



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF CUBA TO THE UNITED NATIONS
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STATEMENT BY MRS. REBECA HERNANDEZ TOLEDANO, FIRST SECRETARY OF THE PERMANENT MISSION OF CUBA, AT THE FOURTH COMMITTEE'S CONSIDERATION OF AGENDA ITEM 31: "UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST."

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation would like to commend the work by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, which was carried out under the harshest conditions.

Ever since its creation 56 years ago, pursuant to resolution 302 (IV) of the General Assembly, the Agency has carried out a truly commendable effort to try to improve the terrible living conditions of the Palestinian refugees. The report that we are assessing today is full of lively testimonies in this regard and it shows numerous activities undertaken in fulfilling the humanitarian mission with the Palestinian refugees.

Mr. Chairman,

Cuba deems unjustifiable that the Palestinian people continue to suffer the long and brutal Israeli military occupation of their land since 1967, and that they continue to be denied their fundamental human rights, including, their right to self-determination and the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their land.

The tragic deterioration of the political, economic, social and humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, is distressing as a consequence of the nonstop illegal policies and practices carried out by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people, including the grave and continued violations of human rights and the constant war crimes.

The so-called "withdrawal" of the Israeli troops from the Gaza Strip and the evacuation of that area's settlements have not been by any means the beginning of the end of the Israeli Government's genocidal policy in the area, or the path towards a definite solution to the Palestinian issue.

Israel continues to control the air space and the land and maritime borders. Crossings remain closed, particularly the Karni crossing, which has brought about serious consequences for the Gaza population, on account of the impossibility to receive medicines, food and fuel.

The unilateral measures in force that Israel applies in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, pose a grave threat on the perspectives to achieve a negotiated agreement based on a two-State solution.

Mr. Chairman,

Since 25 June 2006, more than 280 Palestinians have died, including more than 60 children, and more than 800 have been seriously injured. Due to numerous incursions by Israel in the Gaza territory, many families have been obliged to abandon their houses. According to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) estimate, they have currently more than 3,400 Palestinian refugees.

Extrajudicial executions, border blockades, destruction of homes and civilian facilities, indiscriminate use of force, collective punishment and psychological terror methods, have become permanent attributes with which the Israeli Government acts in Palestine.

Cuba condemns such aggressive policy, which has turned Gaza in a sealed area, in which its inhabitants are prisoners, where the reiterated calls of the international community and the successive resolutions adopted by the different United Nations organs are ignored, in marked violation of International law.

The freezing of the bank transactions by Israel and the major donors in May this year has caused an increased deterioration of the situation. The Palestinian Authority has not been able to pay its employees, which has brought about serious impact on the health, water and power services among others.

Mr. Chairman,

It is amidst this bleak prospect that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East must carry out its work.

The Israeli authorities continue to impose unacceptable restrictions on the freedom of movement of the Agency's personnel, assets and vehicles, which have undermined the Agency's capacity to exercise its functions and provide essential and emergency services, and have caused substantial monetary loss.

My delegation notes with satisfaction the Agency's good management of the budget and the responsibility which they have assumed fulfilling the recommendations arising from the Audit Committee.

Cuba regrets that the implementation level of the Agency's budget was limited by security concerns, mainly in the areas of Gaza and the West Bank, which has brought about that the positive difference of 19.2 million dollars of the budget, is not due to a surplus, but to the amount of scheduled activities that could not be carried out.

Cuba reiterates the importance that this Agency receives all the support and necessary guarantees to perform its functions. It is unacceptable that Israel continues to violate the international agreements on the protection to UN facilities and the Conventions and Agreements in matters of protection and security of the UNRWA.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I would like to reiterate that Cuba will continue to support the revitalization of a peace process that leads to the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace solution in the Middle East. We will not give up in our struggle in favor of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to free self-determination and to establish their independent and sovereign State, with East Jerusalem as Capital.

Thank you.