

**International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People
29 November 2023**

Statement by the Chair of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli practices affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian people and other Arabs of the occupied territories

Mr. Chairman,

On the solemn occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, I thank you for the invitation extended to me to deliver this statement in my capacity as the Chair of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli practices affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian people and other Arabs of the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Over forty years ago, the General Assembly established an International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people to remind us of our collective, unfinished task of resolving the question of Palestine.

On a day such as this, the General Assembly Resolution 181(II) was adopted on the 29th of November 1947 with provision for the establishment of two states- Israel and Palestine with much hope and expectations of peace and peaceful coexistence. However, 75 years later, we are still grappling with the same issues.

Mr. Chairman,

Earlier this month, I presented the 55th Report of the Special Committee that covered the time period from September 2022 to September 2023. The report provides an update on a number of issues of concern, inter alia, the continued expansion of Israeli settlements, settler violence, the human rights situation of Palestine refugees, situation in the Gaza Strip, and the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. In accordance with its mandate, the Committee focused on historic settler influence on Israeli practices and policies over 30 years since the first Oslo Agreement in 1993.

Mr. Chairman,

Since 7th October this year, the world witnessed escalation of violence and military action in Gaza on a scale we have never seen and the unprecedented loss of life and suffering of the people of Palestine. We also mourn the Israeli civilians, injured or taken hostage in Southern Israel on that tragic day.

A majority of the Palestinians killed in Gaza in the past one and a half months are women and children. The affected civilians also include humanitarian, medical, and media personnel. While we remain appalled by the statistics, the aggression continues, unabated.

Mr. Chairman,

We grieve for all those killed, wounded and have had their lives torn apart, including the United Nations colleagues, over 100 UNRWA staff who have lost their lives, along with their families.

While we pledge our solidarity to the people of Palestine, I wish to acknowledge with deep appreciation the work done by UNRWA and for the commendable efforts taken by the Agency, to provide care and deliver vital human development services and emergency assistance.

We acknowledge the Palestinian refugee crisis, with 5.9 million who receive critical services of UNRWA today. Despite catastrophic suffering and losses, UNRWA remains - one of the last remaining lifelines for survival in Gaza as water, food, medicine and fuel supplies are exhausted.

The Special Committee reiterates its call for this Assembly and its Member States to provide UNRWA with predictable and sustainable funding, to ensure service provision to millions of Palestine refugees, and to preserve Palestinian rights, dignity, and hope, particularly for women and children.

Mr. Chairman,

It is of concern that Israel has not granted the Special Committee access to the occupied territories since this Committee was established in 1968. This year the Committee travelled to Jordan, as it does every year and also travelled to Egypt, for the first time since 2014.

Mr. Chairman,

The recent respite that we have witnessed with the release of hostages and prisoners as well as the flow of humanitarian aid should be welcomed with caution.

The recent ceasefire between Israel and Hamas has provided a temporary relief from the violence and destruction that has been ongoing for several weeks. It has given people in the region a chance to rebuild, mourn their losses, and take a breath.

However, it is important to recognize that the underlying issues and tensions that have fueled the conflict remain unresolved. The respite should be seen as an opportunity for diplomatic efforts to find a long-term solution that addresses the root causes of the conflict. It is essential to remain vigilant and committed to promoting peace, justice, and security for both Israelis and Palestinians. It is crucial for all parties involved to engage in meaningful dialogue, prioritize the well-being of the people in the region, and work towards a sustainable peace.

We call upon the international community to play an active role in supporting the peace process and make every effort to prevent any further expansion of hostilities. Mediation efforts, diplomatic initiatives, and the provision of humanitarian assistance are all crucial in helping to de-escalate tensions and create an environment conducive to peace.

Mr. Chairman,

The Special Committee joins the international calls for a just and lasting resolution of the question of Palestine, based on the two-State solution and an end to the suffering of the Palestinian people.

It is imperative to rededicate our collective efforts and commitment, to forge a peaceful settlement on the question of Palestine.

To this end, we reaffirm our steadfast support of their cause, to find a just and peaceful solution to the question of Palestine and to provide for their humanitarian needs as they strive to gain their legitimate rights and aspirations.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.