

Statement by H.E. Mr. Cheikh Niang

**Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the
Palestinian People**

**The High-Level Special Meeting on the International Day of Solidarity with
the Palestinian People**

26 November 2024

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, we once more gather to observe the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People—not as a mere commemoration but as a solemn reminder of unfulfilled promises, denied rights and the historic injustice endured by the Palestinian people for decades. Seventy-six years after the adoption of General Assembly resolution 181(II), which envisioned two states living side by side in peace and security, the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people remain unrealized, including their right to self-determination, a right owed to all peoples on this earth.

This year's commemoration takes place amid unprecedented suffering and tragedy. Now stretching beyond 400 days, Israel's military action on the Gaza Strip has inflicted devastating human and material losses. Over 44,000 Palestinians have been killed, 70 per cent of whom are women and children, more than 104,000 have been injured, many disabled for life, and thousands more are still missing, believed to still be buried under the rubble.

The entire Palestinian civilian population in Gaza is enduring a humanitarian catastrophe of a level unseen since the Second World War. A relentless blockade, compounded by devastating military assaults by Israel, the occupying Power, have left families without food, water, electricity, or essential supplies, and without shelter. Gaza has been made uninhabitable by design, with homes, schools, hospitals, and 80% of civilian infrastructure lying in ruins, and the basic necessities of life have been weaponized by Israel, including starvation as a method of war.

In the words of UNRWA Commissioner-General Lazzarini, Gaza has been turned into a place where *“the smell of death is everywhere as bodies are left lying on the roads or under the rubble.”* As the Secretary-General has lamented, Gaza has become *“hell on earth”* - the most dangerous place in the world to be a child, for humanitarians and all of the civilians who call Gaza home.

We must act decisively to end this humanitarian, political, legal and moral catastrophe.

The scale of catastrophe and severity of the crimes have led numerous scholars, independent experts and human rights organizations to recognize this grave situation as constituting genocide. The International Court of Justice is now addressing the case and has three provisional measures to protect the Palestinian people from irreparable harm.

At the same time, in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, Israeli settler violence against Palestinians and their properties continues to escalate, with impunity fostering a climate of lawlessness, leading to rising casualties and forced displacement of entire Palestinian communities. Israel’s settlement expansion and creeping annexation of Palestinian lands – now openly threatened by Israeli government ministers – undermines both the prospects for peace and the viability

of a future Palestinian state. These actions, deemed illegal under international law and reaffirmed this year by the International Court of Justice, continue unchecked, underscoring the profound the cost of global inaction.

We must also act to end this injustice.

The grim reality, which we are facing day in and day out, forces us to confront a fundamental truth: Palestinians deserve dignity, respect and the same inalienable rights afforded to all people. Dehumanizing rhetoric and calls for their annihilation or to obliterate their identity or right to exist as a nation are not only a stain on the perpetrators but a stain on our humanity.

The United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People unequivocally condemns and demands an end to all of the atrocities being perpetrated by Israel, the occupying Power, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. We urgently call on the international community take decisive action to end Israel's occupation, to ensure accountability for perpetrators, deliver justice for the victims, and uphold the long overdue inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. This includes addressing the rights of Palestinian refugees, achieving the independence of the State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem, as its capital, with full recognition of Palestine as a sovereign state, equal among nations.

To continue to deny these rights to the Palestinian people is to betray the principles of humanity and justice we claim to uphold.

Distinguished Delegates,

The failure of the international system to act decisively, in the face of such grave breaches of international law, and particularly the inability of the Security Council

to uphold its Charter duties and to enforce its legally binding resolutions, has severely compounded this conflict and deepened the suffering of the Palestinian people. This unacceptable failure and abdication of responsibility reflect not just an institutional paralysis and threaten the credibility of our Organization, but also a glaring moral deficit. This inaction and the impunity granted to Israel's violations have emboldened its disregard of international humanitarian law, leaving the Palestinian people defenseless in the face of relentless aggression and defying the very principles of the UN Charter.

We are encouraged by the action of the ICC with the decision to issue arrest warrants for the perpetration of war crimes and crimes against humanity, restoring a loss of trust in the rule of law. We urge all Member States to do their part to ensure accountability, as demanded by international law, as determined by the ICJ and as set out in the provisions of General Assembly resolution ES-10/24 for bringing an end to all violations and an end to this illegal occupation in its entirety.

Today, UNRWA, the lifeline for millions of Palestine refugees and a UN-mandated agency, is also under attack—politically, financially and rhetorically. These efforts to undermine and effectively eliminate the agency and obstruct its operations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, are unlawful and will cause further suffering to millions of Palestinians and threaten regional stability and the prospects for peace.

As the occupying Power, Israel has no legal authority to terminate UNRWA's mandate. Its attempts to restrict or ban UN operations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory represent a direct challenge to the authority and privileges and immunities of the United Nations, Israel's obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention. These actions also contravene the collective will of the international

community, reflected in the mandate by the General Assembly in 1949 to create UNRWA, a mandate that has consistently reaffirmed with the overwhelming support from Member States.

Distinguished Delegates,

Despite these dire circumstances, there are reasons for hope. The General Assembly's adoption of resolution ES-10/24 of 18 September 2024, which seeks the implementation of the International Court of Justice's advisory opinion on the illegality of the Israeli occupation and the requirement to end it, is a significant step forward. This resolution reminds Member States of their international legal obligations to address this illegal situation, including provisions for concrete action to be taken by Member States to uphold their obligations, including halting arms transfer to Israel and an end to all dealings with its settlement enterprise.

The lessons of history are clear. The global solidarity that ended apartheid in South Africa and Namibia demonstrates that collective will can achieve change. All Member States must apply the same resolve to end the Israeli occupation and secure justice for the Palestinian people.

Neutrality in the face of injustice is complicity.

In the work of our Committee, we take comfort in the words of former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon that echo today: *"No occupation that oppresses a people can last forever."*

We, therefore, appeal to the Security Council and all Member States to fulfil their responsibilities by urgently considering actions needed to swiftly end Israel's illegal occupation of the Palestinian territory, foremost through the implementation

of its numerous resolutions, and to assist the Palestinian people to realize their right to self-determination and freedom, a solemn obligation on all of us.

Today, we must resolve that this day will not merely commemorate unfulfilled rights but serve as a turning point for action. We call on all Member States to unite in pursuing a just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine.

The path forward is clear: prevent annexation and end the illegal occupation of the Palestinian territory in its entirety; halt all violence—both the relentless military assaults in Gaza and the escalating settler aggression in the West Bank and East Jerusalem; and uphold international law with accountability. Humanitarian lifelines like UNRWA must be protected, and Gaza’s reconstruction must be prioritized under Palestinian leadership.

Our actions must restart towards achieving the two-State solution, based on UN resolutions and on the pre-1967 borders, with the realization of the independence of the State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The time for action is now—justice for the Palestinian people can no longer wait.

The world is watching, and history will judge us not by our words but by our actions. Let us act with urgency, courage, and determination to fulfil the vision of two states—Israel and Palestine—living side by side in peace, security, and mutual recognition.

Thank you.