*Unofficial Transcript*

Ahmed Fathalla, UN Permanent Observer of Arab League, reading out a message from Nabil Elaraby, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States

November 29, 2012, UN Headquarters, New York

Thank you sir for giving me the floor for reading the message from Mr. Nabil Elaraby, Secretary General of the League of Arab States on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

Mr. President, at the outset it gives me pleasure in my capacity as Secretary General of the League of Arab States to extend warm greetings to his Excellency, the chair of the Committee on the Exercise of Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, to the members of that committee and to all in attendance in my capacity as the chair, Secretary General of the League of Arab States, we are expressing our appreciation for all the effort that the committee is deploying to support the Palestinian people and their right to self-determination and the establishment of an independent state with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Some may be wondering why is this occasion marked on this date. November 29 was chosen as the date for the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People because of significance for the Palestinian people. It was on that date in 1947 that the General assembly adopted in the second session resolution 181, which called for the establishment of two states. However, the Palestinian state has yet to be established. The General Assembly chose this date in order to -- that it may serve as an opportunity for the international community to focus on the fact of the Palestinian question has not yet been resolved, owing to the lack of serious political will to implement a just and comprehensive solution and to record that the Palestinian people have not yet realized its inalienable rights in accordance with United Nations resolutions, namely the right to self-determination without extended interference, the right to national independence and sovereignty, and the right of the Palestinians to return to their homes and properties from which they were to place and expelled.

All of those rights are enshrined in the charter of the United Nations. However, owing to its inability to realize those rights, the Palestinian people continue to suffer the consequences of an historic injustice in the midst of precarious circumstances and various dangers developed in the course of Israel's obdurate refusal to achieve peace.

Mr. Chairman, although there is an international consensus on the two-state solution as a basis for a peaceful settlement leading to the establishment of an independent, contiguous and sovereign Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital, Israel continues to defy and violate that United Nations resolution, international legitimacy and human rights instruments. It's continued its settlement policy, which is aiming at the swallowing up the land of Palestine while the government protects the settlers and covers up their actions, which are utterly beyond the pale.

Those actions include attacks against Palestinian civilians, the burning of the Koran and the Bible, and attacks against mosques and clerics, in addition to the fact that Israel is detaining 4,000 prisoners, including women and children. Some have been detained for more than 25 years in inhuman conditions. Such conduct reveals the racism of Israel and its settlers. It also creates new facts on the ground that undermine and threaten the two-state solution and any real opportunity to establish a sovereign Palestinian state.

Israel also persists in its unilateral and illegal actions aimed at Judaizing East Jerusalem and its surroundings, altering its demographic composition, rewriting its history and appropriating its Islamic -- and expropriating its Islamic and Christian heritage in clear violation –– and with impunity in clear violation of the relevant Security Council and General assembly resolutions and with impunity.

I should like to emphasize the responsibility of the United Nations and all its relevant organizations, agencies and funds to protect the Palestinian people and their properties and to help them in their destiny. In addition, the import it has to reinvigorate its role to support the legitimate and sacred right of the Palestinian people to decide -- to self-determination and to establish their independent state.

Israel continues to commit aggressions, including the recent attack on the Gaza Strip and its brutal blockade against the Palestinians in that territory, and to adopt dangerous racial practices that call to mind the apartheid policies of South Africa. Such actions are having an adverse impact on the lives of the more than 1.5 million Palestinians of 1948 and their descendents in an attempt to impose and implement the policy of transfer and displacement and to deny the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes.

Ladies and gentlemen, the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is occupied territory under international law and United Nations resolutions. Israel's unilateral actions in the occupied Arab territories are thus null and void and have no legal standing. In consonance with UN Security Council resolution 252 of May 21, 1968, which provides that all legislative and administrative measures and all actions taken by Israel, including expropriation of land and properties thereon, and which attempt to change the legal status of Jerusalem, are invalid, null and void and cannot change the status of that city.

The international community, and in particularly the Security Council, the quartet and its influential members, and in particular the United States of America, must shoulder their responsibilities and put an end to the Israeli government strategy of evading and delaying any efforts aimed at achieving peace and commencing earnest and serious negotiations to that end.

We would like to reiterate the full support of the Arab states for the Palestinian position, as was explained and expressed by President Mahmoud Abbas in his speech to the United Nations General Assembly on 24 September 2011, as well as his speech on September 2012, in which he called for the establishment of the independent state of Palestine, expressing his commitment to pursue negotiations aimed at achieving a lasting resolution to the conflict in accordance with United Nations resolutions.

He also called for the resumption of negotiations based on terms of reference that are in accordance with international legitimacy and for a complete halt to settlement activity. He reemphasized continuous settlement building policies is no longer useful or acceptable to continue conducting fruitless negotiations, whether direct or indirect, that waste time and effort and do not lead to any progress on the ground.

The Israeli government bears full responsibility for the collapse of the negotiations and the attendant, grave consequences that may result from that. This is all the more relevant because -- this is all the more relevant given that more than 10 years have passed since the adoption of the Arab peace initiative at the Arab Summit in 2002. In recent years, the role of the United Nations on the issue of Palestine to attain the nonmember observer status is part of the efforts of attaining peace and the responsibility of the international community to help Israel -- to help realize that peace.

The United Nations, which has been absented from finding a practical solution, is required through the United Nations Security Council and the General Assembly to adopt resolutions that emphasized the rights of people, especially the Palestinian people and the basic principle upon which the United Nations was established, and that is to realize international peace and security and maintain them.

In addition to that, in addition to calling on the Secretary -- the General Assembly to adopt a resolution to upgrade the status of Palestine to a permanent observer pending additional recommendations of the Security Council, which we urge them to take as soon as possible by giving Palestine full membership of the United Nations in consonance with the principles of international law.

I also wish to reiterate that Israel cannot in the 21st century -- Israel cannot continue to control the destiny of the Palestinian people. It must take heed of the trends of history and the ongoing developments in the Arab region. The future will belong to the people, not only the Palestinian people in particular who will not accept to be dictated upon, notably that it has the spirit of steadfastness and the strength of purpose to gain its legitimate rights, however long that may take, and to prevail over the challenges that have been placed in its path.

The best illustration of the changing reality is the fact that the Palestinian people withstood the recent Israeli aggression against Gaza. It lost dozens of elders, women and children, and suffered and made great sacrifices. Its infrastructure was destroyed, but its resistance to that savage aggression was rewarded with the truce which was broken by Egypt [sic] on November 21, 2012.

On this important occasion, I should be remiss if I did not warn of the precarious situation of the Middle East region owing to the Israeli war machine's brutal onslaught on civilians, including children, women and the elderly in the Gaza Strip. Thus, we must focus on ending the occupation, which is the fundamental and main problem, and lifting the blockade imposed on the Palestinian people in the West Bank and Gaza so that the Palestinian people can be able to live in peace and security in an independent state on its national territory of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Similarly, I must refer to -- mentioned that on 20th November, a League of Arab states delegation comprising the Secretary-General of the League of Arab states, ministries of foreign affairs of the Arab states and the ministries of foreign affairs of Turkey visited the besieged Gaza Strip, where it observed the extent of the material damage caused by Israel's indiscriminate bombardment on the Palestinian people.

On this occasion, I call on the international community to shoulder its responsibility toward the Palestinian people by providing all forms of assistance and enabling them to live in peace and security like other peoples of the world. The United Nations, and in particular the Security Council, should especially fulfill their duty to uphold international peace and security, a duty that has been undermined by Israel's repeated acts of aggression.

May the peace, mercy, and blessings of God be upon you all.