



# INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE QUESTION OF JERUSALEM

*The Question of Jerusalem after 50 years of Occupation and 25 years of the Oslo Accords  
26 to 28 June 2018*

Rabat, Morocco

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## CHAIR SUMMARY

The International Conference on the Question of Jerusalem “The Question of Jerusalem after 50 years of Occupation and 25 years of the Oslo Accords” was convened in Rabat on 26 to 28 June 2018, under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (CEIRPP) and with support of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation. Ahead of the Conference, on 26 June the Committee Delegation held bilateral meetings with Mr. Yousef Gharbi, Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee in the House of Representatives (Upper House) of the Parliament of Morocco and Mr. Ahmed Touizi, Vice President of the House of Councillors (Lower House). The Delegation also had a bilateral meeting with Mr. Nasser Bourita, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Morocco.

The Conference brought together Palestinian, Israeli and international experts, representatives of the diplomatic community and civil society to provide up-to-date information on the current situation in East Jerusalem, examine latest legal developments impacting the political and social status of Palestinians, and explore practical ways that the International Community could support the City’s resilience and development, in particular its youth. In addition, the event identified opportunities for international and regional support while safeguarding the rights of Palestinians in East Jerusalem.

At the opening, a message delivered on his behalf by Minister of Foreign Affairs Nasser Bourita, **King Mohammed VI of Morocco and Chairman of Al-Quds Committee of the Organization for Islamic Cooperation** reiterated his rejection of the movement of embassies to Jerusalem and any modification of the legal, political or historical status of Jerusalem, since this would undermine international efforts to find a peaceful solution to the Question of Palestine. He also called for greater rallying of diplomatic efforts and actions on the ground to promote development in the social and humanitarian fields. Concretely, and in relation to the Conference held in Rabat, King Mohammed VI suggested that future such conferences also be held outside the Arabo-Islamic world.

**United Nations Assistant Secretary-General Miroslav Jenča** recalled that Jerusalem is a final status issue that must be resolved through direct negotiations between the two parties on

the basis of relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolution. He stressed that it is more important today than ever to take effective concerted action, as decades of convergence and global consensus are eroding noting that recent developments in Jerusalem, taken against international consensus and the resolutions of the UN Security Council, risk to embolden antagonistic voices on both sides and to further weaken any hopes to reach a peaceful and sustainable solution.

**Assistant Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Samir Bakr**, delivered a message from the Secretary General of the organization calling on the international community to intervene responsibly and effectively to protect the vision of the two-State solution by engaging a multilateral political process based on international legitimacy and the Arab Peace Initiative. He reiterated the OIC's rejection of US decisions to recognise Jerusalem as Israel's capital and to transfer its embassy to the City and expressed regret over the failure of the Security Council to act against Israeli transgressions of international law.

The representative of the State of Palestine, **Minister of the Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction Mohammad Shtayyeh**, stated that the components of the solution for the Palestinian-Israeli conflict were well known and enjoyed near-consensus of the international community. However, the formula of negotiations under the sole mediation by the United States had failed as the latter was not a fair mediator. He reiterated the eight-point plan presented by President Abbas to the Security Council on 20 February 2018, adding that Palestinian would welcome an international conference and a mechanism to end the conflict on the basis of the international law and international legitimacy. In reference to the internal Palestinian divide, he added that the Palestinian Authority under President Abbas remained open and ready to cooperate with other groups, e.g. Hamas, provided that they fully accept the two-State solution, abide by international law, embrace peaceful popular resistance and a single legitimate authority, and the holding of elections to revive Palestinian democracy.

In his statement, the **Chair of the Committee, Ambassador Fodé Seck (Senegal)**, reiterated the Committee's rejection of recent decisions by the United States and other countries to transfer their embassies to Jerusalem, in violation of international law. Recalling that the international community has an obligation to support the Palestinian inhabitants of East Jerusalem morally and politically, through diplomacy, and materially, he pointed to the activities of the Committee in the diplomatic and capacity building arenas – such as conferences, bilateral visits and numerous trainings for Palestinian civil servants – as contributions to the larger goal for the Palestinian people to attain their inalienable rights.

