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Statement of
H.E Dr. Amrith Rohan Perera
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the United Nations
in New York
and
the Chairperson of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices
Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the
Occupied Territories,
on the occasion of the
International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People
29 November 2017

Thank you Mr. Chairperson

I am honored to address this Special Meeting to commemorate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, and I take this opportunity to thank Mr. Fodé Seck, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, for the kind invitation extended to me to address this Special Meeting in Sri Lanka's capacity as Chair of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories.

The International Day of Solidarity reminds us of the urgent need to find a just and peaceful solution to the question of Palestine, and most importantly, to address the plight of the Palestinian people, particularly its children, and to provide for their humanitarian needs.

Earlier this year in Amman, civil society representatives, victims and witnesses of Israeli practices affecting the human rights of the Palestinian People, as well as Palestinian and United Nations officials, briefed the Special Committee on the situation of human rights within the occupied Palestinian territories and the occupied Syrian Golan.

These briefings and testimonies once again brought to the attention of the Committee, the daily violence and humiliation suffered by Palestinian men, women and children, whose every aspect of life continues to be impacted by the unlawful occupation. Settlement expansion has had a direct impact on the escalation of violence in the occupied territories, and has largely contributed to the increase in the number of civilian casualties that include infants. This is a matter that has engaged the particular attention of the special Committee in recent years as reflected in its reports.

Mr. Chairperson

We must remain deeply concerned of reports that dozens of families of Palestinians killed have been denied the right to a proper and dignified closure on the basis of 'security concerns'. While many of the bodies have now reportedly been released, unacceptable conditions have been imposed regarding the release of bodies, such as the prohibition of autopsies and limitations on funeral rites.

According to testimonies before the Special Committee, Israeli practices have also included state-sanctioned land seizures, retroactive legalization of outposts, demolition of Palestinian homes and livelihood structures, denial of building permits, restrictions of movement or access to livelihoods, and lack of accountability for settler violence. The cumulative impact of these measures on the human rights of the Palestinian people is a matter of serious concern.

Year after year, for the better part of a half-century, since the establishment of the Special Committee, the information received by the Committee has affirmed the trends and patterns of human rights violations associated with the occupation and its inextricable link to the settlement enterprise.

Mr. Chairperson,

An emerging issue of particular concern brought to the attention of the Special Committee has been the shrinking democratic space for civil society, particularly local Palestinian and Israeli organizations, working to promote human rights in the occupied territories.

The Special Committee's report this year also covers the situation in Gaza, where Israel's land closure and naval blockade has now entered its eleventh year. The impact of the electricity crisis on the already strained health and sanitation infrastructure was one of the key issues highlighted to the Committee. At the time of reporting, hospitals had been forced to reduce services, and access to essential care was limited consequent to this crisis.

The Report also highlights the situation of human rights in the occupied Syrian Golan and their impact of settlement expansion. While we here today, pledge our solidarity to the people of Palestine, I wish to acknowledge with deep appreciation the work done by UNRWA to provide care and deliver vital human development services and emergency assistance, to over 5.2 million Palestine refugees since 1950. The work of UNRWA needs the continuing support and engagement of States through adequate and predictable resourcing to ensure the effective discharge of their invaluable mandate.

Mr. Chairperson,

As Chair of the Special Committee I repeat the call for a just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine and an end to the suffering of the Palestinian people.

Both parties to the conflict must create the necessary environment to facilitate peace. There is an urgent need for mutual confidence-building measures in support of efforts to resume dialogue and substantive negotiations. Israel must protect the Palestinian civilian population in the Occupied Territories and desist from actions that are contrary to the established rules of international law and practice.

We reiterate our support to General Assembly resolutions 242/1967, 2443 (XXIII) of 1968 and 32/40 B of 1977, and the implementation of all other UN General Assembly Resolutions regarding the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to Statehood, and the attainment of a two state solution based on 1967 borders.

We are encouraged that despite decades of disappointment, the people of Palestine have resolutely sustained their spirit and the strength of purpose to gain their legitimate rights and have prevailed over the considerable challenges facing them. We hope that the Palestinian people will work together to preserve national unity which is imperative for the creation of a fully sovereign, independent Palestine.

In conclusion Mr. Chairperson,

The resilience and endurance of the people of Palestine must inspire us.

Surely it must also energize and motivate us to act now. This is not a struggle they can fight alone. It is a struggle we must engage in together as a global community.

Thank you.

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