

**The Origins and Evolution
of the Palestine Problem:
1917-1988**

**PART IV
1984-1988**

INTRODUCTION

The International Conference on the Question of Palestine, held between 29 August and 7 September 1983 at Geneva, became a landmark event which focused the attention of the international community on the struggle of the Palestinian people for its inalienable rights. The Conference elaborated and adopted two far-reaching political documents designed to map out principal guidelines and directions of activities relating to the question of Palestine in years to come.

The Geneva Declaration on Palestine, adopted by the International Conference on the Question of Palestine, laid down guidelines for concerted international efforts aimed at a comprehensive, just and lasting political settlement of the question of Palestine through the convening of an international peace conference on the Middle East. The Programme of Action for the Achievement of Palestinian Rights clearly outlined the obligations and responsibilities of United Nations Member States, the United Nations system as a whole and its bodies and agencies in particular. Further, this document highlighted the role of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in raising awareness of the core of the Middle East problem, namely, the question of Palestine.

The need for and urgency of convening an international peace conference were recognized in subsequent years in a series of General Assembly resolutions, proposals by major intergovernmental organizations and individual States Members of the United Nations, as well as by hundreds of NGOs. The years 1984 to 1988 were marked by a continuous effort by all these forces to convene an international peace conference on the Middle East and to find a solution to the question of Palestine and the Arab-Israeli conflict as a whole.

Over the years, the United Nations General Assembly, the Security Council, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, other organs and bodies of the United Nations system as well as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) have been continuously seized of the ever-deteriorating

situation in the Palestinian territory occupied by Israel since 1967. The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People has been prompt in responding to the developments in the region through the consideration of this matter at its meetings. It has also brought such developments to the attention of the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council and has called for appropriate measures in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions, including application by Israel of the provisions of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, 1/ and appropriate action by the Secretary-General to provide protection and assistance to the Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territory.

I. THIRTY-EIGHTH SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE

The year 1983 was marked by the adoption by the thirty-eighth session of the General Assembly of resolution 38/58 C of 13 December 1983. 2/ This resolution welcomed and endorsed the call made by the International Conference on the Question of Palestine to convene the International Peace Conference on the Middle East in conformity with the following guidelines:

"(a) The attainment by the Palestinian people of its legitimate inalienable rights, including the right to return, the right to self-determination and the right to establish its own independent State in Palestine;

"(b) The right of the Palestine Liberation Organization, the representative of the Palestinian people, to participate on an equal footing with other parties in all efforts, deliberations and conferences on the Middle East;

"(c) The need to put an end to Israel's occupation of the Arab territories, in accordance with the principle of the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force, and, consequently, the need to secure Israeli withdrawal from the territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem;

"(d) The need to oppose and reject such Israeli policies and practices in the occupied territories, including Jerusalem, and any de facto situation created by Israel as are contrary to international law and relevant United Nations resolutions, particularly the establishment of settlements, as these policies and practices constitute major obstacles to the achievement of peace in the Middle East;

"(e) The need to reaffirm as null and void all legislative and administrative measures and actions taken by Israel, the occupying Power, which have altered or purported to alter the character and status of the Holy City of Jerusalem, including the expropriation of land and property situated thereon, and in particular the so-called "Basic Law" on Jerusalem and the proclamation of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel;

"(f) The right of all States in the region to existence within secure and internationally recognized boundaries, with justice and security for all the people, the sine qua non of which is the recognition and attainment of the legitimate, inalienable right of the Palestinian people as stated in subparagraph (a) above."

The resolution "invited all parties to the Arab-Israeli conflict, including the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), as well as the United States of America, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and other concerned States, to participate in the International Peace Conference on the Middle East on an equal footing and with equal rights". It also called upon the Security Council to facilitate the organization of such a Conference and requested the Secretary-General, in consultation with the Security Council, urgently to undertake preparatory measures to convene the Conference and to report on his efforts in this direction early in 1984.

II. ISRAELI POLICIES AND PRACTICES IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY

A. Violation of human rights in the occupied territory*

During the five years under review, the human rights situation in the occupied Palestinian territory has seriously deteriorated. Israel, the occupying Power, has been violating the relevant conventions and rules of international law and the generally accepted norms and principles of international behaviour. In particular, its policies and practices in the occupied territory remain in clear violation of a number of carefully elaborated and universally

