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**Statement by Ms. Nadya Rasheed, Counsellor, before the Third Committee, Agenda item 68: Right of Peoples to Self-Determination, 64th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, 2 November 2009 (Please Check Against Delivery)**

The right of peoples to self-determination is founded on the premise that human beings are the holders of given and inalienable rights- rights that allow them to determine their own destinies and future. Unfortunately, for more than four decades, this right has been forcefully withheld from the Palestinian people living in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, by Israel, the occupying Power, in the most brutal and inhuman manner.

Every year that passes, in which the Palestinian people continue to be denied their right to self-determination, is another year of more suffering and further deterioration of their dire living conditions. Attempts to merely calm the situation on the ground without truly addressing the core issue of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination will repeatedly fall short of a genuine solution. The enjoyment of the Palestinian people to self-determination and independence are essential for the achievement of a comprehensive, permanent and lasting peace in the Middle East.

Mr. Chairperson,

Throughout the forty-two years of occupation, the Palestinian people have endured constant threats to their national existence, and systematic violations of their human rights, both individual and collective. The machinery of Israel's occupation has denied them of their most basic rights and freedoms. In addition to the right to self-determination, other rights such as 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. It is the same brutal machinery of Israel's occupation, which also produces illegal settlements, closures, checkpoints, home demolitions, land confiscation, destruction of civilian infrastructure, wanton killings by illegal settlers and occupying forces and the over two-year vicious siege of the Gaza Strip and the more than 1.4 million Palestinians living there.

However, the most obvious manifestation in which the Palestinian people's basic and fundamental right to self-determination has continued to be denied is as result of Israel, the occupying Power's, continuation of its illegal polices and measures of creating new facts on the ground- a clear attempt to strengthen its subjugation and strangulation of the Palestinian people and to entrench its illegal occupation. In complete defiance of the international community and in contravention of international law, U.N. resolutions and the International Court of Justice, Israel has been carrying out a massive colonization campaign in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. The occupying Power is doing so via the illegal construction and expansion of settlements and its unlawful Wall, which is intricately linked to the settlements and intended to fortify and protect them. Settlement colonization continues to be especially intense in and around Occupied East Jerusalem, which is the

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heart of the Palestinian Territory, and Israel is actively pursuing additional policies to further obstruct Palestinian access to the city and physically sever it from the rest of the Territory.

It is relevant to our debate today to recall that 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. Moreover, 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.

Having said all of this, the international community, including the United Nations, must continue to call and demand for Israel to comply with its obligations under international law. The continuation of illegal Israeli settlements will indeed deal a fatal blow to any hope of re-launching the stalled peace process because without a settlement freeze and the eventual dismantlement of settlements, there will be no Palestinian state to negotiate and no two-State solution left to speak of. In this regard, the Palestinian position has not changed and an immediate and comprehensive settlement freeze has been a consistent requirement for the Palestinian side to engage negotiations, as well as the benchmark established by the international community for meaningful and credible negotiations to resume.

Mr. Chairperson,

Year after year, we come before the international community 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. This year again, 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 forty-two years of Israeli occupation, it must be stressed that the Palestinian people will never give in to the forces of oppression, subjugation 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.

In conclusion, I wish to inform the Committee that we 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. Thank you Mr. Chairperson.