

STATEMENT TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL

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THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE**

**OPEN DEBATE
ON THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST,
INCLUDING THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION**

New York, 28 July 2021

Mr. President,

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, at the outset I would like to congratulate France for its able presidency of the Security Council this month.

Mr. President,

So far, 2021 has proven particularly challenging for the Palestinian people on all fronts. Not only have we witnessed terrible loss of life, a humanitarian crisis and destruction during an 11-day conflict in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem and particularly affecting the Gaza Strip, but cases of COVID-19 are raising in the Occupied Palestinian Territory due to the lack of access to vaccines.

The hostilities in May, the most severe and deadly escalation of violence since 2014, tragically claimed the lives of at least 245 Palestinians in Gaza, including 68 children and 37 women, killed by Israel airstrikes on civilian areas, and 12 persons killed in Israel by indiscriminate rocket fire from Gaza. The Committee stresses the

imperative of full respect for international humanitarian law and human rights law and the protection of civilian persons. The Committee calls on all parties to the conflict to respect the ceasefire and allow for unhindered humanitarian and reconstruction efforts, which are urgent to alleviate the dire socioeconomic conditions and hardships borne by the Palestinian population in Gaza.

On 10 May the Bureau, on behalf of the Committee, issued a statement expressing its deep alarm at the escalation of violence and acts of provocation and incitement, particularly by Israeli extremists in occupied East Jerusalem and at Al-Aqsa Mosque compound. It also condemned the planned evictions of Palestinian families from their homes in the Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan neighbourhoods of occupied East Jerusalem. The Committee further urged the Security Council and the Middle East Quartet to revitalize the stalled peace process in view of resuming meaningful negotiations towards the achievement of a just peace on the basis of international law and the relevant UN resolutions that have long been at the heart of the international consensus on a just solution.

As we heard today from the Deputy Special Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator Lynn Hastings, the violent escalation has had severe humanitarian consequences for the civilian population, particularly in Gaza, which remains under a 14-year blockade by Israel, the occupying Power. The Committee reiterates its

longstanding call for the lifting of the blockade and for the freedom of movement of persons and goods to be respected in accordance with international law. The Committee also calls on donors to support the reconstruction needs of the Strip as outlined in the Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment (RDNA) by the World Bank Group, the United Nations and European Union, in close cooperation with the Palestinian Authority which estimated recovery needs of up to US\$485 million during the first 24 months.

In this context, let me reiterate the Committee's full support for UNRWA and underscore our call for adequate and reliable funding to the Agency for its life saving activities in support of Palestine refugees.

We support the international community's swift and resolute response calling for respect of international law and accountability. Following a General Assembly debate on 20 May, when I delivered a statement on behalf of the Committee, the Human Rights Council through its resolution of 27 May at its emergency special session, decided "to urgently establish an ongoing independent, international commission of inquiry" to investigate in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in Israel all alleged violations of international humanitarian law and all alleged violations and abuses of international human rights law leading up to and since 13 April 2021. The Committee welcomes the appointment on 22 July, by the Human Rights Council, of Navi Pillay (South Africa), Miloon Kothari (India)

and Chris Sidoti (Australia) to serve as the three members of the Commission of Inquiry. The Committee, once more, calls on Israel, the occupying Power, to abide by international law, including international humanitarian and human rights law, and urges it to cooperate fully with the Commission of Inquiry stressing that accountability is central for the achievement of justice and peace.

There is no doubt that the escalation in May was directly linked to the continuous human rights violations the Palestinian people are enduring as a result of the decades-long Israeli occupation of their territory, leading to provocations and incitement in East Jerusalem and followed by a heavy response by Israeli security forces. In addition, arbitrary detentions of Palestinian civilians, restrictions to the freedom of movement, settler violence, demolitions and confiscation of Palestinian property across the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem continue relentlessly, affecting communities and displacing entire families. The Committee calls for a stop to ongoing Israeli violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in Al-Aqsa Mosque, which were among the root causes of the latest escalation.

Similarly, the Committee urges Israel, the occupying Power, to abide by its responsibilities under international humanitarian law to supply prompt and adequate vaccine protection to all in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, to avert further spread of

the virus and damage to the health and well-being of the Palestinian population under occupation.

The inalienable rights of the Palestinian people continue to be denied, and the illegal occupation of Palestinian territory continue as well through, inter alia, the construction and expansion of illegal settlements despite provisions of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), which so far have been disrespected.

At a time when the international community had generated momentum to revitalize the peace process, with the support of the Quartet plus other concerned partners, the hostilities brought the revival of a political process to another standstill, posing a real threat to the efforts to salvage the two-State solution on the pre-1967 borders.

Through its outreach to Member States, the Committee continues to encourage all supporters of the two-State solution to assist the parties to resume negotiations towards the achievement of a peaceful settlement in line with international law and the relevant UN resolutions.

The Committee also regrets the postponement of Parliamentary and Presidential elections in the State of Palestine and encourages the organization of the elections as soon as possible, including in East Jerusalem. We also call on Israel, the occupying Power, to uphold its obligations and commitments in this regard.

The Committee also reiterates its call for all Palestinian factions to accelerate reconciliation efforts towards the achievement of unity for the benefit of the Palestinian people.

Mr. President,

The full realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian People, the idea of a just solution based on the relevant United Nations resolutions that ensures two States, Israel, and Palestine, live side by side in peace and security along the pre-1967 lines and with East Jerusalem as the capital of the Palestinian State, and a just solution for the Palestine refugees in line with resolution 194 (III), will require the cooperation of everyone in order to see the light. The Committee is committed to upholding its responsibilities towards this principled goal, in line with its General Assembly mandate.

Mr. President,

The international community is called to engage with the parties aiming at de-escalation and maintaining the ceasefire in full compliance with international law, including respect for the human rights of the Palestinian people.

In the coming weeks, the international community, including an expanded Middle East Quartet, will be called to create the conditions with relevant stakeholders, including regional organizations, in view of garnering wider global support for the resolution of the question of Palestine and the realization of the two-State solution. The Committee

will remain a reliable partner in the pursuit of the full realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including to self-determination and independence.

I thank you for your attention.
