Unofficial Transcript

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Meeting of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations

Chair: We will move to next organization, to the Palestinian Return Centre, Sudan you have the floor:

Sudan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In this organization, my delegation supports this organization in full. It assists the Palestinians in need and this organization is registered in the U.K. We have not received any indication that it has caused any problems with the U.K. government until today. I do not speak on their behalf but since it is registered in the UK then that’s is a good sign. We also support this organization because we think it holds activities that assists the Palestinians in need. It has presented its application since 2011 and until today we think this is enough of a period for the NGO to receive support and the consultative status. I have also spoken with the delegation of the State of Palestine and they also support the NGO completely. I will not prolong my statement, everyone knows the situation with this NGO. I will not talk at length of its activities or its condition. My delegation will request voting on this NGO to grant it consultative status and I ask this member states in this committee to support this request, this application, and to vote in favor of granting the NGO the consultative status. And I do not want to prolong any further. I officially request voting for this NGO and I hope that we hold a voting to grant status to this NGO. Thank you very much.

Chair: Thank you very much to the representative of Sudan. The committee has received a request for a vote to grant special consultative status to this organization, the Palestinian Return Centre, and in accordance with article 59 of ECOSOC rules and procedure we will proceed to review the request for a vote for the Palestinian Return Centre. The vote has begun. Would any delegation like to explain the vote before the vote, according to Article 62, any delegation has the right to do so, if not we can proceed immediately to the vote. You have asked for the floor, if it’s on this issue then I will give you the floor. If not, I would ask you to take the floor later because we are now considering the question of the request for the vote. You have the floor…

Mauritania: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I do not want to talk for long, I only requested the floor to agree with my distinguished colleague from Sudan to express our solidarity with this NGO. We support the application and the request of Sudan. Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Chair: Thank you to the representative of Mauritania. Israel, you have asked for the floor.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. We are here today to discuss the application and status of the Palestinian Return Centre. The case of the Palestinian Return Centre is one that if not handled correctly could create precedent for the acceptance of organizations with known affiliation to terrorist organizations. The committee must therefore ask itself if it can afford to accept organizations affiliated with terror, one of our larger shared global threats, into partnership of the United Nations. Is this how we envision the future work of ECOSOC and the United Nations?

While the PRC has written in its application that the organization has never supported violence in any form or shape and denounces terrorism in all of its forms and all related acts, we have reason to believe that these claims do not accurately depict the nature of the organization.

Ismail Haniyeh, a senior leader of Hamas, a well-known terror organization, was invited by the PRC to give the keynote address at its conferences three times. Ismail Haniyeh is the same man who in 2013 stated that this is a generation of the missile, the tunnel, and suicide operations.

By accrediting an organization that honors individuals such as Ismail Haniyeh we are providing a platform for ideas of violence and terror, in stark contrast to the themes of peace and non-violence stated in the PRC application. The organization is in support of Hamas. Hamas is an organization committed to violence and the total annihilation of the State of Israel without hope of achieving peace.

It is our responsibility as members of this committee to prevent terrorist organizations from infiltrating the UN. And let it be clear, voting yes and accrediting the PRC is accrediting Hamas, Hamas, which is banned in Egypt, has been designated a terrorist organization by the European Union, Canada, Japan, the United States, and Israel. World media sources, national intelligence agencies and independent -

Chair: Excuse me Israel, sorry, just a small interruption, I’m requested. I understand this is an explanation of vote, yes?

Israel: Yes, that’s right, and we’re going to finish in one minute. World media sources, national intelligence agencies and independent have cited connections between the Palestinian Return Centre and organizations such as the Charity Coalition and Interpal, both known as large financial sources for terrorism and I’m going to finish Mr. Chair but it’s so important that please allow me to finish the explanation of vote.

Today we have outlined not only the reasoning behind the rejection of the Palestinian Return Centre by the NGO committee but have also posed a number of questions-But would like to post a number of questions about the future of our committee. With each application, we must consider the future implications of a possible acceptance.

