

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Cheikh Niang,**

**Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian people**

**International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People 2021**

**General Assembly Hall**

**Monday, 29 November 2021**

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

On this day, every year, we commemorate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. With heavy heart, we note that the promise of the independence of the Palestinian state and the realization of Palestinian rights remain unfulfilled: since 1967 and more than seven decades since the 1948 *Nakba* the Palestinian people continue to experience increasing levels of dispossession, violence and insecurity under the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem.

The Committee notes with regret that despite the passing of countless UN resolutions, including Resolution 181, now marking its 74<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and Security Council Resolution 2334 in 2016, and despite efforts over the years by the international community, the question of Palestine remains unresolved. Israel continues to deepen its occupation by expanding its illegal settlements, confiscating Palestinian property and structures, demolishing homes and forcibly displacing Palestinian families, and arresting and imprisoning Palestinian civilians, including children, thus creating a very volatile situation.

The fast-deteriorating situation is a stark reminder that the work of the Committee, and the international community at large, is more relevant than ever. We cannot lose hope and we cannot cease our collective efforts to achieve a just peace based on international law and the many relevant resolutions adopted in the UN chambers.

The Committee has a mandate from the General Assembly to raise awareness and advocate for a just solution to the question of Palestine. In solidarity with the Palestinian people, the Committee, during 2021, was resolute in its response to the many unfolding and serious events.

Despite the challenging times due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Committee made sure that current challenges remained the focus of attention of the international community. It engaged partners to advance towards the achievement of Palestinian rights and the two-State solution on the pre-1967 borders.

In response to Israel's further expanding its settlement enterprise – with now close to 700,000 Israeli settlers living in illegal settlements in the West Bank including East Jerusalem, the Committee, in its quarterly statements to the Security Council open debates, consistently condemned this flagrant breach of international law. It also publicly condemned the expansion of settlements as a source of volatility and a threat to the peaceful resolution of the conflict.

In March, ahead of the planned Palestinian elections, the Committee called for Israel to allow elections in East Jerusalem, a vital part of the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The Committee also organized a virtual event to highlight the contribution of Palestinian women as agents of change and their crucial role to bring about a just and sustainable solution.

In solidarity with the 5.7 million Palestinian refugees registered with UNRWA in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, in April the Committee partnered with UNRWA Commissioner-General Phillippe Lazzarini to call on Member States to deliver on their political commitment and provide sustainable and reliable funding to the Agency.

When deadly conflict broke out in May, the Committee expressed grave concern at ongoing attempts to expel Palestinian families from their homes in Occupied East Jerusalem, the Israeli incursions and outbreak of violence at Al-Aqsa Mosque and the escalation in Gaza, where many civilians, including children, were killed by Israeli airstrikes. The Committee called for all indiscriminate attacks against civilians to stop and for respect by all for international law, including humanitarian and human rights law.

In support of just efforts to keep the issue of Jerusalem high on the agenda of the international community, the Committee organized a virtual conference in July on the issue of forced demographic change in the City to highlight the actions of the occupying Power as a grave breach of international law and a threat to peace.

And in October, the Committee joined the High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet, several UN Experts and other organizations expressing deep concern at Israel's decision to designate six Palestinian civil society organizations as "terrorist organizations". These organizations are reputable and reliable partners of the Committee and the United Nations and have been advocating for years for the protection and promotion of the human rights of Palestinian children, women and men. In its public statement, the Committee reaffirmed its determination to continue its engagement with civil society partners in implementing its mandate.

In addition, since March 2021, the Committee directly engaged the members of the Middle East Quartet and members of the Security Council to support calls for - and act towards - resuming meaningful negotiations firmly based on international law.

On this day of solidarity with the Palestinian people let me reaffirm our ongoing commitment to this just cause: the Committee will continue to spare no effort in advocating for a just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine. It will continue to stand firmly in solidarity with the Palestinian people for the achievement of their inalienable rights, including to self-determination and to build their own State, and the full enjoyment of their human rights.

The Committee will tirelessly continue to serve as a torchbearer until we reach the finish line of a just, lasting and comprehensive solution whereby two States, Israel and Palestine, will live side-by-side in peace and security, with East Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Palestine, and with freedom and dignity enjoyed by all. We invite the overwhelming majority of Member States who have long recognized the urgent need for a just and peaceful solution and international organizations to join the Committee in support of this noble goal.

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