



המשלחת הקבועה של ישראל לאומות המאוחדות

PERMANENT MISSION OF ISRAEL TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Statement by:

Mr. Ran Gidor

Israel's Representative to the Fourth Committee

Item 31:

Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories

60th United Nations General Assembly

United Nations, New York
8 November 2005

Please check against delivery

800 SECOND AVENUE 14TH FLOOR, NEW YORK, NY 10017 - TELEPHONE: 212.499.5510 - FACSIMILE: 212.499.5515

Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories

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Israel's Representative to the 4th Committee**

Mr. Chairman,

On 15th September, the Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, addressed the United Nations General Assembly with the following words:

"The right of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel does not mean disregarding the rights of others in the land. The Palestinians will always be our neighbours. We respect them, and have no aspirations to rule over them. They are also entitled to freedom and to a national, sovereign existence in a state of their own."

The Prime Minister continued:

"This week, the last Israeli soldier left the Gaza Strip, and military law there was ended. The State of Israel proved that it is ready to make painful concessions in order to resolve the conflict with the Palestinians. The decision to disengage was very difficult for me, and involved a heavy personal price. However, it is the absolute recognition that it is the right path for the future of Israel that guided me. Israeli society is undergoing a difficult crisis as a result of the disengagement, and now needs to heal the rifts".

Mr. Chairman,

Year after year the Special Committee submits resolutions, reports, statements and documents on the situation in the Middle-East, which are discussed at great length in the 4th Committee. And year after year we draw the attention of this committee to the waste and redundancy which some of our colleagues insist on imposing on the UN's woefully overtaxed budget. It is an incontestable fact, that all these hours, days and weeks of futile rhetoric have no bearing whatsoever on the well-being of the Palestinian population in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. The only effect of this absurd, indeed – shameful, waste of resources, is to further undermine the credibility of the United Nations as a relevant, serious and balanced player in the global arena. Moreover, it reinforces those voices (not only in Israel) who advocate the marginalizing of the UN, in order to leave the real and complex business of peace negotiations to others.

It is not just a question of a proper use of resources. Let me make my delegation's position clear: even if the resolutions were costless, we would still oppose their one-sided and contentious mandate. The very name of the Special Committee establishes, a priori, the conclusions of its purported 'investigation'. Moreover, the fact that only about 45% of this body's membership votes to renew the committee's mandate, attests to the international community's view of it's work.

While the Special Committee 'investigates', while my esteemed colleagues deliberate endlessly in New-York and Geneva, while the observers are busy 'observing', it is others who are actively pursuing measures on the ground in order to improve the situation of the Palestinian population.

Mr. Chairman,

Since the Special Committee is manifestly interested in exploring Israeli practices affecting the human rights of the Palestinian People, let me avail myself of this opportunity in order to describe some of those recent 'practices' (all of which, incidentally, have been confirmed by various international organizations):

- Between 14th August and mid-September, Israel has withdrawn its military forces from the Gaza Strip and large parts of the Samaria. In fact, the area evacuated in the West Bank exceeds in size that of the entire Gaza Strip.
- During that same period, Israel has dismantled and evacuated twenty-four Jewish communities with a population exceeding 8,000 people, from the areas mentioned before.
- Improvements to the Karni border crossing between Gaza and Israel resulted in smoother and quicker exportation of Palestinian products into Israel, which – in turn – helped reduce the level of unemployment in Gaza by 8.5 percent during the second quarter of 2005 (compared to the identical period the previous year). It has to be stressed that those improvements were undertaken by Israel, notwithstanding acts of terrorism directed specifically against the personnel of the Israeli-Palestinian border terminals, the very people whose job it is to facilitate the movement of Palestinian citizens and goods.
- During the past year Israel has removed almost 40 percent of the road-blocks and checkpoints, and brought the total number from 600 down to around 370. That was possible due to a decrease in terrorism inside Israel, which had resulted mainly from the construction of the security barrier. The removal of those checkpoints facilitated the movement of persons and goods, and contributed to the reduction of

unemployment in the West Bank by 4 percent from the first - to the second quarter of 2005.

It is important to reiterate, that all the data provided here has been confirmed and approved by various international agencies such as OCHA and ILO. And that brings me to another point. Israel wishes to make clear that it is open - as a democratic state - to discussion of the human rights situation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In any given year, the region is examined by foreign government agencies - such as the US Department of State; by the European Union; by UN bodies and Special Rapporteurs; and reputable NGO's of international stature such as Amnesty International.

