

People, the international community must do its utmost to support both sides in finding a solution to the conflict.

7. In the plenary meetings, political efforts to break the status quo and the impact of settlement expansion on prospects for a two-State solution had been discussed. An Israeli expert had highlighted the contradiction between the Israeli Government’s stated commitment to a two-State solution and its actual policy, which had resulted in a dramatic increase in the settler population in the West Bank since 1993. Panellists had called on the media to provide accurate first-hand coverage of the situation on the ground, as distorted media coverage had contributed to the suffering of the Palestinian people. The cultural, ethnic, economic, religious and political ties between Palestine and Latin America and the Caribbean, and the region’s support for a comprehensive settlement of the question of Palestine, had also been considered. In a discussion of the role of non-governmental organizations, an initiative to organize young people in local Jewish and Arab communities in the Southern Horn of Latin America to support efforts to end Israel’s occupation had been cited as an example.

8. The one-day Meeting of Civil Society had allowed participants to exchange views on such matters as the growing boycott, divestment and sanctions movement.

9. The Committee delegation had met with the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ecuador, who had offered to assist in promoting the Committee’s objectives in Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the National Assembly of Ecuador, who had endorsed the idea of convening an international conference of parliamentarians in support of the Palestinian people at United Nations Headquarters.

10. All information related to the Meetings was available on the Question of Palestine website (<http://unispal.un.org/unispal.nsf/home.htm>). The Secretariat was in the process of uploading all video recordings of the Meetings to its YouTube channel.

11. **Mr. Lasso Mendoza** (Ecuador) said that it had been a great honour for Ecuador to host the International Meeting and that his Government was taking steps to open an embassy in the State of Palestine, which already had an embassy in Ecuador.

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

12. **The Chair**, summarizing other developments that had taken place since the Committee's preceding meeting, said that on 17 March 2014, President Abbas had met with President Obama as part of intensive diplomatic efforts to advance peace talks. Also on 17 March, the United Nations and the Palestinian Authority had launched a strategic humanitarian response plan for the State of Palestine for 2014-2016. On 18 March, the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs had briefed the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East and the question of Palestine.

13. On 19 and 20 March, Israel had announced plans to build 186 new settlement units in East Jerusalem and 2,269 new units deep in the West Bank. On 21 March, the outgoing United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 had called on the International Court of Justice to assess the legal implications of the prolonged Israeli occupation. On 26 March, the summit meeting of the League of Arab States had expressed support for the Palestinian position in negotiations with Israel.

14. On 28 March, the Human Rights Council had adopted four resolutions on Palestine, including one on settlements. On 30 March, Pierre Krähenbühl had assumed the post of Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. On 1 April, President Abbas had signed applications to join 15 United Nations agencies.

15. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that one important development that had emerged from the International Meeting was a consensus that, during the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, support must be mobilized worldwide. A similar consensus had been reached at the recent joint meeting of the Committee and the League of Arab States in March 2014, at which the Cairo Declaration had been adopted. Both meetings had emphasized that the International Year was not only a festive occasion for celebrating international support for the Palestinian people's struggle, but also a time for the international community as a whole to contribute to efforts to find a just solution to the conflict by ending the occupation that had begun in

1967 and achieving independence for the State of Palestine, so that a two-State solution would exist in practice. If Israel, the occupying Power, was not ready and willing to move in that direction, the international community must be prepared to do what was necessary.

16. Israel had reneged on its commitment to release a fourth group of political prisoners, violating the agreement it had concluded with the State of Palestine under the auspices of the United States of America. Under that agreement, the State of Palestine had pledged not to pursue its legal right to join United Nations agencies, treaties and conventions. His Government had reacted immediately to the Israeli violation by beginning the process of accession to 13 international instruments, in exercise of its right as a State recognized by the General Assembly. On 2 May, 30 days after it had deposited its instruments of accession, the State of Palestine would become a State party to those instruments. The State of Palestine stood ready to negotiate with Israel in good faith, but it was equally prepared to proceed with further steps towards accession to international instruments if Israel persisted in illegally punishing the State of Palestine for legal actions.

