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**Statement by Ms. Feda Abdelhady Nasser, First Counsellor, before the Third Committee, Agenda item 69: Right of Peoples to Self-Determination, 62<sup>nd</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly, 7 November 2007**

Mr. Chairman,

The realization of the right of many peoples to self-determination and the achievement of freedom and independence for a great number of countries are among the most important accomplishments of the past century. The United Nations has greatly contributed in this regard in the field of de-colonization, providing the political and legal framework to support the liberation of peoples from colonial and foreign rule. Indeed, the U.N.'s successes in this field were made possible because of the unequivocal stance among its Member States in their affirmation of the inalienable right of peoples to self-determination.

Unfortunately, the U.N.'s legacy and responsibilities in this regard will remain unfulfilled as long as the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory continue to live under foreign occupation, living in a situation where their right to self-determination, hence their freedom, sovereignty and statehood, has been withheld by force and relentlessly violated by their occupier. For more than four decades, the Palestinian people have struggled to realize their right to self-determination - an inalienable right guaranteed under international law and which cannot be abrogated under any circumstances. Sadly, the realization of this right continues to elude the Palestinian people for reasons well-known to the international community.

Mr. Chairman,

This past June the Palestinian people solemnly marked 40 years of Israel's occupation of their land since 1967 and next year will mark 60 years since Al-Nakba. Today, the Palestinian people remain a stateless, dispossessed and oppressed people, suffering deepening hardships in their ongoing struggle to realize their right to self-determination. As each year passes, the injustices imposed upon the Palestinian people, including the Palestine refugees, mount, as their human rights and dignity continue to be trodden upon by the occupying Power.

Not one day has passed in which Israel, the occupying Power, has ceased its brutal military campaign against the Palestinian civilian population, a defenseless population entitled to protection under international humanitarian law. The machinery of Israel's occupation has produced the systematic violation of a range of individual and collective rights of the Palestinian people, accorded to all human beings under international law, including humanitarian and human rights law. In addition to the right to self-determination, the rights to life, to liberty and security of persons, to freedom of movement, to livelihood, to education, to property, to development and many other rights have been flagrantly violated.

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Instead of respecting the principles and provisions for respect of human rights enshrined in instruments of international law, and acknowledging the Palestinian right to self-determination, Israel, the occupying Power has deliberately engaged in gross human rights violations against the Palestinian people, denying their right to self-determination and committing countless human rights violations. Israel has perpetuated its occupation by an incessant series of illegal practices, including punitive measures, and violence and terror against the civilian population, causing widespread death, destruction and devastation. Under these circumstances it must be asked: How can the Palestinian people's right to self-determination be guaranteed when even their basic right to life has been denied and violated in the most horrific manner?

Mr. Chairman,

As Israel's military occupation has continued and become entrenched over the decades, its illegality has deepened and its colonial nature has become undeniable. This colonial nature is particularly evident in Israel's unlawful and fervent construction and expansion of settlements, of the Wall, and of bypass roads and its imposition of the hundreds of checkpoints. All of these illegal practices undermine the territorial unity, contiguity and integrity of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, which is comprised of the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip and which is the territorial unit in which the Palestinian people are striving to establish their independent State and exercise their right to self-determination.

After the passage of so many years of Israel's systematic and constant violations, it has become glaringly clear that the occupying Power has been carrying out its illegal policies against the Palestinian people with the deliberate intent to promote its expansionist aims and ensure the *de facto* annexation of as much of the Occupied Palestinian Territory as possible, all while oppressing the entire Palestinian population under its siege. Such illegal policies and practices are altering the character, status and demographic composition of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, creating facts on the ground which not only seriously violate the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination but also constitute serious obstacles to the future realization of this right.

In accordance with the relevant provisions of international, including in particular the 4<sup>th</sup> Geneva Convention, the major organs of the U.N., including the Security Council, the General Assembly, ECOSOC and the International Court of Justice (ICJ), have explicitly affirmed the illegality of the settlements and have called for their dismantlement. Indeed, under Additional Protocol I, Israel's illegal colonization practices constitute grave breaches. Yet, more than 450,000 Israeli settlers - many armed and fanatical, who constantly harass and terrorize the Palestinian civilian population, have been illegally transferred into illegal Israeli settlements and continue to be transferred on a daily basis. Settlement construction in and around Occupied East Jerusalem has been especially intense, with the occupying Power declaring its intention to create a contiguous Jewish presence linking East Jerusalem to major settlement areas in the West Bank, including via the so-called E-1 plan, totally isolating the city and its Palestinian inhabitants from the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory and furthering its Judaization.

At the same time, the illegal construction of the Wall, which is intricately linked to the settlements and intended to entrench them and to advance the land grab, also continues unabated. Entire communities are being destroyed and thousands of Palestinians continue to be displaced by this apartheid Wall, which is separating Palestinian areas, many of which have become totally walled-in enclaves or Bantustans, and is causing extensive socio-economic devastation by destroying thousands of livelihoods. In its Advisory Opinion, the ICJ concluded that construction of the Wall,

along with measures taken previously by the occupying Power, severely impedes the exercise by the Palestinian people of its right to self-determination, and is therefore a breach of Israel's obligation to respect that right.

It is unquestionable that the presence and continued construction of Israel's illegal settlements and the Wall are undermining and actually fragmenting the contiguity of the Palestinian Territory and are therefore making the goal of the two-State solution and the Palestinian people's enjoyment of their right to self-determination in their independent State nearly impossible to achieve. The gravity and seriousness of these issues and their impact on the future prospects for achieving peace, justice and the rights of the Palestinian people must be duly recognized and addressed.

Mr. Chairman,

We thus come before the international community once again to address the issue of the right of the peoples to self-determination and to draw attention to the continuing denial and violation of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination. We reiterate our appeal for real efforts to bring an end to these violations and to advance the efforts for the realization of this inalienable human right by the Palestinian people. It is our hope that, after all of these years, the international community will exert the necessary pressure on Israel, the occupying Power, to finally compel it to cease its violations of international law, including humanitarian and human rights law, against the Palestinian people and to respect its legal obligations in this regard.

Peace can never be achieved on the basis of the subjugation of an entire people and the denial of their inalienable human rights. Despite the overwhelming pain and loss that the Palestinian people have endured due to the Israeli occupation, it must be made clear that the Palestinian people will never succumb to the forces of oppression, violence and injustice. Their aspirations for freedom and independence and their struggle to achieve them will continue until the Israeli occupation is brought to an end, allowing for the Palestinian people to finally live a normal, free and dignified life in their independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, wherein all of their rights, including their right to self-determination, will be realized.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, I wish to inform the Committee that my delegation will submit a resolution under this item entitled, "The Right of the Palestinian people to self-determination" for adoption. It is our deepest hope that the Member States will send a strong message in solidarity with the Palestinian people by adopting this resolution by consensus, unequivocally affirming their long overdue right to self-determination and calling for its fulfillment.