This committee cannot allow itself to approve organization with even a shred of suspicion about its affiliation. Organization like the PRC give the NGO committee an opportunity to reaffirm its values through its decision making process and to shed the committee for the future.

To conclude, Israel will vote no, and I urge all members of the committee to do the same. Thank you Mr. Chair.

Chair: Thank you Israel for your explanation of vote. And now the distinguished representative of South Africa has the floor for the explanation of vote before the vote.

South Africa: Thank you very much, chairperson. The political position of the Democratic Republic of South Africa and its support for the Palestinian self-determination is unshakeable and unwavering. For these reasons, my government believes that the PRC and its activities to popularize the right to self-determination for Palestinian people and for the statehood is a just cause. And as a result, my government will vote in favor of the accreditation of this NGO. The right of return is practiced elsewhere in the system and we believe that the Palestinians are also similarly entitled to this right.

Chair: Thank you very much, distinguished representative of South Africa for your explanation. The US, you have the floor

US: Thank you very much Mr. Chair and thank you for allowing me to explain the vote of the United States. The United States will be voting no against granting status to this NGO today, and I will be expressing our concerns through my explanation of position, my explanation of vote. I would just like to note that though my delegation opposed the calling of this vote, we are not attacking the Chair or attacking the process, or creating chaos, as we saw last week, but we are expressing our explanation of vote and our intention to vote no. One of the reasons we will be voting no is because we still have outstanding concerns about this organization. We had come prepared to ask this organization questions that we still have about its organizations that it works with, the nature of its relationships in various countries. We will be voting no because the United States supports the critical voices of civil society at the UN as a matter of principle but we cannot support accreditation of this NGO today because of the outstanding concerns we have about this NGO’s activities and the leadership of this NGO. We will be voting no because we encourage delegations to allow for further consultations so that we can have an opportunity to raise our questions about this NGO. However, we regret Mr. Chair that this did not take place. We still have outstanding concerns and for all of those reasons we will be voting no against granting status to this NGO. Thank you.

Chair: Thank you very much, distinguished representative of the United States of America. The representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran you have the vote

Iran: Thank you Mr. Chairman. This is an explanation of vote before the vote. The Islamic Republic of Iran will vote yes in granting the ECOSOC consultative status to the Palestinian Return Centre. The Islamic Republic of Iran believes that the aim and work of the Palestinian Return Centre fully complies with the UN charter and ECOSOC resolution 96/31. We also believe the work of the organization for exercising the right of all Palestinian people to return to homeland is based on international law and international humanitarian law. Thank you.

Thank you so much, I see no other explanations. Sudan, you have the floor or we go for vote?

Sudan: Thank you Mr. Chairman, I did not want to talk for long when I asked for vote and I was brief in my introduction of this NGO so that we don’t allow for extensive conversations. Some states spoke about their concerns, and we respect every concerned delegation and individual. But there is no doubt that we when we request voting, this does not mean that we immediately go to the vote. We, last Friday, someone opposed us, and now I ask that we immediately go to the vote as had practiced on Friday. Thank you very much.

Chair: But distinguished delegate, but according to the rules of procedure, this is just an explanation of vote, and there is no limitation of time for any delegate who wants to express their reasons for voting yes or no. That’s why I am, you know, giving the floor for anyone who asks for the floor to give an explanation of vote. What happened last time was that sometime is that unfortunately some people do not only talk about the explanation of vote but about other things which are not allowed. But if you want to provide an explanation of vote there is no limit. So, I saw the distinguished delegate of Cuba. Distinguished representative of Cuba had asked for the floor and I think she too is allowed to give her explanation of vote.

Cuba: Thank you very much sir. I did not certainly want to interrupt the distinguished delegate of Sudan, I did not want to interrupt their right to speak, I just want to explain my vote and say that the case of Palestine is in line with our foreign policy and we will vote in favor of giving consultative status to this organization because we believe that it does fulfill the requirements in resolution 96/31 and other principles established in United Nations charter. In addition it would help advance the process of creating an independent autonomous state and would help give the Palestinians rights over their territory. Thank you.

