

*Check against delivery*

**STATEMENT TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL**

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**BY AMBASSADOR CHEIKH NIANG**

**CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF  
THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE**

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**ON THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST,  
INCLUDING THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION.**

New York, 23 July 2019

**Mr. President,**

On behalf of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian people, I would like, at the outset, to commend the professionalism with which the delegation of Peru has conducted the work of the Security Council this month.

**Mr. President,**

While welcoming the holding of this public debate, which is a renewed opportunity to consider the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, I reiterate the deep concern of Committee over recent developments on the ground that continue to undermine hopes for a peaceful settlement to the question of Palestine. In this same spirit, the Committee strongly deplores and condemns the demolition of houses by Israel, yesterday morning, in the Palestinian community of Sur Bahir and calls to end these violations of international law.

**Mr. President,**

Indeed, as we gather in this Council, the cycle of violence, dispossession, settlement expansion, evictions, demolitions, deteriorating human rights, humanitarian and economic situation, all in the context of Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, continues unabated.

We face a critical juncture due to a series of deliberate, unilateral and unlawful actions aimed at negating many of the final status issues, including settlements, status of Jerusalem, and return of refugees. The threat of *de facto* annexation of the Palestinian territory is more worrisome than ever.

In response to the “Peace to Prosperity” workshop on 25 June in Manama, Bahrain, the international community has made it clear that an economic initiative for the Palestinian people without a political initiative that addresses this historic injustice with the fulfillment of their inalienable rights, including to self-determination and independence, and the realization of the two-State solution, cannot succeed. While humanitarian and economic support for the Palestinian people is very important and is indeed an urgent matter, the solution to the conflict remains political. The only viable and just solution to this conflict remains the one based on the long-standing parameters of two States, living side-by-side in peace and security, based on the pre-1967 borders, East Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Palestine and negotiated outcomes for all final status issues, as per international law, the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid principles and the Arab Peace Initiative.

By and large the international community, is still upholding those parameters, as witnessed in the declarations and outcomes adopted at recent AU, OIC, LAS Summits and and the NAM ministerial meeting.

During recent visits of Committee delegations to Brussels and Berlin, government and EU interlocutors also reaffirmed their ongoing and strong commitment to the two-State solution. This support must translate into concrete actions, including with formal recognition of the State of Palestine and support for the State's full membership in the United Nations.

In addition, the Committee continues to emphasize the importance of a collective approach to revive and promote the long-stalled peace process and calls for the strengthening of the Middle East Quartet and for immediate efforts to this end.

The international community must also support UNRWA to continue its crucial operations. In fact, despite the additional US \$60 million raised at the 25 June Pledging Conference, the Agency's 2019 budget shortfall remains at US \$151 million. That's why the Committee calls on all donors to continue to ensure reliable and sustainable funding for the Agency's core programmes and life-saving services and to continue to strongly support its General Assembly mandate, which is to be renewed in the upcoming 74<sup>th</sup> session.

**Mr. President,**

Allow me to reiterate that settlements are illegal under international law and remain a substantial obstacle to peace. The Committee welcomes that some reports of the Secretary-General on the implementation of

Security Council resolution 2334 (2016) are now provided in writing and the Committee expects upcoming reports to incorporate text on compliance with the resolution, including with operative paragraph 5 requiring Member States to distinguish in their dealings between Israel and the Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. This is imperative to ensure accountability as a central contribution in the search for justice and peace.

The Committee is also encouraged by steps taken by the High Commissioner for Human Rights to publish in the coming months the database of companies operating in Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. This will be an important tool to ensure accountability for the private sector engaged in illegal business activities in the occupied territory and would represent a significant step towards the implementation of SCR 2334 (2016).

**Mr. President,**

Moreover, the situation in Jerusalem remains of utmost concern, as discussed at the latest conference organized by the Committee on 27-28 June in Geneva focused on “Preserving the cultural and religious character of Jerusalem”. The Committee reiterates its calls on all Member States to comply *inter alia* with Security Council resolutions 476 (1980) and 478 (1980) and to refrain from establishing diplomatic missions in Jerusalem. Furthermore, the sanctity and historic status quo of the holy

sites in Jerusalem must be respected, and their preservation is the international community's shared responsibility.

In the meantime, the security situation on the ground, particularly in Gaza, has remained tense in recent weeks with continuing weekly demonstrations at the fence where Palestinian lives, including of children, have been taken, while rockets continued to be fired into Israel. The Committee reiterates its condemnation of all acts of violence and terror against civilians and stresses the need to ensure the protection of civilians in accordance with international humanitarian law and the resolutions of this Council. The Committee also reiterates its call for the lifting of the illegal blockade on the Gaza Strip.

Regrettably, on the other hand, there has been no resolution to the Palestinian Government's serious financial crisis, caused by Israel's withholding of Palestinian tax revenues. The Committee calls for an end to such punitive measures and calls for respect of international law and all agreements signed. It is also crucial that this matter, as well as Palestinian reconciliation, with the support of Egypt and others, be positively resolved so as to facilitate the creation of an environment conducive to the pursuit of peace.

**Mr. President,**

In conclusion, the Committee reiterates its call on all Member States to remain committed to the two-State solution as the only way to end the 52-year old Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory and achieve a peaceful, just, lasting and comprehensive peace, as long called for by this august Council and by the General Assembly.

For the very future of our collective action, we need to do more to close the gap between words and deeds. We cannot stand idle before the terrible ongoing historical injustice suffered by the Palestinian People. We must become the actors that achieve the two-State solution and make a just peace a reality.

**I thank you.**

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