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Statement by Mr. Ammar Hijazi, First Secretary, before the Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee, (3rd Committee), Agenda Item 64: Elimination of Racism and Racial Discrimination, 61st Session, 6 November 2005:

Mr. Chairman,

The Palestinian People's plight with racism has been going on for almost 100 years, when their land was promised as another people's homeland without their consultation or consent. This plight continued reached its peak when in 1948; more than 800,000 Palestinians were forcibly expelled from their historical homeland. For years, these refugees' identity was denied and they were abandoned on the margins of life, without as much as an identification card. It's been fifty-eight years since then and these refugees are now four million strong, constituting the majority of the Palestinian nation. They remain confined to the narrow alleys of the refugee camp, forced to live a life of utter deprivation and isolation while tolerating the most racist policies from the culprits who forced them into refugee status. Inheriting refugee status is no cause for celebration. Rather, it is a burden that plunges them into the dark abyss of bitterness and hopelessness.

Mr. Chairman,

Israel, the Occupying Power, has adopted racial discrimination as doctrine when dealing with the Palestinian People. This doctrine is glaringly evident in the way Israel deals with the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homeland, in accordance with International law as well as the practices it carries out as an Occupying Power in the Occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. This discrimination becomes all the more evident when Israel's policies towards non-Palestinians are taken into account because the contrast is unmistakable to say the least.

Israel continues to exert all efforts to deny these refugees the rights they are entitled to in accordance with International Law and relevant resolutions, including the right to return to the homes they were forcibly expelled from. In the meantime, it enacts laws granting others the right to a so-called return based on religion and race. Israel's "Return and Nationality Law" is a prime example of this policy, which is driven by a mentality in which discrimination on the basis of religion and race is inherent, not accidental. It grants the right of immigration and citizenship to any person of the Jewish faith born anywhere in the world, as well as their children, grandchildren, and spouses. Meanwhile, Israel subjects its non-Jewish citizens, namely the indigenous Palestinians, to a litany of tests and proof of residency in order to earn and keep their citizenship.

Another stark example of the institutional discrimination in Israeli law is the law forbidding Israeli citizens from residing in Israel if their spouses carry a Palestinian identification card. This law earned wide-scale condemnation from Israeli human rights organizations, which accuse the State of racial discrimination. Such laws, which in effect forbid marriage between Arab Israeli citizens and their Palestinian brethren for example, was enacted to cement the idea of exclusivity in the Israeli State and

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to cement the Israeli-Arabs' very tangible reality of living in a state that considers them citizens of lesser rights and status.

Most recently, the Israeli Prime Minister invited Israel's most racist politician to join the government as his Deputy and Minister of Strategic Affairs. Avigdor Lieberman, head of the "Israel Beituna" party, is a man who has repeatedly and very openly disclosed his racist views of Arabs and Palestinians in particular. The endorsement of such a racist politician by the Israeli Government speaks volumes for its views of Palestinians in particular and Arabs in general. In this regard, I must refer to the regrettable silence on the part of the international community with regards to Lieberman's new and influential position in the Israeli government; a position contrary to what is customary with regard to similar instances in other governments.

Mr. Chairman,

The occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, has been shackled by the Israeli military occupation for the past thirty-nine years. This occupation regime is built on the racist premise that security and prosperity must come through the subjugation, exploitation, and oppression of another nation and all its resources. Part en parcel of this institutional racism is the adamant rejection of Israel, the Occupying Power, to recognize the applicability of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights Law to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, in open defiance of the will of the international community.

The Israeli occupation's notorious Israeli-only road system in the Occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, is part of the institutional discrimination that the occupied Palestinian nation suffers, which exceeds in its overt racism the defunct apartheid in South Africa. For on illegally expropriated Palestinian land, the Israeli occupation regime has funded and defended the creation of exclusively Jewish settlements, in grave violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 and the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination of 1966, to which Israel is a Party. Needless to remind that the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court considers transferring the civilians of the occupation regime into the occupied territory a war crime.

Mr. Chairman,

It is one thing to be guilty of racist practices and policies that could be undone through principled political actions. It is another if the existing political will thrives on reinforcing these shameful policies by creating facts on the ground that turn them into a crushing reality that is very difficult to change. The colonial Wall Israel, the Occupying Power, has erected in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is the key example in this case. It translates, into cold, hard, cement, the Israeli government's racist ideology of separation and exclusivity and deems impossible the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, thus brings to a dead end the hopes and aspirations of the Palestinian People for self-determination and a better future. This Wall also stands as disgraceful evidence to the inability of the international community to apply and protect International Law, regardless the circumstances for it continues to devour Palestinian land, property, and resources despite being condemned as illegal by the International Court of Justice in its Advisory Opinion of 9 July 2004. The Wall was erected to embed and perpetuate the occupation of the Palestinian Territory by Israel because this occupation regime builds its prosperity on the demise of the Palestinian People, driven by the racist premise that this People is of lesser status, unworthy of the inalienable rights that others are entitled to. Aside from devouring almost half of the West Bank, this Wall of shame takes control of the Occupied Palestinian Territory's main water resources, bisects tens of villages, and isolates tens of

thousands of Palestinians while shielding and expanding the illegal and exclusively Israeli settlements, built on Palestinian land illegally seized for that purpose. None other than racism explains this Wall and the pretexts used to justify it. What other possible explanation could exist for stripping Palestinians of their land, resources, and right to a dignified life of freedom and security while awarding these rights and resources to Jewish Israeli settlers illegally present on occupied land, solely on the basis of ethnicity and religion?

Mr. Chairman,

There is no worse manifestation of racism than denying a people their inalienable right to self-determination. Israel, the Occupying Power, continues to practice its racist policies towards the Palestinian People by denying them their inalienable right to self-determination, return, and a dignified life in their homeland.

Racism, Mr. Chairman, does not create stability or peace. Instead, it fuels feelings of bitterness and resentment that can not be undone as quickly as they are created. Racism is a disease that ails those practicing it just as much as those suffering its unbearable and humiliating consequential policies. Hence, it is incumbent on the international community to work diligently on curing the ill and ailed from this dreadful ailment. In the case of the Palestinian People, it should be unacceptable to tolerate crafted statements by the Government of Israel regarding the Palestinian People's right to live in peace like other nations. Instead, actions that translate these now empty statements that must be demanded from the Government of Israel for actions speak much louder than words. Even more, these empty words about rights and freedoms fuel intolerance and bitterness among those oppressed and discriminated against.

In order to cleanse itself of racism, Israel must begin by recognizing its historical responsibility for the pain and suffering it has caused the Palestinian People for the past fifty-seven years and be driven to undo the wrongs done to the Palestinian People. Freedom for the People of Palestine in this context would be the ultimate indication that Israel has come to terms with the ugliness of occupation that has perpetuated its occupation of Palestine and oppression of its People.