17. The Palestinian people could no longer endure occupation or remain foreigners in their own land, but instead aspired to independence and life in peace and harmony with all their neighbours, including Israel. It was therefore time for Governments, the media and all other stakeholders to help the State of Palestine gain its independence. In that connection, he hoped that hundreds of parliamentarians would attend the international conference for parliamentarians to be held at United Nations Headquarters in connection with the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

18. The Latin American and Caribbean region, which had assumed a leadership role in hosting the recent International Meeting, must not lag behind Europe in adopting legislation to prohibit trade and business transactions of any kind with illegal Israeli settlements. Latin American support for the Palestinian struggle must extend beyond political recognition, which was, nevertheless, appreciated.

19. Currently, the political situation was very difficult, with countless obstacles created by the Israeli side. Out of a desire to negotiate in good faith, President Abbas had initially taken the bold decision to

refrain from joining international agencies and acceding to international instruments. However, Israel's conduct with regard to settlements; its extension of its sovereignty over Islamic holy sites in Jerusalem; its confiscation of Palestinian land; and its demolition of homes and expulsion of people from them, particularly in East Jerusalem, did not indicate readiness to withdraw from the Palestinian people's homeland but was instead the illegal behaviour of a country entrenching its colonization project. If Israel refused to negotiate in peace, it would force the State of Palestine and the international community to take further steps to hold it politically, diplomatically and legally accountable. It was high time for Israel to change its behaviour; should it fail to do so, it would have no one to blame but itself for the outcome.

20. **The Chair** said that Mr. Ziad Abuzayyad and Mr. Hillel Schenker, co-editors of the *Palestine-Israel Journal*, had been invited to brief the Committee on the situation in East Jerusalem.

21. *At the invitation of the Chair, Mr. Abuzayyad and Mr. Schenker took places at the Committee table.*

22. **Mr. Abuzayyad** (Editor, *Palestine-Israel Journal*) said that his point of departure was the assumption that the two-State solution remained a viable option and that no Palestinian leader would accept a Palestinian State without Jerusalem as its capital. On that basis, Israel was acting to undermine the two-State solution by changing the status, image and reality of East Jerusalem. In 1967, Israel had unilaterally annexed East Jerusalem's land and buildings and had declared that the Arabs who had lived there for centuries were Jordanian tourists who had happened to be in the city at the time, and granted them permanent residence visas. Under Israeli law, however, those visas could be withdrawn for a variety of reasons. What had been, in effect, a policy of ethnic cleansing and Judaization of Jerusalem had been further consolidated by the construction of housing for Jews and changes to the city's infrastructure.

23. Budgets had been allocated on a discriminatory basis to Jewish neighbourhoods while Arab neighbourhoods had been excluded from development and zoning plans. The segregation wall was used to exclude the Arab population from the city, while settlements far outside Jerusalem were being integrated into it through the construction of modern highways for Jewish use only, with a view to establishing the

so-called greater Jerusalem. Palestinians living in suburbs of Jerusalem and in the West Bank were not allowed to visit Jerusalem. Lastly, attempts were being made to change the status quo in Al-Haram Al-Sharif and Al-Aqsa Mosque.

24. Israel continued to revoke the identity cards and residence permits of Arabs in Jerusalem; according to Israeli statistics, between 1967 and 2012, 14,383 Palestinians had been expelled from Jerusalem and not allowed to return. Israel had denied two thirds of Palestinian building licence applications, and most Palestinians could not afford a licence even if granted one. As a result, as Palestinians' families grew, they were forced to add rooms to their homes, but were then targeted for home demolition and required to either pay for the demolition or perform it themselves.

25. Israel had left all of East Jerusalem without zoning and had classified much of it as a green area in order to preserve the land for settlements. After the 1967 war, Israel had confiscated all land belonging to Arabs who had not been in Jerusalem at the time, with the result that 35 per cent of the total area of the city was considered absentee property. Concurrently, the construction of settlements had increased sharply; as of 2012, there were more than 50,000 housing units and nearly 200,000 Jewish settlers in East Jerusalem. The aim was to isolate Jerusalem from Arab neighbourhoods in the West Bank and to fragment Arab neighbourhoods within the city. That isolation had resulted in a sharp rise in poverty rates among Arab residents of Jerusalem and a decline in their standard of living.

