

Madame Rapporteur:

Thank you for responding to the invitation to visit Israel. We have read with attention your report following your visit to Israel and the Palestinian Authority in October 2005. We have also listened attentively to your summary this morning. I would like to commend your sincere efforts to present a balanced and comprehensive overview of the situation facing human rights defenders in our region.

We welcome especially your finding regarding Israeli Democracy and the corresponding freedoms of expression and action that exist and are protected by our laws. Israel takes its obligations in this area very seriously.

Your assessment regarding the difficulties faced by human rights defenders in the Palestinian Authority raise some concern and we want to commend you on your courage in bringing their plight to the attention of our august Council. We hope that your recommendations in that field will be cause for useful introspection within the Palestinian society.

Regrettably, Madame Rapporteur, Israel's security concerns did not diminish after our full disengagement from Gaza, and may even have increased. Israeli towns, villages, and civilians continue to be targeted

daily by Qassam rockets launched from Palestinian territory. We continue to make efforts to ensure that our justified responses to such attacks meet the recommendations put forward in your report. We sincerely hope that violence in the region will soon abate and that implementation of the Road Map will result in the two states solution, living side by side in peace.