During the first panel, on “*Political and social status of Palestinians in East Jerusalem today*”, speakers outlined the Israeli policy of imposing facts on the ground onto Jerusalem with the goal to make them irrevocable. They also addressed the background of US decisions under President Trump and their impact, among them the fact that, instead of taking the Question of Jerusalem off the negotiations table, it has now brought greater attention to the question from the international community. Panellists also highlighted the genesis and current situation of Israeli residency regulations for Palestinians in Jerusalem, which aim to transform and keep them as a minority in their own city without full political, economic and social rights. Participants called for the launching of initiatives for Palestinians in Jerusalem to stay in the City; they also referred

to the role played by parliamentarians in support of the Palestinian people. Others cautioned against losing sight of the political aspects while focusing on humanitarian questions. All agreed that the Palestinian community, its heritage and institutions in Jerusalem needed to be reinforced.

In the second panel, on “*The Question of Jerusalem in international law and Member States’ obligations*”, participants recalled UN General Assembly resolution 181 and the international status of the entire City, which made it a final status question for Israeli-Palestinian negotiation. They examined the cautious engagement of the European Union and recent fissures in the political consensus of the regional bloc, and explored why during previous rounds of negotiations, the question of Jerusalem could not be solved. During the discussion, speakers pointed to the hardening political positions in Israel and a coloniser/colonised power dynamic between Israelis and Palestinians. They called for the EU to take a more active role and to fulfil its obligations to safeguard human rights. Addressing the question why Israelis and Palestinians had failed so far to reach an agreement, attendees pointed out that the fundamental problem was the Israeli occupation, and Israelis’ reluctance to recognize the Palestinian people as an equal.

Continuing the Conference on 28 June, the third panel, on “*Coming of age under occupation: Palestinian youth in East Jerusalem*”, highlighted the hurdles faced by the young generation in maintaining their right to live in the City, seeking education and to create a liveable future. The Palestinian youth speakers echoed calls from earlier panels for increased international political and development support. The panel also highlighted United Nations support to East Jerusalem. Speakers argued that suggestions for Palestinians in East Jerusalem to participate in the Israeli municipal elections which could help increase budget allocations for their neighbourhoods would, however, amount to accepting and legitimising the Israeli annexation of occupied territory. Others remarked that the task for Israeli partners in the quest for peace was not to advise Palestinians how to accommodate the occupation, but to work inside their own community with the goal to end the occupation.

In the fourth panel, on “*Palestinian rights in East Jerusalem and the International Community*”, saw panellists highlighting the contributions of Member States and inter-governmental organisations – among them Turkey, Bayt Mal al-Quds, the OIC Research Center for Islamic History, Art and Culture (IRCICA), and the United Nations Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People (PAPP) – to East Jerusalem, to support its population in the realms of development aid and resilience and the preservation of its historic and cultural identity. The discussion saw a strong appreciation for regional and United Nations support to the Palestinian people, as well as calls for a permanent UNESCO presence in Jerusalem as a safeguard against further Israeli alterations. In response to a query why no representative of Hamas, the de-facto authority in the Gaza Strip, had been present at the conference, participants pointed out that the Israeli and US focus on Hamas was only a new phase in the long-standing attempt to put the onus of compliant behaviour on the Palestinian side; instead the core problem was the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory and population. In addition, while the Committee always aimed to invite Palestinians from Gaza – albeit not Hamas as an organisation – to its conferences, Israel would not issue exit permits.

The closing session saw statements by the host country and the State of Palestine.  
**Director at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Fouad Akhrif**

recalled that the message of King Mohammed VI had elevated the conference and showed the clear position of Morocco regarding Palestine and Palestinian rights. The only possibility for a fair and just settlement of the conflict was the two-State solution based on international law. The conference was set in the framework of international and regional efforts for the realization of Palestinian rights. He called on all to continue to be committed to the independence of Palestine state with East Jerusalem as its capital. **Ambassador Riyadh Mansour, Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations**, emphasized the importance to redouble efforts in defending the two-State solution, if the international community, and among them Israel and the United States, did not want to see a further deterioration of the situation. He called upon the international community to create the conditions where all could put an end to the current tragedy, and said that Israel could not continue to oppress and humiliate Palestinians and still expect peace.

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*\*\*\*Note: This Summary attempts to provide an overall picture of the deliberations of the Conference. A detailed report, including specific questions that were addressed during the interactive discussions, will be published by the Division for Palestinian Rights in due course.*