

**Statement to the Security Council
by H.E. Mr. Abdou Salam Diallo,
Chairman 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**

(United Nations Headquarters, New York, 22 July 2014)

Mr. President,

I would first like to congratulate you on the able manner in which you direct the work of the Council. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon, for his comprehensive briefing. We welcome his intensive diplomatic efforts towards an immediate ceasefire, as well as those by his Special Representative Robert Serry, US Secretary of State John Kerry and by other regional leaders.

Mr President,

The UN Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People condemns, in the strongest possible terms, the excessive and disproportionate use of force during the Israeli onslaught in the occupied Gaza Strip, including in the district of Shuja'iyah, which has caused many deaths and injuries among Palestinian civilians, including women and children. The casualty figures we heard during the briefing are truly appalling. The Committee also condemns indiscriminate rocket fire emanating from Gaza, which has resulted in two Israeli deaths and several injuries so far.

We are appalled by the disproportionate use of force by a trained and well equipped army, which has resulted in the high number of Palestinian civilian casualties – estimated at 77 per cent of the total fatalities. The shelling of a Gaza beach, where four innocent boys aged between 9 and 11 were killed on 16 July while playing football is emblematic of this type of senseless violence that has annihilated entire families and destroyed hundreds of homes.

The situation took a dramatic turn for the worse with the beginning of the Israeli ground invasion. The casualty numbers, the photos, the survivor stories from the Shuja'iyah neighbourhood which was carpet-bombed by Israel speak for themselves. An international investigation should be considered by the Human Rights Council to determine accountability for this heinous act.

The Israeli attacks on Palestinian civilian infrastructure - hospitals, water, sewage and so on, as well as mosques, are equally appalling. Thousands of homes have been destroyed or severely

damaged, displacing over 100,000 people. Up to half of the population is currently without a water supply.

These acts are direct violations of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which obligates the occupying Power to protect the civilian population under its occupation. Article 33 of the Convention states that, “No protected person may be punished for an offence he or she has not personally committed”, and “Collective penalties and likewise all measures of intimidation or of terrorism are prohibited”. The Israeli rhetoric that it no longer occupies Gaza after the 2005 withdrawal of illegal settlers and soldiers is null and void – Israel controls the access through border crossings, airspace and waters, and Gaza is an integral part of the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

Our Committee welcomes and fully supports the request by the State of Palestine to the Government of Switzerland to convene a Conference of High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention to deal with the continuing violations of its provisions by Israel. It is the responsibility of High Contracting Parties, under Article I of the Convention, to “undertake to respect and to ensure respect for the present Convention in all circumstances”. Moreover, and as has been stated before, our Committee will fully support the State of Palestine if it decides to sign and ratify the Rome Statute in order to establish full accountability for the targeting, wounding and killing of all innocent civilians.

Mr. President,

The Committee calls upon the international community to adopt concerted action to stop all violations of international humanitarian law, including the collective punishment of the Palestinian people. Only serious collective action by the international community will compel Israel to abide by its obligations as the occupying Power as defined under international humanitarian law.

In the meantime, the UN humanitarian agencies on the ground in Gaza, stretched thin and underfunded to begin with, are struggling to respond to the massive humanitarian needs of over 150,000 affected Gazans. We urge donors to respond generously to the latest UNRWA \$115 million emergency appeal.

Mr. President,

Our Committee welcomes the convening of the Security Council’s emergency meeting on Sunday, 20 July, to consider the ongoing crisis, takes note of the remarks to the press by the Security Council President, and urges concrete follow up action by the Council to stop the senseless violence and the further escalation of this dangerous crisis. Ultimately, our Committee believes that only a comprehensive solution to the Gaza situation, in line with Council resolution 1860 (2009), can prevent the periodic flare-ups of violence, and should become a top priority of the Council.

Thank you, Mr. President.

* * *