Chair: I thank all representatives who’ve expressed their, explained their vote before the vote. Now, if nobody else wishes to take the floor for this purpose. I see that the distinguished representative of Guinea has asked for the floor, you have the floor.

Guinea: Guinea will vote yes to grant special consultative status for the Palestinian Return Centre NGO to be granted this status and this is completely in line with guinea’s policy for the self-determination of the Palestinian people to be supported. Thank you.

Chair: I thank you for your comment to explain your vote. If there are no other comments, we will proceed to the vote. As is customary, we will begin with a country, in accordance with article 63, we will then go from this country in alphabetical order until the end. First Greece, and then we will continue in alphabetical order….

We have completed the voting process. The result is 12 in favor, 3 opposed, 3 abstentions, and 1 absent. Accordingly, it has been recommended, that is special consultative for this organization has been granted, and now members who wish to take the floor will be allowed to do so to explain their vote after the vote. Sudan has the floor.

Sudan: Thank you Mr. Chairman, I asked for the floor to thank everyone who has voted in favor for granting special consultative status to this NGO. I also understand the position of everyone who abstained. I did not talk at length as I said previously before the vote in describing this NGO and its right to defend the unarmed Palestinian people who are in diaspora outside their homeland, and the Palestinian question is well known. We did not want to delve into issues of terrorism or anything of the sort. If we were to speak about these topics we would say a lot. It’s known who supports terrorism and who does not. We only requested the floor now to thank everyone who supported this NGO and I wanted to request the floor after the committee concludes its vote and we know that the Palestinian question has much appreciated support and the UN in its many resolutions has presented its position clearly. And the voting results are often as significant as today, or the difference between the yesses and the nos. Therefore the position is, the opinion is stating through the voting. The voting is the strongest position. We requested the voting on this NGO’s application because its right is clear, its cause is clear in assisting the Palestinian people and defending their most basic rights. I thank everyone for this vote and we hope that this NGO works commendably in assisting the Palestinian people.

Chair: Just to- If no one opposes, you can continue speaking, but article, rule 62 says the representative of a member sponsoring a proposal or motion shall not speak in explanation about their own except it has been amended.

Sudan: Thank you Mr. Chairman, I will comply with the rules and I will conclude, thank you to everyone. Thank you Mr. Chairman, I only wanted to clarify that the committee has said its opinion. Thank you very much.

Israel: Thank you Mr. Chair. Indeed another tremendous day here at the NGO committee where members of the committee have definitely said what they wanted to say. Sponsoring, voting for this NGO is without a doubt a mistake in our opinion. I think that our vote no was very clear because of the terrorist affiliation of this NGO. One of many examples, is just, one of the PRC’s senior figures, **Majid al-Ziyad**, who said the need for militant resistance, i.e. terrorism, is indeed the major way to go. I would believe that this NGO has nothing to do with the self-determination of the Palestinian people and it will definitely won’t add any honor for this committee and this institution, the UN itself. We will take into consideration the activities, the actions taken here today and we’ll think about our next steps and what are our options for the future with this NGO. I thank you, Chair.

Chair: Thank you very much Israel for your remarks. And now the Russian Federation has the floor

Russia: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I’d like to say that the Russian Federation abstained in this voting in relation to the fact that the application as the application stands now, and I emphasize as it was submitted to us, goes back to 2014. We have always been in favor of the rights of states to ask as many questions of an organization as they consider necessary and therefore I recognize that everything is not quite so simple with this organization. But as the application has been presented to us as it stands on the screen it has only been one year since this application has been submitted, therefore we abstained.

Concerning the ties of this organization and terrorism, I think that’s a very serious accusation. And if those accusations are truly justified then they need to immediately either be proven false or they need to be legally pursued because as they are in London and they are seriously fighting terrorism this is a great concern. So if there are justifications for these accusations to consider that it is assisting or facilitating terrorist activities then this needs to be immediately clarified so that everything can become as clear as it can as quickly as possible.