

Islamic Republic of I R A N

Permanent Mission to the United Nations

Statement by H.E. Dr. M. Javad Zarif
Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran
on the
"Question of Palestine"
Before the 60th Session of the United Nations General Assembly

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In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Mr. President,

At the very outset and on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, I would like to reiterate the solidarity of the Government and the people of the Islamic Republic of Iran with the Palestinian people and authorities in their brave struggle to defend their inalienable rights.

May I take this opportunity to express my delegation's appreciation to the Secretary General for his informative reports and to the Chairman and members of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for their tireless efforts to address the torment and onerous circumstances of the people of Palestine.

This year's report once again illustrates the uninterrupted and increased violation of the rights and aspiration of the Palestinian people by the Israeli regime, resulting in the deterioration of the situation to unprecedented and intolerable levels. As the report indicates, throughout the period under review the systematic pattern of human rights violations and massive breaches of international law and international humanitarian law by Israel continued unabated.

Mr. President

The continued unspeakable sufferings of the Palestinian people, including the rising number of deaths and injuries among civilians, the deepening humanitarian crisis and the widespread destruction of Palestinian property and infrastructure, are but the direct consequences of the unlawful and inhumane policies and practices of the Israeli regime in the occupied territories.

Over the past six decades, Palestinians have been subjected to persecution, punishment and deprivation simply because of their wish to exercise their legitimate and inalienable rights, especially the right to live in their homeland. Annexation of the occupied territories, construction of new settlements in the territories occupied in 1967, implementation of a policy of apartheid by segregating Palestinians of some residential areas from the others, construction of the separation wall, deportation of Palestinians to other countries, and many other transgressions that threaten

the lives of Palestinian men, women and children on a daily basis have been but a few examples of the prevailing Israeli inhumane policies and cruel measures throughout all these years of occupation and suppression. Sadly, the failure of the international community to address the Palestinian issue fairly and effectively has further exacerbated this condition.

Mr. President

We are commemorating the International Day of solidarity with the Palestinian people while, as the realities on the ground abundantly suggest, Israel continues to defy the will of the international community particularly the numerous United Nations resolutions and decisions. As noted in the reports of the Secretary General and the Committee, during the period under review and in defiance of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice and the unambiguous calls of the international community, the Israeli regime continued the construction of the illegal wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Moreover, the Israeli regime even announced its decision to accelerate plans for the completion of the wall. The direct and grave impact of this ongoing illegal practice on the efforts to restore the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and to seek a just and lasting solution for the Palestinian situation is indeed indisputable.

Furthermore, and as the report of the Committee illustrates, settlement construction and expansion in the West Bank has continued apace in the course of the past 12 months. New facts on the ground were also accompanied by alarming reports of plans for intensified construction in the West Bank settlements in contravention of international law. Besides, the Israeli regime's plan (the "E-1 plan") to enlarge settlements in the West Bank would be, if implemented, the largest expansion project ever witnessed and would involve the confiscation of an area larger than the Gaza Strip.

A disturbing fact regarding the Gaza disengagement has been pertinently spelled out in the letter of the representative of Palestine addressed to the Secretary General. This plan, despite Israel's massive propaganda campaign, has been implemented concurrently with the increase of settlement activities, acceleration of the construction of the illegal wall and the complete isolation of East Jerusalem from the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territories. We fully share the valid concern that the focus of the international community on Gaza withdrawal has been manipulated and exploited by the Israeli regime in order to complete its colonization and de facto annexation of huge areas of the West Bank. Moreover, Israel's illegal control on the borders of the Gaza Strip, including its territorial sea and airspace and the movement of people and goods into and out of Gaza, has turned the Gaza Strip into a vast open-air prison for the Palestinian people and has also hampered any meaningful economic development in the area.

Mr. President,

As indicated in the reports of the Secretary General and the Committee, in the course of the year, Israeli raids into Palestinian population centers, combined with extrajudicial killings, house demolitions and arrests continued unabated. The humanitarian situation of the Palestinian people remained grave, and standards of health and education continued to deteriorate. Close to 4,000 Palestinians have been killed and 40,000 wounded since the start of the intifada, while a total of 35,000 Palestinian arrests had been made by Israel since September 2000. The growing number of women and children, directly harmed by the violence or torture in Israeli prisons, has been

especially worrying. Over 4,000 Palestinian homes have been destroyed since the beginning of the current intifada.

Furthermore, the deliberate measures adopted and implemented by Israel to destroy the already fragile Palestinian economy have pushed the economy to the verge of collapse, Palestinian living conditions have declined dramatically and the health and nutritional status of the Palestinian population, particularly women and children, has worsened.

Mr. President,

It is long overdue for the international community to take meaningful measures to restore the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. The Charter of United Nations has bestowed an immense responsibility upon this world body to help find a fair and durable solution to this crisis, which constitutes the core of the Middle East conflict.

We believe that a durable peace in Palestine will be possible only through the full restoration of the rights of the Palestinian people including the return of all Palestinian refugees to their homeland and establishment of a Palestinian state with Al-Quds- Al- sharraf as its capital.

Mr. President,

The situation in the occupied Syrian Golan is also a matter of grave concern for the international community. It continues to be another source of tension in the region. The Israeli regime has thus far indicated that it is not intent on considering a withdrawal from the Golan. Rather, it has made repeated attempts to alter the demographic and legal character of the area by establishing new settlements and imposing its laws on Syrian citizens, in contravention of all relevant UN resolutions and principles of international law. Since the Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan in 1967, the international community has always reiterated its firm rejection of that occupation and repeatedly called for withdrawal of Israel from the entire Syrian Golan.

The international community's concern over this issue has been constantly reflected in various resolutions of the Security Council and the General assembly including the General Assembly resolution 59/33 which, inter alia, called Israel's decision to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration on the Syrian Golan as null and void. The Security Council in its resolution 497 (1981) had also called upon Israel to annul its decisions and actions on Syrian Golan.

Furthermore, Israel's threats and repeated aggressions against Lebanon have remained a major source of concern. The Lebanese people have already demonstrated their resolve to defend their homeland. We believe that stability and sovereignty of Lebanon are decisive for the maintenance of regional peace and security.

Mr. President,

The international community bears a heavy responsibility in addressing the Israeli regime's policy of threat and use of force against other members of the United Nations in contravention of the United Nations Charter and international law and its systematic and gross violations of basic human rights of the Palestinian people. Should we neglect to address this responsibility fairly and properly, the situation in this volatile region will continue to be bleak.

Thank you Mr. President,