



THE PERMANENT MISSION OF
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TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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**STATEMENT
BY**

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**AT THE SPECIAL MEETING TO MARK FORTY YEARS
OF OCCUPATION
ORGANIZED BY THE COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE
OF THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN
PEOPLE**

**UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
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Mr Chairman,

For more than 60 years, the Palestinian people have led an intolerable life. In the past 40 years following the 1967 war, Palestinians have endured illegal occupation by Israel that has affected all aspects of their lives. They have suffered every imaginable violation; the continuing withholding by Israel of the much-needed Palestinian tax revenues; the endless expansion of Israeli settlements; the building of the Separation Wall that has been declared illegal by the International Court of Justice; as well as the cruel restrictions of movement and access on Palestinians that has underlined the fact that Palestinian people remain stateless.

Despite these challenges, the Palestinian inalienable right to self determination and statehood represents the steadfastness, hopes and dreams of millions of Palestinians living in the Occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip. It represents the yearning for the normality that only comes from being able to call your home - home.

Today, more than 2.5 million Palestinians are confined to dozens of enclaves separated by Israeli roads, settlements, military zones and the Separation Wall. This means that the impact of the Israeli occupation excludes 40% of the Palestinians from their territory. Even the Palestinian cities such as Nablus, Jericho and Ramallah have been reduced to isolated spots that can only be reached via 450 road blocks and 70 check points.

Mr Chairman,

Recently, South Africa was honoured to host the UN African Meeting on the Question of Palestine, held under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, in Pretoria from 9-11 May 2007. The Final Document adopted concluded that the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, the systematic human rights abuses and discriminatory practices committed against the Palestinian people by the Israeli occupying forces constitutes war crimes in terms of the Fourth Geneva Convention and the Protocol I Additional to the Geneva Conventions.

The participants were highly critical of Israel's routinely disproportionate and indiscriminate military operations in Palestinian population centres. In this regard, they reminded Israel, the occupying Power, of its responsibilities and accountability under international law. They called upon all Governments, intergovernmental organizations and others to meet their legal obligations faced with Israel's non-compliance, and take appropriate actions.

Mr Chairman,

The United Nations, in particular the Security Council, carries a special responsibility to find a solution on the Israeli-Palestinian issue. This year will also mark 40 years of defiance by Israel of Security Council resolution 242 which called for the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the territories that it occupied after the 1967 war. It is time for the United Nations to accept that Israel continues to reject with impunity all resolutions passed by both the General Assembly and the Security Council and this cannot be allowed to continue for another 40 years.

Recently, the responsibility of trying to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has shifted to the Quartet made up of the UN, EU, Russia and the US. The challenge for the Quartet has always been the fact that it is not a representative body, despite the participation by the Secretary-General. The fact that it excludes some of the countries in the region that could contribute effectively to a lasting solution has robbed the Quartet of the potential to make significant progress and achieve the goal of a two-State solution and lasting peace.

Perhaps it is time for the international community to consider other alternatives to bring about peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians. It is for this reason that we welcome and support the decision of the Arab League Summit in Riyadh in March 2007 that offered Israel full normalization of relations with the Arab League's 22 countries in exchange for full withdrawal from Arab territories occupied in 1967, together with a negotiated resolution of the Palestinian refugee problem. We believe that efforts must be made to persuade the Israeli authorities to respond constructively and creatively to the Arab initiative. An historic moment for peace may be at hand and the Israeli Government may wish to seriously consider it in the interest of all people in the Middle East and for regional and international peace and stability.

Mr Chairman,

On this day that we mark 40 years of illegal occupation, my delegation reiterates our unwavering support to the Palestinian people in their struggle for the establishment of an independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side-by-side with Israel with both States enjoying secure and internationally recognised borders. This vision of a two State solution, as enshrined in Security Council resolution 1397 (2002), and the principle of land for peace must therefore underpin any permanent settlement of the Middle East conflict.

I thank you.