



UNITED NATIONS
LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN MEETING
ON THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE

Caracas, 13 and 14 December 2005

CARACAS DECLARATION

1. The United Nations Latin American and Caribbean Meeting on the Question of Palestine was held in Caracas, on 13 and 14 December 2005, under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian people. Its theme was “Achieving the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people – the key to peace in the Middle East.” Participants in the Meeting included international experts, representatives of Governments, Palestine, intergovernmental organizations, United Nations entities, parliaments, civil society and the media.
2. The Meeting was convened by the Committee with a view to sensitizing international public opinion, particularly in Latin America and the Caribbean, to the situation of the Palestinian people living under Israeli occupation, the need to assist the Israelis and Palestinians to return to a meaningful political dialogue, and the importance of reaching a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine. The participants reviewed the situation on the ground, discussed international efforts in searching for a settlement of the question of Palestine and the support of Latin American and Caribbean countries in this endeavour.
3. In this context, an extensive debate was held on the agenda item proposed by the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, entitled "Humanitarian and socio-economic challenges faced by the Palestinian people", with a view to giving greater human visibility to the Palestinian cause. The point is to make international organizations much more aware of the totally defenceless position of Palestinian children, women and men in the Occupied Territory, in that they have been deprived of their human rights, in particular their social rights, and therefore their right to lead a dignified life. From this perspective, the participants agreed to call on the international community and the various United Nations organs and bodies to work together more closely to solve the serious problems of education, health, housing, land cultivation and lack of jobs, among other things, that adversely affect the Palestinian people in the Occupied Territory. Likewise, they agreed to keep the issue on the agenda of Regional Meetings as well as of the Committee.
4. The Meeting was held amidst renewed hopes for a resumption in the stalled peace process following recent positive political developments, as well as concerns over renewed violence on the ground. The participants viewed the Israeli disengagement from the Gaza Strip and parts of the northern West Bank, completed in September 2005, as a positive first step that could re-ignite negotiations within

the framework of the Road Map aimed at bringing about the establishment of an independent, viable and territorially contiguous Palestinian State, living side by side with Israel in peace and security. The participants called for the implementation of the understandings reached at Sharm el-Sheikh, especially returning to the situation in the West Bank before September 2000 and the freeing of Palestinian prisoners. The participants noted the recent Agreement on Movement and Access reached between the Israeli Government and the Palestinian Authority on control over movement of people and goods between the Gaza Strip and Egypt as well as between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, calling for its timely and full implementation. The participants called for the expeditious resolution of all unresolved issues in the Gaza Strip, including the clearing of the rubble, the opening of the airport and the construction of a seaport, and for Israel to fulfil its obligations as an occupying Power under international humanitarian law.

5. The participants welcomed the Palestinian Authority's continued efforts at building democratic institutions, as well as introducing comprehensive reform of the security services. They supported the Palestinian people's holding of municipal elections in 2005 and its determination to hold legislative elections scheduled for 25 January 2006. The participants called on Israel, the occupying Power, to stop interfering with the election process and to assist the Palestinian side and grant freedom of movement to candidates and voters during the campaign and voting period, including in East Jerusalem, and to allow Palestinian prisoners in Israel to participate. Noting the importance of parliamentary elections for Palestinian reform, the participants called on the international community to help the Palestinians in holding free, open and fair elections.

6. The participants condemned the recent resumption by Israel, the occupying Power, of military incursions and extrajudicial killings that threaten to unravel the fragile truce agreed to by Palestinian groups, provoke feelings of hatred and despair, and undo what progress has already been achieved. At the same time, the participants condemned all attacks by militants against civilians in Israel. These undermine prospects of building trust and confidence between the parties.

7. The participants strongly condemned the continuing construction of the wall and the expansion of settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, in defiance of the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice. The participants were greatly dismayed at the continued settlement activities in the West Bank, particularly, the plan to connect to East Jerusalem the largest settlement of "Ma'aleh Adumim". In the view of the participants, the combination of the continued settlement activity and the building of the wall was creating new and significant facts on the ground making a two-State solution extremely difficult to attain.

8. The participants expressed the view that the long-standing conflict would have no final solution without the achievement of the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights defined by the General Assembly in 1974 as the right to self-determination without external interference, the right to national independence and sovereignty, and the right of Palestinians to return to their homes and property, from which they had been displaced and uprooted, on the basis of relevant United Nations resolutions.

9. The participants commended the international donor assistance to the Palestinian people and emphasized its continued critical importance, especially at this post-disengagement period when timely aid was key to rebuilding the devastated economy and alleviating the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. They called on Israel to lift all measures that deny the Palestinian people access to essential services and markets.

10. The participants expressed support for efforts at helping the parties move towards achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Their position was that those efforts should be pursued in keeping with Security Council resolutions 242, 338, 1397 and 1515, the

principle of a permanent two-State solution to the conflict, based on the 1967 borders, the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, and the right of all States to live in peace and security.

11. The participants reaffirmed the permanent responsibility of the United Nations with respect to the question of Palestine, until it is resolved in conformity with relevant United Nations resolutions and norms of international law, and until the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people are fully realized in all aspects.

12. The participants called on the Latin American and Caribbean States members of the Committee to redouble their efforts to promote the incorporation of other countries of the region as members or observers, with a view to strengthening the Committee's efforts to achieve peace and respect for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

13. The participants in the Meeting welcomed the Brasília Declaration, adopted on 11 May 2005 at the South American and Arab Countries Summit, which had reaffirmed the need to reach a just, durable and comprehensive peace in the Middle East on the basis of the principle of land for peace and relevant United Nations resolutions, as well as the Madrid framework and the Arab Peace Initiative that ensured the realization of security for all countries in the region. The Declaration had also highlighted the necessity of the full implementation of the Road Map and the materialization of the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people.

14. The participants welcomed the pledge of Governments of Latin American and Caribbean, intergovernmental organizations, civil society representatives, to exert all efforts to support the peace process and its successful conclusion. They noted that Latin American and Caribbean States, having had a long experience in their struggle for self-determination, independence and national sovereignty, should continue their moral, political and material support to the Palestinian people.

15. The participants voiced its appreciation for the active and constructive role played by the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, an Observer in the Committee, in support of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the region. The participants expressed its deep gratitude to the Government of Venezuela for hosting the Meeting and to the Ministry for External Relations for the assistance and support extended to the Committee and the United Nations Secretariat in its preparation.

Caracas, 14 December 2005

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