



INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE QUESTION OF JERUSALEM

“Preserving the cultural and religious character of Jerusalem”

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

OPENING SESSION

Statement by

H.E. Mr. Cheikh Niang

Chairman

Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights
of the Palestinian People

H.E. Cheikh Niang statement

**Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of
the Palestinian People**

Permanent Representative of Senegal to the United Nations

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

These are critical times for the future of the Palestinian people. A much-anticipated US plan for the region is being developed, including an “economic workshop” this week. However, economic commitments cannot replace political solutions. Also, solutions to the conflict cannot be imposed from the outside but must reflect the aspirations of both peoples. The international community’s pledges to the Palestinian people about their right to exercise their inalienable rights must be respected.

These pledges are very clear. United Nations resolutions, other agreements and the international consensus consistently state there must be a two-State solution, based on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as the capital of an independent State of Palestine and negotiated

outcomes for all final status issues. Any proposals or actions that depart from these parameters are bound to undermine a peaceful future.

Yet, day after day we witness the efforts to create *faits accomplis* that undermine these agreements. East Jerusalem, the topic of our gathering, is part of the occupied Palestinian territory.

Throughout the occupied territory, Palestinians face disproportionate use of force. Demonstrations at the Gaza fence are dispersed with live fire and there are numerous reports of detainee mistreatment, including torture.

Throughout the occupied territory, particularly in East Jerusalem, it is nearly impossible for Palestinians to obtain permits, build homes and live a peaceful life. In Gaza the ongoing blockade makes life unbearable. Moreover, the destruction of Palestinian property has increased exponentially in 2019, leading to the displacement of at least 350 people since January, almost 200 of them in East Jerusalem alone.

Israel continues to illegally extend its legal regime to pieces in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, violating international law. Throughout the occupied Palestinian territory, settlements keep expanding and slowly eat away the land of the future independent State

of Palestine. Resolution 2334 must be implemented, and Israeli settlement activity, especially in the area surrounding East Jerusalem, must stop.

In East Jerusalem, occupation had given way to claims of formal annexation of the eastern part by Israel already in 1980. The Security Council had, right then, strongly condemned this action and ruled it null and void. Recent moves of embassies to Jerusalem are a flagrant violation of international law. The Committee strongly urges all Member States to comply with Security Council resolution 476 and refrain from establishing or maintaining diplomatic missions in Jerusalem.

Legislation redrawing the municipal boundaries of East Jerusalem, combined with other measures, risk excluding an estimated 120,000 Palestinians from the City, while absorbing some 140,000 Jewish settlers into it. Already many Palestinian Jerusalemites find themselves cut off from the City by the illegal separation wall, depriving them of access and basic municipal services. These measures must be halted and reversed, or the character of Jerusalem will be irreversibly changed.

The *status quo* of the holy sites must be respected. Jerusalem is a monument in our global heritage and its preservation is our shared responsibility. However, preservation can never be an excuse to

expropriate Palestinians from their homes, as is now often the case. I also welcome statements made in recent months by world leaders such as His Majesty the King of Morocco and, His Majesty the King of Jordan and His Holiness Pope Francis to support the *status quo* and the rights of worshippers in the Holy City.

In conclusion, I want to assure the Palestinian people: We remain unwavering in our support of your rights. We will continue to strive to preserve Jerusalem for you, for everyone with equal rights, and for the generations that will follow.

[End of statement]