

**Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices
Affecting
the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of
the
Occupied Territories
Fourth Committee**

Mr. Chairman,

Today's meeting offers yet another window into the "**theater of the absurd**".

This committee has chosen to devote its valuable time to a one-sided report that distorts the truth and ignores the reality on the ground.

Unfortunately, the report of the Special Committee under consideration today does not seek to advance human rights or promote Palestinian development. Nor does it bring us **a single step closer** to a lasting peace. Instead, it further propagates a biased narrative of the conflict and advances a clear political agenda aimed at discrediting Israel.

Mr. Chair,

The Government of Israel is ready to work with all those who are committed to enhancing the security, co-existence and welfare for all peoples in the region, and seeks to identify the opportunities within the challenges in a changing and profoundly volatile Middle East.

Israel's message in this regard is clear – we want to achieve a lasting peace that would end the conflict once and for all. Israel supports and seeks to promote the vision of two states for two peoples.

Mr. Chair,

I would like to take a moment to highlight some important facts that were omitted from the report- in particular, I would like to address the steps that Israel has taken and will continue to take in order to improve the wellbeing of the people living in the Gaza Strip under the oppressive rule of Hamas.

Despite the constant threat posed to the citizens of Israel from rocket attacks launched from Gaza by Hamas, Israel has been doing its utmost to assist in the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip.

Israel has been working closely with the United Nations to facilitate the mechanism for Reconstruction of the Gaza Strip. Over 347 projects have already been approved by the Gaza Reconstruction

Mechanism, as well as 141 international projects outside this framework.

Israel has upgraded the capacities of the Kerem Shalom and Erez crossings, resulting in an increased capacity of 800 trucks per day. Thus far, almost 2 million tons of building materials for the reconstruction mechanism, for the rebuilding of roads and for the numerous projects funded by the international community have been transferred into Gaza.

Israel has also taken several measures in order to improve the wellbeing of the people of Gaza, such as granting entry permits into Israel for urgent medical care for patients, and raising the number of travel permits to the West Bank for non-urgent medical care. Israel has coordinated the movement of 650 doctors and medical teams from the Gaza Strip to the West Bank for continuing education projects and conferences.

We trust that all these steps and other measures we have taken have had a significant impact on the lives of Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip. However, in order for the reconstruction mechanism to produce better results and for efforts to improve the situation on the ground to succeed, the Palestinian Authority must take on a more substantive role. The fact that the PA does not assert its responsibility on the Gaza strip makes one wonder about their priorities.

Above all, it should be clear that on the road to recovery in Gaza, there must be zero tolerance for terror and violence. The rehabilitation of Gaza must go hand-in-hand with the demilitarization of Hamas and its proxies, and with the return of the Palestinian Authority to effective governance in Gaza.

Mr. Chair,

Over the last few weeks, Israeli citizens have been facing daily terror attacks by Palestinians. Since September, Israel witnessed 62 stabbing attacks, 7 shooting attacks and 8 vehicular attacks, which claimed the lives of 13 Israelis and injured almost 200, most of them civilians.

The reason behind this wave of terror is clear- it is inflammatory rhetoric that lit the fuse, and it is incitement that keeps feeding the flames.

The violence that Israel now faces began with lies about the Temple Mount; Palestinian President Abbas has continually accused Israel of trying to change the Status- Quo. Let me be clear - Israel remains committed to the status-quo. Far from endangering the holy sites, it is Israel that ensures their security. We continue to protect the right of Muslims to pray in the mosque, as well as the freedom of all people, Muslims, Christians, Jews and others, to visit the Temple Mount.

The facts speak for themselves- every year, there are approximately 3.5 million visits by Muslims, who come to pray in the Al-Aksa mosque, and 80,000 non-Muslims visit the site, of which only 12,000 are Jews.

As part of the effort to defuse the situation, it's important to have these basic truths put forward and reaffirmed by the International community.

Mr. Chair

Israel has repeatedly called for the resumption of talks and expressed our readiness to meet with Arab leaders and Palestinian leadership in order to advance the peace process. Unfortunately, the Palestinian side consistently refuses to return to the negotiating table. How can Israel make peace with a Palestinian partner who refuses to even sit at the negotiating table?

The Palestinian Authority must play a constructive role in this process by demonstrating a commitment to **bilateral negotiations rather than unilateral actions**. It is **only through direct negotiations** that we and the Palestinians will be able to find concrete solutions to the challenges at hand. Any other path will hold the region captive by the chains of resentment and hatred – and pass a legacy of violence and intolerance on to the next generation.

We call on our Palestinian and Arab neighbors to join Israel in taking concrete and courageous steps to pursue the path of peace. Let us end the cycle of inflammatory rhetoric and start utilizing this committee's resources in the way that they were intended – to improve the lives of the people in our region.

Thank you.