



# INDIA भारत

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## STATEMENT

BY

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MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT  
AND  
MEMBER OF THE INDIAN DELEGATION  
ON

Agenda Item :30 :  
United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees  
in the Near East

FOURTH COMMITTEE  
60<sup>th</sup> Session of the  
UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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Mr Chairman,

At the outset, I should like to express my delegation's sincere appreciation to Ms Karen AbuZayd, Commissioner General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East for presenting an insightful and comprehensive report on the work by the Agency during the period 1 July 2004 - 30 June 2005, as contained in document A/60/13. My delegation would also like to take this opportunity to commend the commitment and outstanding work of the staff members of the Agency in the service of the Palestinian refugees who have now increased to over 4 million in Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Mr Chairman,

India is deeply concerned at the on-going conflict in the Middle East. The violence that has beset the region since September 2000 has claimed several thousand Palestinian and Israeli lives, besides the physical or psychological scars not visible in conflicts that involve civilians as much as combatants. India has joined the international community in voicing its concern over the endless cycle of violence and counter-violence that has characterised the current phase of this conflict. India has maintained consistently that violence was a serious impediment to the peace process, and that the solution did not lie in more violence but in pursuing the path of political dialogue.

The economies of both Israel and the Palestinian Authority have suffered immeasurably as a result of the on-going conflict. Some of the grim details are contained in Paragraph 9 of document A/60/13. Palestine has been particularly hard hit. It continues to reel under what the World Bank has described as "one of the worst recessions in modern history". The widespread increase in poverty and unemployment, coupled with the decreasing revenues of the Palestinian Authority, has brought the economy to the verge of collapse.

The deteriorating humanitarian situation in the Occupied Territory has been further aggravated by the construction of the separation wall by Israel in the Territory, including in and around East Jerusalem. This remains a source of deep concern to the international community. As we have stated in the past, no one could have objections to the construction of the wall in areas coinciding with the green line. Its encroachment on Palestinian land and interests create great hardships for the people affected by its construction and exacerbates the situation. Besides, continued construction of the wall on Palestinian land threatens to prejudge the eventual outcome of the final status negotiations between the parties.

Mr Chairman,

The services provided by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) constitute a critical element in the context of the continuing spiral of violence in the Middle East. Since its inception over half-a-century ago, the Agency has played a key role in addressing the multifaceted tasks and humanitarian needs of the Palestinian refugees, and is today a symbol of the international community's commitment to the well being of the Palestinian refugees until a just and durable settlement of the refugees problem is achieved. As the largest UN programme in the Middle East, the Agency is a key instrument in providing education, health, relief and social services and other vital programmes to the most vulnerable segments of the Palestinian population, not only in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, but also in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria.

India has called for an easing of the restrictions placed on the Palestinian areas and an immediate amelioration of the on-going humanitarian crisis there. We have, in the past, manifested our support to the Palestinian people in their quest for nationhood through regular assistance and supply of medicines to the Palestinian Authority. We have also been a regular, albeit modest, contributor to the UNRWA budget and in 2004 have doubled our contribution to the Agency's regular budget.

An area of continuing concern is the restriction in freedom of movement of UNRWA staff members. Regrettably, the environment in which the Agency carries out its operations continues to hamper its ability to deliver services. Of equal concern is that these restrictions have had a serious impact on the ability of UNRWA to move staff and humanitarian assistance to those in urgent need. Closures and blockades need to be lifted and unhindered access allowed to humanitarian supplies. We salute the staff members of UNRWA for their untiring efforts to assist Palestinian refugees under difficult and often dangerous circumstances.

Mr Chairman,

UNRWA is the primary source of humanitarian relief assistance to Palestinian refugees. We believe that the Agency's activities constitute an important component in the struggle for the realisation of peace in the Middle East, and its continued operations in the region are crucial to address the mounting humanitarian crisis among the Palestinians. Under the circumstances, it is imperative that the international community remains firmly committed in carrying out its shared responsibility to assist and provide the vital support required by UNRWA to continue to effectively fulfil its mandate.

Mr. Chairman,

At this juncture, it is critical for the international community, in particular the Middle East Quartet to work closely with the parties with a view to encouraging them to fulfil their commitments and obligations. It must also be ensured that vested interests on both sides are not allowed to derail the process. India is confident that a just and comprehensive solution to the conflict is attainable and we call upon all sides to work together to achieve the vision of two States living side by side in secure and recognised borders, based on Security Council resolutions 242, 338, 1397 and 1515.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.

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