26. Giving Jewish names to Arab neighbourhoods was a tactic employed by Israel to mislead the Israeli public. Right-wing Israeli settlers were establishing footholds in Arab neighbourhoods in East Jerusalem, claiming them as Jewish land on religious grounds and harassing their inhabitants. Since those settlers were protected by the Israeli army and law enforcement, Palestinians were inevitably branded as terrorists, their own victimization notwithstanding. Meanwhile, the wall had left 80,000 Arab residents of Jerusalem outside the city — by Israeli design — where they lacked access to municipal services despite being required to pay fees in order to retain their residence permits.

27. Noting the recent increase in the number of Israeli organizations, subsidized by the Israeli Government, calling for the rebuilding of the third temple on what they called the Temple Mount within

Al-Haram Al-Sharif, he warned that that situation constituted a ticking time bomb that could only result in an explosion of religious sentiment. Israeli ministers and parliamentarians visited the compound — which for Muslims was part of the mosque — to hold Jewish religious ceremonies, and Palestinians who attempted to prevent those ceremonies were taken to court and barred from the mosque.

28. In order to save the two-State solution and to avoid a conflagration in Jerusalem, Israel must put an immediate halt to all settlement activity and refrain from attempts to change the status quo in Al-Haram Al-Sharif. The civil, cultural and political rights of Arabs in East Jerusalem must be guaranteed and all Palestinian national, cultural and political institutions in the city must be reopened. Lastly, the wall, or at least the checkpoints barring Palestinian access to Jerusalem, must be demolished.

29. **Mr. Schenker** (Editor, *Palestine-Israel Journal*) said that while Jerusalem loomed large in the minds of Jews around the world, West Jerusalem was in reality the poorest large city in Israel and a place where poverty and unemployment affected Jews and Arabs alike. Younger Israeli Jews were leaving Jerusalem in search of not only work, but also a more open society, since ultra-orthodox groups had gained increasing influence in West Jerusalem. Most Israelis supported the idea of a special international regime for the old city, provided that access for Jews to the Western Wall and the old Jewish quarter was guaranteed. And although most Israeli Jews would say they opposed the division of Jerusalem, if the question were formulated differently, most would agree that specific Arab neighbourhoods should be given to the Palestinians, since they did not consider those neighbourhoods part of the city. In fact, the vast majority of Israeli Jews had never been to East Jerusalem.

30. His journal had recently co-published a special policy paper based on the outcomes of a round-table discussion on Jerusalem in which prominent Palestinians and Jewish Israelis had participated. The main points made were that Jerusalem remained a key factor in Israeli-Palestinian relations and Israel's relations with the Arab world as a whole, but current Israeli policies severely undermined the possibility of resolving the conflict by political means; the Israeli Government and the municipal government of Jerusalem continued to create facts on the ground that hampered solutions; the response of the Palestinian Authority and the Palestine

Liberation Organization was fragmented, disorganized and inadequate; and the international community and United Nations agencies should play a third-party role in deterring unauthorized Israeli measures and in fostering a climate of dialogue towards a peaceful resolution of the conflict and the status of Jerusalem. In addition the humanitarian situation of the Palestinians in East Jerusalem must be addressed.

31. **Mr. Percaya** (Indonesia) asked whether, despite the clearly grim situation on the ground, there were any positive signs or developments that the Committee could build on.

32. **The Chair** said that the signs were not positive, and the Committee must continue to fulfil its mandate to protect and restore the rights of the Palestinian people by sounding the alarm, as it had done with the statements it had issued on illegal Israeli settlements in East Jerusalem and the bill before the Knesset on the Jewishness of East Jerusalem. It was clear from the objective accounts provided by the two invited experts that the serious situation on the ground was deteriorating due to one party alone, namely Israel. Seizing the other party's lands during ongoing negotiations was unacceptable, and it was the Committee's responsibility to say so clearly. Its members must take action on the political, diplomatic and legal fronts. In that regard, the State of Palestine was to be commended for its recent decision to become a party to a number of international conventions.

33. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that he agreed that the situation in Al-Haram Al-Sharif and Al-Aqsa Mosque was a ticking time bomb. Experience in other parts of the region had shown what occurred when conflicts took on a religious dimension, and practical solutions needed to be found to avoid an explosion. Such solutions would be the focus of the important international meeting on the question of Jerusalem that would be held in Turkey in May.

34. He supported the call for an immediate end to illegal settlement activities in East Jerusalem, but events on the ground showed that Israel paid no heed to calls to abide by international law. The Palestinian people were doing their part: the 300,000 Palestinian Arabs in East Jerusalem were refusing to leave despite enduring horrific conditions that were tantamount to a sophisticated form of ethnic cleansing; and the State of Palestine was taking an initial step by becoming a party to international conventions and treaties. It was now

time for the international community to move beyond reiterating principled positions and for each country to take practical steps, as the European Union and South Africa had done, and review its relations with Israel, particularly with regard to the settlement enterprises, to ensure that Israel's illegal policies and practices in and around East Jerusalem and the occupied territories as a whole incurred consequences and costs that might force the Israeli Government to change its policy.

35. **The Chair** said that he agreed that having principled positions was not enough, and it was to be hoped that the actions taken by the European Union would inspire other regions. The time for action had indeed come. At the meetings in Quito, participants had discussed taking regional measures in relation to the economies of the occupied territories to send a clear message to Israel, and the issue would be at the centre of the proposed meeting of parliamentarians to be held in New York.

36. **Ms. Abdelhady-Nasser** (Observer for the State of Palestine) asked whether the *Palestine-Israel Journal* conducted its own polls to ensure that it obtained accurate measures of the pulse on both sides.

37. **Mr. Schenker** (Editor, *Palestine-Israel Journal*) said that his journal did not conduct its own polls, but used the best information available. As to signs of hope, there were two: the Palestinian-Israeli Peace NGO Forum had held two conferences on Jerusalem recently, with support from the European Union, which had produced constructive recommendations; and civil society organizations, such as Peace Now's Settlement Watch team, were working to ensure that the international community was alerted as to what was happening on the ground.

#### **International Meeting on the Question of Jerusalem, Ankara, May 2014** (working paper No. 5)

38. **The Chair** said that the aim of the International Meeting on the Question of Jerusalem, convened by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Government of Turkey, was to support international efforts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through the establishment of an independent State of Palestine based on the pre-1967 borders, living side by side with Israel in peace and security, with Jerusalem as the capital of both States and acceptable arrangements for the holy sites, and to examine the status of Jerusalem from a religious and legal

perspective. Internationally renowned experts and representatives of United Nations agencies, Members and observers, other international organizations, civil society and the media would be invited. He thanked the Turkish authorities for the commitment shown in their organization of what was a highly important event.

39. **Mr. Eler** (Turkey) said that Turkey was honoured to be hosting the Meeting and looked forward to the active participation of the international community. It was the hope of his country that such meetings would build momentum and augment support for the State of Palestine, which it hoped to see join the United Nations as a sovereign Member. Turkey welcomed the news that Ecuador was opening an embassy in Palestine.

40. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for the State of Palestine), thanking Turkey for hosting the Meeting and the enthusiastic support shown by its authorities for the event, expressed the hope that, in addition to religious and academic experts, high-level representatives of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Committee would attend the Meeting as a concrete demonstration of their commitment to the issue of Jerusalem, which was of great importance to the region and the Islamic world, and to the Palestinian people.

41. **The Chair** said he took it that the Committee wished to approve the provisional programme of the Meeting, as set out in working paper No. 5.

42. *It was so decided.*

#### **Other matters**

43. **The Chair** reiterated the Committee's appeal to its members and observers to set up national committees to spearhead activities in relation to the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. He thanked Nicaragua and Palestine for having shared information on their national activities with the Bureau.

44. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that the Palestinian national committee was planning a wide range of activities and events, including not only conferences, but also fashion shows and film screenings, to show that the Palestinian people were involved in all aspects of life despite the occupation.

*The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.*