



PAKISTAN

PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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Statement by

**Ambassador Farukh Amil
Acting Permanent Representative of Pakistan**

**in the
Emergency Special Session of the General Assembly
on illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem
and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory**

New York
16 January 2009

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Mr. President,

1. We thank you for your timely and important statement. Pakistan supports the convening of this emergency special session of the General Assembly in view of the grave crisis and calamitous situation in Gaza. At a moment when the Security Council has been unable to shoulder its responsibility, the General Assembly has been obliged to step forward and play its rightful role under the Charter. This meeting also reaffirms the permanent obligation of the United Nations towards the resolution of the Palestine issue.

2. For the last 21 days, the international community has witnessed, in utter shock and disbelief, the unfolding of an unimaginable human tragedy and humanitarian catastrophe resulting from the ongoing campaign of terror and abominable crimes of Israel, the occupying power, against the 1.5 million Palestinian people incarcerated in Gaza. Israel has blatantly defied world-wide calls for immediate cessation of hostilities, lifting of Gaza's blockade and provision of unimpeded humanitarian assistance. With complete impunity, it has flagrantly violated international human rights and international humanitarian law, particularly its obligations under the 4th Geneva Convention.

3. On its part, the Security Council has yet again failed to fulfill its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. It failed to act quickly and resolutely to stop the aggression and to protect the innocent civilians of Gaza. It dragged its feet as the occupying power escalated its killing spree in Gaza. Belatedly, albeit reluctantly and under immense international pressure and by the growing body count of civilians, the Council adopted resolution 1860 on 8 January. Though not an entirely satisfactory and fair decision, that resolution instilled hope for a ceasefire. The international community including the visiting high level Arab Ministerial delegation sincerely expected that violence would stop henceforth. Unfortunately, but consistent with its track record, the Council disappointed once again. It failed miserably. In fact, it did not even try to enforce compliance of its resolution, which was reduced to a farce. The massacre of Gaza meanwhile continued right under the Council's watch. Indeed the Council remains "seized of the situation", for whatever that means.

4. Under the circumstances, the international community is posed with a serious question: can it afford to wait another day while innocent civilians, women and children are killed, maimed, brutalized and terrorized by the Israeli war machine? The answer is “no”. Silence and inaction in such a situation is tantamount to complicity with the ongoing crimes and killings in Gaza.

5. Mr. President, Pakistan stands in complete solidarity with the Palestinian people, whose pain and suffering in this hour of trial, we fully share and understand. The sentiments of sympathy and support of the people of Pakistan for the people of Gaza and the question of Palestine have been expressed through all means - peace demonstrations, statements of our President, Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, adoption of a unanimous resolution by the National Assembly of Pakistan on 12 January, besides other diplomatic efforts in the context of the OIC, NAM and the United Nations. We join the international community in strongly condemning this latest Israeli aggression in Gaza, which is in fact a sequel of its decades long policy of aggression against the Palestinian people and the occupation of the Palestinian land. We support the unanimous demand to bring an immediate and complete end to this aggression, and to address its causes and consequences in a just manner.

6. Mr. President, just action can only result from a just and objective understanding of the situation and the genesis of the problem. We wish to reiterate and highlight the following points in this context:

- First, it needs to be recalled that the besieged populations of Gaza are mostly the Palestinians who were originally dispossessed and driven from their own homes by the Israeli occupation.
- Second, under decades of occupation, the Palestinian people have suffered the worst kinds of human rights violations and collective punishment, which were further aggravated by the callous blockade imposed by the occupying power on Gaza.
- Third, rocket fire is only one aspect of the frustration expressed by a section of this oppressed and deprived population. We have called for an end to the firing of these rockets which do not serve the Palestinian cause in any way. However, attempts to justify the overwhelming force and massively disproportionate response by Israel to these rockets are entirely misplaced and unjust. This is besides the fact that it was Israel which first violated the six month temporary ceasefire much before it expired. In fact, Israel’s refusal to lift the blockade constituted a daily and constant violation of the truce.
- Fourth, no attempts or tactics by the occupying power can be allowed to mask the root cause and origins of the conflict, which are: occupation,

human rights violations, collective punishment of the Palestinian people, and the denial of their right to self-determination.

7. Mr. President, facts and figures being reported from Gaza are earth-shaking:

- More than 1000 Palestinians have been martyred. Gaza is running out of burial space.
- Over 5000 have been injured. There is no way of treating them. Hospitals are not only short of supplies but have themselves become targets. Rescue and relief workers are being attacked.
- Nearly 40% of all casualties are children and women. The international community is aghast by heart wrenching and appalling images of dead and injured children. Those alive are short of food and essential supplies.
- Thousands are homeless, shelter-less surviving in the cold and dark. Displaced they are, but within the prison. There is nowhere to escape.
- The scale of destruction especially targeted against civilians and civilian infrastructure is colossal. Nothing and no one has been spared. Ironically, those who have absolved themselves of preventing this destruction are talking of reconstruction.
- The Fourth Geneva Convention that prohibits collective penalties or collective punishment of the civilian population, as well as the three cardinal principles of international humanitarian law, namely proportionality, distinction, and precaution, have been grossly violated in the ongoing conflict in Gaza.

Mr. President

8. If things were not bad enough already, there are now reports of white phosphorous being used. The use of this element regardless of purpose adds another cruel layer to this tragedy. Furthermore what can be more galling for the international community and this august body than on the very day the Secretary General of this Organization visited Israel, Israeli shells smashed through the UNRWA buildings. We trust the bitter irony is not lost on the international community.

9. The crisis in Gaza requires an urgent, collective and effective response from the international community. If the Security Council has not been allowed to act, this Assembly has to assume responsibility. In recommending action, the General Assembly may need to recognize the international condemnation of the situation in Gaza. It should distinguish between the aggressor and the aggrieved. It

should be able to capitalize on the worldwide backing for an immediate and fully respected ceasefire, and put its weight behind that call. It should compel Israel to immediately stop its aggression and completely lift the siege of Gaza. It can recommend the establishment of appropriate mechanism to ensure protection of civilian population and monitoring of ceasefire in Gaza. It should demand unhindered and safe access and conditions for humanitarian work. It should also demand full respect and compliance of all parties for international human rights and humanitarian laws. It should make clear that there will be accountability for all violations of these obligations. It can pronounce its support for the ongoing efforts by the Secretary General, and regional and international partners to secure peace. More specifically, the General Assembly can endorse its support for the resolution adopted by the special session of the Human Rights Council, as well as for resolution 1860 adopted by the Security Council, and call for implementation of those resolutions.

10. Mr. President, there is a need to act urgently. Failure to stop the Israeli aggression in Gaza will perpetuate the cycle of violence, foment desperation and anger and lead to escalation of tensions in the region. Perhaps some may not have fully grasped the consequences - its biggest casualty could be the peace process. Therefore at stake is the international community's shared objective of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East and the resolution of the Palestinian question. We believe the choice is clear.

11. A solution lies not in use of force, whose futility has been exposed time and again, but in dialogue and negotiations. Israel must demonstrate its sincerity and desire for peace. Its actions prove otherwise. I would like to conclude by reiterating Pakistan's steadfast and complete support for the achievement of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to exercise self-determination and sovereignty in their independent and viable State of Palestine, on the basis of the pre-1967 borders, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. Thank you.