

Statement by Ambassador Munir Akram Permanent Representative of Pakistan during “Open Debate” of the Security Council on the Situation in the Middle East on October 4, 2004

Mr. President,

Since this is the first meeting of the Security Council this month, may I take this opportunity to extend to you the warm felicitations of the delegation of Pakistan on assuming the Presidency of the Security Council during the current month. We will extend every cooperation to you, Sir, to ensure the success of your Presidency. I would also like to express my delegation’s congratulations and admiration to Ambassador Juan Antonio Yáñez-Barnuevo the Permanent Representative of Spain for the successful Presidency during the last month.

Pakistan believes that an end to the cycle of violence between Israel and the occupied Palestinians could facilitate the implementation of the Roadmap and the realization of the vision of a two state solution in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242, 338 and 1515.

Unfortunately, instead of proceeding on the Roadmap to peace, the Israeli government has reacted once again by launching a cruel and ill considered offensive, killing over 80 Palestinians since last Wednesday. Innocent people including women and children have borne the brunt of the military might that Israel has brought to bear in densely populated areas of “Jabaliya” and “Beit Hanoun to secure what has been described as “its right to self-defence”. No one can justify the killing of innocent civilians. That’s why we condemn terrorism. But, the rationale of the right of self defence cannot be invoked for attacks that cause mainly civilian casualties. It was after the horrible experience of the Second World War- with the indiscriminate bombings of cities and civilians—that the international community adopted the Geneva Conventions outlawing the targeting of mainly civilian targets. As an occupying power, Israel is bound by the Geneva Conventions especially the Fourth Geneva Convention. Grave violations amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The real cause of insecurity for Israel as much as the Palestinians is Israel’s illegal, protracted and forcible occupation of Palestinian territories. The uninterrupted policy of illegal settlements has added insult to the injury caused by continued occupation. The construction of a “Separation Wall” in defiance of the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice is a manifestation of the objective of permanent annexation of occupied Palestinian territories.

Mr. President,

The Security Council has a political, moral and legal obligation to demand that Israel:

One, immediately withdraw its forces sent into the Gaza a few days ago and halt its deliberate policy of unleashing death and destruction against Palestinians;

Two, respect its obligations under international law especially international humanitarian law;

Three, allow the UN, and other relief organizations full and unhindered humanitarian access to areas affected by its incursions, and;

Four, fulfill its roadmap obligations particularly related to the withdrawal from the occupied Palestinian territories as well as construction of illegal settlements.

Israel must carefully consider the short and long term implications of its actions and policies. As the President of Pakistan observed in the General Assembly “the tragedy of Palestine is an open wound inflicted on the psyche of every Muslim”. A Clash of Civilizations may be the objective of some extremists; but it is certainly not in the interest of those who seek the path of peace, security and stability in the Holy Land and beyond.