

**Statement made by Mr. Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, Pakistan Delegate in the Special Political and Decolonization (4<sup>th</sup>) Committee on Agenda Item 32: Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories on 7 November 2006**

**Mr. Chairman,**

1. Pakistan commends and fully supports the work of the Special Committee. The Annual Report of the Special Committee and the briefing by its Chairman present a somber picture of the nature and scale of Israeli policies and practices affecting the human rights of the Palestinian people and other Arabs of the Occupied Territories.
2. Daily press and media reports project the same tragic state of affairs and plight of innocent civilians. The current escalation of violence, indiscriminate and disproportionate use of military force, especially the recent firing at and killing and injuring of Palestinian women, are all the more reprehensible and condemnable acts. The loss of innocent civilian life on the Israeli side is also condemnable.
3. We are deeply concerned by the continuing deterioration of the socio-economic and humanitarian situation in the occupied territories, especially their devastating impact on women and children. The impact is severe particularly during this period of hardship and financial crisis, exacerbated by the social and economic blockade and the withholding of VAT and customs payments by Israel.
4. The continuing construction of the Wall, expansion of settlements, and restrictions on free access and movement of Palestinians by road closures, checkpoints and roads built for the exclusive use of the settlers, are human rights violations in themselves, and also result in other violations and hardships including denial of access to work, business, education, health and social services as well as depriving the Palestinian people of their scarce water resources. With regard to the Wall, we expect early establishment of the Register of Damage.
5. Extra-judicial killings, illegal detention, and torture and inhumane treatment of detainees are the worst signs of occupation. It is distressing that the number of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails – now more than 9000, has increased during the last one year. These include hundreds of child and female prisoners.
6. We call upon all sides to shun violence and respect their respective obligations under international human rights and humanitarian law.
7. The General Assembly has repeatedly reaffirmed the applicability of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949, to all the occupied territories.
8. We also share the Committee's concerns about the human rights situation in the occupied Syrian Golan.
9. Particularly alarming is the Special Committee's observation that not since 1968 it has experienced such anger and misery among the people in the occupied territories and disrespect for their basic human rights and fundamental freedoms. The Special Committee has also

observed that the Palestinians in the occupied territories feel that their plight has been neglected by the international community.

10. It is unfortunate that the momentary sense of optimism generated last year by the withdrawal from the Gaza Strip fast dissipated into despair and renewed violence. Each passing day of violence and reprisals is a set-back to the quest for a peaceful settlement of the problem.

**Mr. Chairman,**

11. For the violation of human rights of the Palestinian people to cease, end to occupation is a necessary pre-requisite. Pakistan's support for the legitimate struggle for self-determination and freedom of the Palestinian people and a viable independent Palestinian state remains firm and steadfast. The United Nations also has a permanent responsibility towards the question of Palestine until it is resolved in all its aspects in a satisfactory manner in accordance with international legitimacy.

12. Just, lasting and peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine, the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, is imperative for the attainment of comprehensive and lasting peace and stability in the Middle East. The reality is that a durable solution cannot be imposed by force or unilateral actions. We must therefore restore the hope for peace and pave the way for dialogue.

13. A comprehensive approach is required to address the Arab-Israeli problems on all fronts.

14. On the Palestine-Israel track, simultaneous confidence building measures are needed to pave the way for negotiations. Israel should end its military campaign in Gaza; release Palestinian prisoners including cabinet members and legislators; remove check points and other obstacles to facilitate access and movement of civilians and humanitarian workers; halt and reverse construction of the Wall; freeze settlement activities and dismantle outposts constructed in West Bank since 2001; release customs and VAT payments to the Palestinian Authority; and accept negotiations with the Palestinian Authority, led by President Mahmoud Abbas.

15. The Palestine side should halt rocket attacks and violence; secure release of captured Israeli soldier; halt internecine fighting and achieve internal cohesion; and establish a national unity government, with authority to the Palestinian Authority President Abbas, to negotiate with Israel.

16. The international community on its part should oversee implementation of the above confidence building measures. It should also provide international assistance to the Palestinians through the Palestinian Authority or the unity government.

17. The above CBMs should lead to resumption of direct Israeli-Palestinian Authority peace negotiations, based on previous agreements, relevant SC resolutions, the principle of land for peace, the Quartet road map, and the Arab Peace Initiative, for a permanent two-State solution, with an independent and sovereign Palestinian State living side by side in peace and security with Israel. A new timeframe should be set for the attainment of the two-State solution, with the resolution of the final status issues to be addressed at the end.

18. Efforts would also need to be undertaken in parallel to achieve negotiated lasting settlements on the Israel-Lebanon and Israel-Syria tracks.

19. We believe that with sincerity, commitment and necessary political will demonstrated by all sides, and a fair and impartial supporting role of the international community, progress can be made towards long-term peace and stability in the Middle East.

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