

Message by
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Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the
Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

2019 International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East
Ankara, 11-12 September 2019

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

As Chair of the United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, I would like to begin by thanking the Government of Turkey for hosting this Media seminar even as I commend the UN Department of Global Communications for highlighting the important role media plays on the road to peace. Fittingly this seminar is held in Turkey, where our Committee, together with the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, held a conference on Jerusalem back in 2014. It was a high-profile event well covered by Turkish and international media. Turkey, a founding member of our Committee, has provided unreserved support to the Palestinian people over the years.

The mission of our Committee, as defined by the General Assembly, is to promote the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination, to national independence and sovereignty; and the right of the refugees to return. Which is why our Committee remains alarmed by the acceleration of settlement construction and house demolitions while violent attacks against unarmed Palestinians, such as Israeli army shootings along the Gaza fence, continue. The occupation

has in fact tightened over the years, leading experts to call it a *de facto* annexation.

We are further alarmed at the rise of violence against journalists reporting on these violations in Palestine. Statistics by the Palestinian Center for Development and Media Freedoms (MADA) show that attacks on Palestinian media workers were up by 60 per cent in 2018, accounting for a total of 584 violations against media freedoms. [Violations documented were committed by the Israeli Government and Palestinian authorities.] Yet amid these difficult conditions, the media continued to inform the public including on human rights violations.

You, the journalists can contribute in many ways to creating a better future for the Palestinian people, including by giving voice to the voiceless, challenging entrenched attitudes/perceptions and promoting trust. Your job is not an easy one, that is why we, the UN community, urge all Governments including the Palestinian authorities, to ensure that the rights to freedom of opinion and expression of the media are protected. In this vein, in July this year, two UN Special rapporteurs on human rights called on Israel to halt the deportation of a Palestinian photojournalist from Jerusalem to Jordan, a country where he does not even have residency rights.

The Training Programme for Palestinian Journalists run by the organizers of this seminar has familiarized its almost 200 participants with the work of the UN on human rights and on the Question of Palestine. As Chair of our Committee I have been fortunate to meet these admirable journalists, and I was deeply moved by their courageous stories.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Mobilizing international public opinion around the world in support of Palestinian rights constitutes a major part of what our Committee does. This is no easy task given the multitude of crises competing for the world's attention. This is why we need you, the media, as our allies. We hold international meetings and conferences in various parts of the world to promote wide support for the Palestinian people, but they would not have full impact without maximum media coverage. Know that our events are always open to you and we encourage you to cover them and assist us in broadening our reach. We broadcast them live, tweet, post videos on our YouTube channel, and publish documents on a daily basis on our website.

This year, a United Nations Forum on the Question of Palestine was held at UN Headquarters in April and an International Conference on the Question of Jerusalem was held at the United Nations Office at Geneva in June. They served as important platforms for raising awareness, exchanging ideas and mobilizing the international community. The Bureau of our Committee met with the UN Secretary-General to exchange ideas on how to move the Palestinian issue forward. Also, this year, as part of its priority to mobilize the European Union, the Committee sent delegations to Brussels and Berlin to talk to key European and national interlocutors.

While the Department of Global Communications builds the capacity of the Palestinian media, we in the Committee also contribute to building capacity of officials from the State of Palestine. This year, in recognition of the important role of the media, we, together with other UN partners, are planning to implement a media and communications training for Palestinian officials.

As a major awareness-raising event organized by the Committee, the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, will be commemorated on 26 November at the UN Headquarters in New York and UN offices worldwide. In New York, it will be accompanied by the exhibit “Palestine - The Most Universal of National Causes”, highlighting the support for the cause of Palestine by major world personalities such as Nelson Mandela. The media is encouraged to cover these activities to give them the biggest international resonance.

The Committee’s social media presence includes Twitter @UNISPAL with 16, 700 followers, the Facebook page of the Committee, its YouTube channel and its website “The Question of Palestine” at www.un.org/unispal, where all information on our Committee’s activities can be found as well as the world’s largest online repository of UN documents on the Question of Palestine which features over 36,000 documents. The Division for Palestinian Rights of the United Nations, on behalf of the Committee, also produces a monthly bulletin on actions by the UN system and intergovernmental bodies, a weekly newsletter on NGO actions relevant to the question of Palestine, and a quarterly newsletter on overall Committee activities. You are encouraged to use these resources in your work.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

We in the Committee are convinced that the proliferation of independent journalists and social media guarantees that the true story on what is taking place on the ground will be told. I invite you to join our Facebook, Twitter and other social media platforms and share your commitment to securing the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

I invite you to join us and contribute to disseminate this idea through your media work as agents of change. Working as partners, we the diplomatic community and the media, can thus promote the achievement of a lasting peace in the Middle East.

I thank you.



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