

Opening remarks by
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Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the
Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People
2020 International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East
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Excellencies,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Madam Under Secretary-General,
Dear Colleagues,

At the outset, on behalf of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, I would like to commend the Department of Global Communications for organizing this year's panels on the "Israel-Palestine conflict and challenges of the new decade" (on 8 December), and - "A tale of two narratives: misinformation and disinformation" (on 9 December).

Through its General Assembly mandated advocacy and awareness raising work on the Question of Palestine, our Committee disseminates and shares information with partners and the public at large using various tools. The Committee's social media presence includes Twitter @UNISPAL, the Facebook page of the Committee @UN.palestinianrights, Instagram, and its YouTube channel. Its website at www.un.org/unispal, contains all information on our Committee's activities and also hosts the UN Information System on the question

of Palestine”- the world’s largest online repository of UN documents on the Question of Palestine which features over 36,000 documents.

In the course of delivering on its mandate, the Committee faces many challenges, including that of countering disinformation on the question of Palestine. For this reason, we see working together with media as an integral and important element of the Committee’s work.

The year 2020 will be remembered as one in which humanity faced a common enemy: the coronavirus pandemic which has changed our way of life, including how we communicate and interact with each other. It has affected some far more than others and especially the Palestinian people.

The burden of endless occupation and an increasingly fragile economy has pushed to the brink the public health system in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip. These are times when the Palestinian people need not only expressions of solidarity, but also our empathetic action.

And yet, we find that there is barely adequate coverage of the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory in the international media. Media attention in recent years has been diverted to other conflicts in the region or has tended to focus on some aspects of the conflict, ignoring the peaceful efforts of millions of Palestinians to live a life of dignity. We are also seeing incessant efforts to distract the media from the fact that the only route to peace in the Middle East is through peaceful resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

The responsibility of the media is not limited to raising awareness and informing public opinion. The media also plays a critical role in documenting history in progress. As we stand at the threshold of a new decade, I urge all

participants here from the media to reflect if they are documenting history objectively or are buying into disinformation on the question of Palestine.

Dear colleagues,

I urge you in the media fraternity to seriously consider how history will judge our generation if we were to wrong the Palestinian people twice over – first by standing aside while their rights are denied, and then by misreporting or not reporting what is happening. This would be tantamount to a miscarriage of justice.

We all have a duty to recommit ourselves to reporting truth, and to speak truth to power. And the truth is that General Assembly resolution 181 (ii) of 1947 called for carving two States out of mandate Palestine. Yet, more than 73 years later, one of the States – the Palestinian State, is yet to be established. The truth is that since 1967, millions of Palestinians have found themselves living under siege on their own land or as refugees unable to return home. They are constantly facing violations of their human rights, confiscation of their land and property, and constant affronts to their dignity. International law is clear on the fact that the occupation and settlement by Israel of Palestinian land is illegal and that it must end. We urge colleagues in the media to never lose sight of these truths.

I sometimes hear friends in the media say that there are always two sides to a story. I could not agree more. The occupation has extracted a heavy social and economic price on Israeli citizens too. This is yet another reason why the untenable situation in Israel and Palestine must end. The illegal blockade on Gaza, now entering its 13th year, is neither legally sustainable nor morally justifiable. The unrestrained plans for settlement expansion and construction amount to blatant disregard for international opinion by Israel as the occupying Power. Hence, it is

time for us to recognize that the time for finger-pointing has passed. It is incumbent on all of us to not let international readers and viewers lose sight of what is happening in Palestine, to report accurately what is taking place, and ensure a truthful historical account.

The President of the State of Palestine has called for an international peace conference in 2021 to resolve the question of Palestine. The Committee fully supports this proposal. We would vastly appreciate your efforts to positively highlight the ongoing attempts to encourage the parties to reach a just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine, including by holding of the conference.

The road ahead is not easy. What we want for the Palestinian people is exactly what we want for any our own people – a life of peace, justice and dignity. I look forward to the support of media in this endeavor and wish the seminar all success.

Thank you.
