

Check against delivery

**Statement to the Security Council by Ambassador Cheikh Niang,
Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of
the Palestinian People, on the situation in the Middle East, including
the Palestinian question.**

New York, 29 April 2019

Mr. President,

I would like, at the outset, to congratulate Germany and France on their joint presidency of the Security Council.

Mr. President,

Last January, we urged the Security Council to take action and make progress on the road to achieving the two-State solution and the full realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. This call has now become a matter of utmost urgency, as we face the expressed intention by Israel to make the occupation irreversible and annex parts of the West Bank territory.

Extending Israeli laws and sovereignty on settlements in the West Bank is a flagrant violation of international law, and if carried through, it would thwart chances to reach a peaceful solution.

These declarations must be met by condemnation by the international community and require urgent action in line with international law and the relevant UN resolutions and the international community's long-unfulfilled responsibilities towards the Palestine question.

If these worrying trends are left unchallenged, they will contribute to the entrenchment of the occupation, eroding the commitment to a

two-State solution, with two peoples living side by side in peace and security along the pre-1967 borders and with a sovereign and independent State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The Committee was encouraged to hear, during its various activities and most recently in its meetings with European Union and Belgian officials and parliamentarians during the Committee Delegation visit to Brussels last March, that the solution based on these long-standing parameters continues to enjoy the overwhelming support of the international community.

Mr. President,

Recently, steps have been taken to undermine the permanent settlement of the conflict, by unilaterally dismantling the agreed upon building blocks of the final status issues: among others, settlement construction, the right of return of Palestine refugees and the status of Jerusalem.

Moreover, the obligation under international humanitarian law to protect the Palestinian population is also being disregarded by the occupying Power, including in Gaza.

Regrettably, on 29 January, the mandate of the Temporary International Presence in Hebron (TIPH) was not renewed, and the international monitors left the city, removing an essential element of protection for the local population.

Mr. President,

Israeli settlement planning and construction, demolitions and confiscation of Palestinians property, including in East-Jerusalem, increasingly accompanied by settler-related violence, are continuing unabated and are illegal and in violation - *inter alia* - of resolution 2334 (2016). As reported by the Secretary-General in his latest written report of 20 March, the advancement, approval or tender of more than 3,000 units in the occupied West Bank is the largest batch since May 2018. The Committee welcomes the written reports by the Secretary-General on the implementation of the resolution and looks forward to future reports in this format.

As highlighted by experts at the UN Forum on the Question of Palestine, organized by the Committee on 4 April, third States must uphold their obligations under international law. Paragraph 5 of resolution 2334 (2016), calls Member States to apply the “principle of differentiation” in all their relevant dealings, between the territory of the State of Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory. Regrettably, some private companies continue to disregard such provisions.

It is only by respecting international law that we can ensure accountability and bring 52 years of illegal occupation to an end.

Mr. President,

The Committee welcomes the final report of the independent Commission of Inquiry established by the Human Rights Council to investigate the demonstrations held between 30 March and 31 December 2018, to identify those responsible for violations of international human rights and international humanitarian law.

We call on Member States to implement the Commission's recommendations to promote compliance with human rights obligations and to ensure respect for international humanitarian law in the occupied Palestinian territory, including an investigation into possible war crimes and, if appropriate, the prosecution of suspected perpetrators of international crimes.

Meanwhile, the situation in Gaza remains volatile and demonstrations at the fence with Israel are ongoing. On March 30, on the first anniversary of the Great March of return, 50,000 protestors gathered. Four Palestinians were killed and 207 injured on that day alone.

An economy captive and dependent on Israel, de-development, and high levels of unemployment among frustrated youth, especially in Gaza, where an environmental disaster is looming, may be the elements of a foretold disaster. The Committee reiterates its call on Israel to lift

the 12 years illegal blockade which is creating dire humanitarian conditions in the strip.

In the meantime, the Committee reiterates its call for the continuation of the funding of UNRWA so that it can reliably and predictably continue to deliver the crucial services in health, education, protection and social services until the time when the right of return of Palestine refugees is addressed in final negotiations.

Mr. President,

Turning on to the newly formed government of the State of Palestine, the Committee hopes that this will constitute a step toward reconciliation among all political players, to safeguard the interests of the Palestinian people and advance the realization of their legitimate national aspirations.

In closing, the Committee would like to call on all members of this Council, including the staunch supporters of the rights of Palestinian people, also represented around this table, to take bold initiatives and move closer to the establishment of a sovereign and independent Palestinian State— based on its territorial contiguity - the only recipe for a peaceful, stable and just solution of the Palestinian question.

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