

STATEMENT

BY

H.E. MR. PAUL BADJI

**CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE
OF THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE**

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE
INTERNATIONAL DAY OF SOLIDARITY WITH THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE**

29 NOVEMBER 2005

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

A sense of shared responsibility has been bringing us together on 29 November of each year to observe the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. The presence at this meeting of many distinguished participants and guests from United Nations organs, Member-State and Observer delegations, United Nations agencies and intergovernmental organizations, as well as civil society organizations, is a great honour and reflects the overwhelming response to the invitation extended by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to the international community to come together and voice its support for the just cause of the Palestinian people for its inalienable rights.

What makes this observance special is that three weeks ago, on 10 November, the Committee marked the 30th anniversary of its establishment by the General Assembly. It was not a cause for celebration, but rather an opportunity for all of us to reflect upon decades of failed efforts by the international community and the parties themselves to resolve the question of Palestine. This gathering today gives us a chance to pledge our unwavering commitment to moving forward towards bringing about a just solution of the question of Palestine.

This Day of Solidarity also reminds us that there will be no final solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict without the achievement by the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights defined by the General Assembly in 1974 as the right to self-determination without external interference, the right to national independence and sovereignty, and the right of Palestinians to return to their homes and property, from which they had been displaced and uprooted.

The occupation of Palestinian land and the occupying Power's ultimate refusal to relinquish control over the Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, complicates efforts, be it by the international community or the parties to the conflict, to arrive at a just solution to the conflict, that is to say, the implementation of the vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side within secure and recognized borders.

This year again has seen encouraging developments, a renewed rapprochement of the two parties to the conflict, contrasted by the continuation of illegal policies by the occupying Power, and an upsurge in violence triggered by the never-ending circle of attacks and retaliation.

The passing of its national leader Yasser Arafat over a year ago represented a real challenge for the Palestinian people and institutions. It led, however, to a peaceful, democratic and responsible transition and, in free and fair elections, Mahmoud Abbas was voted into the office of President of the Palestinian Authority. Soon after, the first summit meeting in years was held at Sharm el-Sheikh between the Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas. The commitments made by the parties created a new momentum towards the resumption of the political process.

Last September, the Committee welcomed the Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and four small settlements in the northern West Bank as a rare opportunity to revive negotiations within the framework of the Road Map and restart the stalled political process. It should be noted, however, that, as we speak, Israel remains in control of the borders of the Gaza Strip, including its

territorial sea and air space and the movement of people and goods in the West Bank, thus hampering any meaningful economic development.

At the same time, the situation in the West Bank remains a cause for concern. In the course of the year, Israel intensified the expansion of settlements in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and accelerated the construction of the illegal wall on occupied Palestinian land. The creation of new facts on the ground is accompanied by alarming reports of plans for intensified construction in West Bank settlements, including in and around East Jerusalem. This is happening in contravention of Israel's obligations under the Road Map and in violation of international law and the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice.

The Committee has recently been encouraged by intensified efforts of the international community at revitalizing the Road Map and facilitating dialogue between the parties. International donors have pledged substantial financial resources towards the recovery of Gaza in the aftermath of the pull-out. Also, the European Union stands ready to provide for a third-party presence at the Rafah Terminal between Gaza and Egypt. We expect both parties to cooperate fully with the Quartet and other facilitators.

The United Nations, for its part, should continue to maintain its permanent responsibility towards the question of Palestine until it is effectively resolved in all its aspects. Ultimately, it is the implementation of the United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolutions 242, 338, 1397 and 1515 that will lead to a permanent two-State solution, based on the 1967 borders and the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. This Committee, as the only intergovernmental body in the United Nations devoted exclusively to political aspects of the question of Palestine, will do its utmost to help the Palestinian people to achieve its inalienable rights and realize its national aspirations in a State of its own. The Committee is ready to carry on the important mandate entrusted to it by the General Assembly for the benefit of the Palestinian people and work at heightening international awareness of the question of Palestine until it is resolved in accordance with international legitimacy.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The dedicated engagement of all of us in efforts to resolve the question of Palestine, the active engagement of the Quartet, other Governments, the United Nations family, intergovernmental and civil society organizations and institutions, as well as individuals, should contribute to building a broad-based support essential for the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East. On behalf of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, allow me to reiterate our Committee's strong support for this noble goal. We pledge our readiness to continue to work towards its attainment together with all Member States and all sectors of civil society.

We should like to take the opportunity afforded by this solemn meeting to offer our profound gratitude to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, for his continuing active support of the Committee's activities and for his untiring efforts at

revitalizing the peace process. He is always there to act as the catalyst for peace and we very much appreciate it.

We also thank the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council for the interest they show in the work of the Committee and for the close attention they pay to the problems of the Middle East.

We have noted with great satisfaction the presence at this meeting of many ambassadors whose Heads of State or Government have conveyed messages of support of and solidarity with the Palestinian people, providing us and, most importantly, the Palestinian people, with inspiration and encouragement.

It is a pleasure for me to welcome among us the representatives of our traditional partners: the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, the African Union, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and the League of Arab States. I would like to thank them for their participation in this International Day of Solidarity and for their constant support for the work of our Committee.

I also take this opportunity to convey the Committee's appreciation for the devoted work carried out by the personnel of agencies, bodies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system on the ground together with their colleagues from multiple civil society organizations to improve the daily lives of the Palestinian population in the Occupied Territory.

In conclusion, I would like, once again, to call on all the representatives of Member States and of intergovernmental and civil society organizations, who are present here today, to redouble their efforts in support of a just, comprehensive and lasting solution of the question of Palestine.

Thank you.

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