

**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE QUESTION OF
JERUSALEM**

Part 2

“Annexation in Practice – Palestinian Youth in Jerusalem”

Thursday, 27 August 2020

10.00 a.m. - 12.00 p.m.

Online event

**CHAIR OF THE
UN COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE
INATLIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

STATEMENT**

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to Part 2 of the International Conference on the Question of Jerusalem on the theme “Annexation in Practice – Palestinian Youth in Jerusalem”, co-organized by the Committee for the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, which I represent today, and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

While these days the focus is on Israel’s plans to annex Palestinian territory in the occupied West Bank, we must not forget – or let anyone else forget – that Israel has already annexed Palestinian land, and one of the most important parts of Palestinian territory: East Jerusalem. This occurred *de facto* shortly after the 1967 War, and *de jure* in 1980.

Israel’s measures to consolidate its unlawful annexation of Jerusalem and its surroundings continue to threaten the City’s legal status as well as its demographic composition and historically multicultural and multireligious character. Demolitions and seizures of Palestinian-owned structures in East Jerusalem and eviction of Palestinian families from their homes, pursuant to increasing lawsuits brought by Israeli settlers under the so-called Absentee Property Law are

harming the prospect of a two-State solution. Other Israeli policies have negatively affected the Palestinians' ability to enjoy the services they are entitled to, further undermining their presence in the City, and cutting off East Jerusalem – once the focus of political, commercial, religious and cultural life for the Palestinian people – from the West Bank.

Despite Israel's successive unilateral actions, the Committee's commitment to achieving a negotiated two-State solution remains resolute. Annexation constitutes a serious violation of international law and UN resolutions and would deal a devastating blow to the two-State solution and to peace in the Middle East. The Committee will continue to support a peaceful and lasting resolution of the conflict on the basis of UN resolutions, international law and bilateral agreements and will continue to work to realize the vision of two States – Israel and Palestine – living side by side in peace and security within recognized borders, on the basis of the 1967 lines and East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine. I call on the Middle East Quartet to find a mutually agreeable framework for the parties to re-engage with each other, to resuscitate a dialogue among all stakeholders, with no preconditions, and in the interest of peace and a negotiated resolution to the conflict.

Following the recent announcement of its agreement with the United Arab Emirates to normalize their relations, Israel said it would

“suspend declaring sovereignty” over areas of the Occupied Palestinian Territory thus leaving the possibility open to future annexation. The Committee reiterates that annexation of any part of the occupied territory is illegal and that any initiative aimed at a just solution to the question of Palestine must, foremost, consider the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people, engage the Palestinian leadership, and be based on the two-State solution.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Young Palestinians and Israelis are increasingly making their voices heard through civil society action and this panel aims at providing yet another platform for Palestinian youth in Jerusalem. A few weeks ago, the UN celebrated International Youth Day under the global theme “Youth Engagement for Global Action” as a cornerstone of this year’s celebrations of the 75th Anniversary of the founding of the United Nations “UN75”. Active engagement and empowerment of the post-Oslo generation is essential for the peaceful resolution of the conflict and an end to occupation. It is therefore essential to continue putting the spotlight on the lives of young Palestinians in East Jerusalem and the rest of the OPT, as they struggle to access opportunities and make their voices heard.

The Committee's mandated activities should continue to serve as platforms to bring together this diversity of voices from Palestine and Israel, particularly young women, and international ones to shed light on the question of Jerusalem and Palestine as a whole and as a global struggle for self-determination and a just and peaceful solution to occupation.

Thank you and I wish us all a fruitful discussion.

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