

# ISRAEL

Statement by:

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**Israel's Representative to the Third Committee**

Right of Reply; Agenda Item 71, Human Rights Questions

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Mr. Chairman,

As I listened to the statement by my Palestinian colleague, I realized to my great regret that I was hearing the same recording that I have heard so many times in the past. Unlike the situation in Israel and the Palestinian territories, which has dramatically changed since the beginning of the 1990's and especially during the past year, my colleague's statement employed the same rhetoric, oversights, factual inaccuracies, and crude generalizations.

Mr. Chairman,

What is of particular concern to us is the lack of assumption of any responsibility by the Palestinian Authority, as reflected in the statement. It failed to address any commitment to the internationally endorsed Road Map and the obligations made to it. It failed to mention the largest obstacle to peace—terrorism—as though terrorism has never existed.

The Palestinian statement referred to the Special Rapporteur's Report. Yet let us all remember, as the Special Rapporteur has himself admitted, he has no mandate for addressing violations of human rights on the Palestinian side. Yet the Palestinians speak in these halls, festively, as though they have committed no violations at all.

Mr. Chairman,

Although the Palestinian delegates may want you to believe otherwise, the situation has changed over the past few years. Despite violence and despair during the *intifada*, there was a peace process prior to it, during which the two sides signed international agreements and the Palestinian Authority was created. Less than a year ago, new hope was created when Prime Minister Sharon and Chairman Mahmoud Abbas met in Sharm el Shiek and both expressed a commitment to a peaceful settlement according to the Road Map. This past summer, Prime Minister Sharon took a bold and courageous move by disengaging all troops and civilians from all of the Gaza Strip and parts of the northern West Bank. Furthermore, constructive negotiations are currently taking place over transferring control of the Rafah border crossing between Gaza and Egypt.

What has not changed, however, is the Palestinian Authority's willingness to confront terrorism and fulfill its first obligation in the Road Map – to dismantle the terrorist infrastructure and collect arms. Palestinian terrorists continue to kill Israeli civilians and fire Qassam rockets onto Israeli towns and cities. There have been more than 26,000 terrorist attacks perpetrated against Israeli targets during the past five years. There should be no doubt about the impetus for these attacks. They were carried out with the sole intention to murder, targeting as many children, women, and men as possible.

Mr. Chairman,

The greatest desire of Israel and its people is peace. We have proven this in the past with Egypt, Jordan, and when we withdrew from Lebanon. Now, the Gaza disengagement has

created a window of opportunity for both peoples. Israel hopes that the Palestinians will utilize the current momentum and take control of the situation in Gaza, reject violence, and prevent terror. Such action, we hope, will create the conditions and climate necessary for moving forward in the direction of cooperation and peace.

Mr. Chairman,

Neither side has a monopoly on suffering, nor can either side fail to assume their commitments. I invite my Palestinian colleagues to discontinue unhelpful rhetoric and utilize the current momentum for peace.