Distinguished colleagues, you are therefore asked to consider: Do we really need yet another body to rehash the work that is already being done by others? And can we really accept the work of the Special Committee when its outcome has been dictated by its mandate?

The answer is, of course, that we must not sanction such a body. That is precisely why a majority of states do not vote in favour of the resolution. Nevertheless, the resolution has passed as a matter of course year after year.

In this context it would be appropriate to repeat the budgetary consideration already raised by us in the past. During 2004, the United Nations spent \$ 2,925,400 on the operation of the Special Committee and the Palestinian Division within the Department for Political Affairs. When taking into account the regular UN budget for the biennium 2004-2005, together with money received from various extra budgetary sources, it emerges that the 3 million Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza receive an average annual per capita support of \$345, compared with refugees elsewhere in the world, who make do with a per capita allotment of meagre \$118. In Sudan, for example, where 2 million people have perished during the last decade and 6 million were forced to leave their homes, external aid is only 18.5 dollars per capita.

And in all those other states where the "human rights situation" is examined - it goes without saying that all violations by all relevant parties are equally and objectively investigated. Why is it then that this Committee is called upon to authorize a mandate of "investigation" of one side only? Surely no one in this chamber contends that the Palestinian Authority is innocent of its numerous human rights violations as documented repeatedly by the international community and responsible NGOs.

However, the imbalance does not stop with the Special Committee. Let us not forget the existence of two other absurd bodies: the Division for Palestinian Rights, the only division within the DPA that is devoted to one people, and the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable rights of the Palestinian People. All three bodies invariably serve as anti-Israel propaganda apparatuses, countering the principles of the Charter and the objective of a more effective United Nations that abides by high standards of integrity, efficiency and prioritized allocation of resources.

Mr. Chairman,

Israel has demonstrated the seriousness of its commitment to peace. Now it is the Palestinians' turn. The termination of Israeli control over the Gaza strip enables the Palestinian Authority to assume responsibility for its citizens' well-being. Surely now is the time to develop its economy, invest in education and create a free and peace-seeking society, based on democratic institutions. The ultimate test for the Palestinian leadership consists of the fulfillment of its obligation to put an end to terrorism. It is also committed to cease the culture of incitement and indoctrination of hatred towards Israel. Will the Palestinians finally rise up to the challenge? Will they take their destiny into their own hands and utilize their talents and energies in order to improve it? - Or will they persist in evading their responsibilities and putting all their problems on Israel's doorstep till the end of time.

Mr. Chairman,

Our committee will soon conclude its deliberations. At this point, we would like to remind the distinguished delegates of the words of paragraph 161(f) of the Outcome Document of the High-Level Plenary Meeting (A/59/L.70) of 13th September 2005:

"We strongly urge the Secretary-General to make the best and most efficient use of resources in accordance with clear rules and procedures agreed by the General Assembly, in the interest of all Member States, by adopting the best management practices, including effective use of information and communication technologies, with a view to increase efficiency and enhance organizational capacity, concentrating on those tasks that reflect the agreed priorities of the Organization".

Many of my distinguished colleagues in this Chamber will agree, that the work of the Special Committee does not serve in any conceivable manner the agenda or agreed priorities of the United Nations as a member of the Quartet, cosponsoring the Road Map process to end terror and violence and renew dialogue in the Middle

East. We must not shy away from putting an end to this futile waste of UN resources.

We started with one excerpt from our Prime Minister's speech to the General Assembly, and we will end with another. Mr. Ariel Sharon said the following words on 15th September:

"I, as someone whose path of life led him to be a fighter and commander in all Israel's wars, reaches out today to our Palestinian neighbours in a call for reconciliation and compromise to end the bloody conflict, and embark on the path which leads to peace and understanding between our peoples. I view this as my calling and my primary mission for the coming years".

Mr. Chairman,

Israel believes that the work of the Special Committee is utterly divorced from reality. On the ground there is currently a sense of cautious optimism, of opportunity, of a fresh momentum, and of new initiatives that may hopefully serve to regenerate the peace process. In the texts before us, however, we face a biased and anachronistic picture of the situation in the region, where the rights of only one side are acknowledged. There is no correlation between these two visions. We therefore urge the Palestinian Authority to stop wasting its efforts on futile diplomatic maneuvers and concentrate on the only possible means of avoiding a paralytic stalemate, namely: the dismantling of the terrorist infrastructure, coupled with direct, sincere and peaceful negotiations with Israel. We call upon the international community to take real, constructive measures in order to assist and support the Israeli and Palestinian peoples in their attempt to end their decades-long bloody conflict. Unfortunately, the work of the Special Committee does not constitute such a measure.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.