

**Statement to the Security Council by
H.E. María Rubiales de Chamorro, Vice-Chair
of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights
of the Palestinian People, on the situation in the
Middle East, including the Palestinian question**

26 April 2018

Mr. President,

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

The past month has again reminded us why, despite the many issues on the Security Council's agenda, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict must remain a priority demanding attention and action by the Council. In recent protests by Palestinian civilians, at least 40 demonstrators have been killed and over 5,511 wounded due to the excessive and disproportionate use of force by Israel, the occupying Power, particularly in response to the Great March of Return demonstrations at the Gaza Strip border fence with Israel. The Committee urges the Council to unite and back the call of the Secretary-General and others for an independent and transparent investigation into the incidents. As warned by the ICC's Chief Prosecutor, violence against civilians could constitute crimes under

the Rome Statute, and the continuation of such violence portends even further deterioration of this unstable, tense situation with grave consequences.

We also condemn the attack on the convoy of the Palestinian Prime Minister during his visit to Gaza on 13 March – a violent and hostile act detrimental to the cause of intra-Palestinian reconciliation. We call on all Palestinian parties to continue working toward unity in the peaceful pursuit of their shared objectives towards realization of the legitimate national aspirations of the Palestinian people.

Next month, May 2018, will mark 70 years since the 1948 War, which culminated in the flight and expulsion of up to 800,000 Arab Palestinian inhabitants from their homes in what was Mandate Palestine. The refugees of 1948 and their descendants continue to be haunted by, and to suffer the consequences of, this legacy of dispossession that is referred to as Al Nakba (“The Catastrophe”). The continued absence of a just solution to that tragedy, including the ongoing plight of the Palestine refugees, has prolonged and compounded this conflict and its regional and global impact.

In this context, the Committee invites all Member States to participate in its upcoming forum titled “70 years after 1948 – Lessons to achieve a Sustainable Peace”, which will be held at UN

headquarters in New York on 17-18 May, to consider this history as well as collective solutions towards peace.

Mr. President,

The Committee urges swift interventions by donor countries to comprehensively support UNRWA's activities, particularly in view of the increasingly grave humanitarian situation in Gaza and also the growing needs of Palestine refugees in the context of the Syria crisis. At this sensitive juncture, we must uphold our humanitarian obligations towards the refugees with the necessary support for the Agency's mandate and its stabilizing role in the region.

We regret that as indicated in the report of the Secretary-General on resolution 2334 (2016) to this Council last month, the Israeli Government has decided to advance settlement plans which contravene Israel's obligations as an occupying power under international law and indicate a blatant disregard for this Council's authority. We encourage Member States to follow the example set by the Danish Parliament and the European Commission by their decisions to distinguish, in their relevant dealings, between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories occupied since 1967, as called for by resolution 2334 (2016) and in line with the Fourth Geneva Convention.

Mr. President,

The unilateral decisions of some Member States to relocate their embassies from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem in contravention of Security Council resolution 478 (1980) and other relevant UN resolutions are irreversibly setting back the prospects for peace and derailing the viability of the two-State solution on the 1967 borders. Against this backdrop, we welcome and support President Mahmoud Abbas' peace initiative, as presented to this Council on 20 February. Committee delegation visits to Uganda in February and to Panama in early April elicited widespread appreciation for the State of Palestine's efforts and perspective in this and support for the full realization of Palestinian rights, reflecting the international consensus that continues to prevail in regard to a peaceful and just solution to the question of Palestine and which must be implemented.

Our readiness as the international community to act, and to act without delay or divergence, remains the best safeguard for a peaceful settlement to this conflict.

Thank you.