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Statement to the International Conference on the Question of Palestine**

Submitted by the London Friends of Palestine, a non-governmental organization accredited to the International Conference on the Question of Palestine.

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LONDON FRIENDS OF PALESTINE

President, delegates, I am very glad and grateful for the opportunity of addressing you.

I am greatly concerned that at the end of this Conference we may have achieved a first class statement of principle about the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people but that we will still be lacking immediate strategies to sustain the Palestinians on their land.

Mr. McCluskey suggested that we should work on American public opinion. And he is right. Support groups such as ours spend a great deal of effort in this regard and will continue to do so - and I hope that our efforts will be coordinated as a result of this Conference. But this remains a long term achievement as does the hope that Israeli public opinion will eventually change Israeli policy.

Another suggestion is for an International Conference headed by the two super powers. It is indeed vital that the USA gets involved in direct negotiation with the PLO and faces up to the realities. But this also, unfortunately entails further period of time which the Palestinians under occupation and refugee camps and within Israel itself can ill afford.

How many more massacres will there be before a real peace process commences? How much more land will be seized? How many more families will lose their livelihood and be forced into economic subjugation or into emigrating? How many more settlements will be erected as an irreversible fact of colonisation in the West Bank and Gaza and even in Galilee? What will be left to hand back to the Palestinians on that glorious day of independence?

We would like to suggest that an immediate effort be made that will help the Palestinians to remain on the land while final solutions are discussed. It is essential that a sound economic base is maintained for the Palestinians' day of glory.

I am sure you know of all the economic discrimination and apartheid restrictions placed on Palestinian producers. The inability to dig deeper or new wells for irrigation, the refusal to grant licenses to replant new fruit trees to replace old unproductive ones, the impossible obstacles placed on Palestinian producers against obtaining export licenses (the alternative being that they must sell to Israeli middlemen who will discriminate against Palestinian produce).

We think it is possible to counter these measures. It would take effort on the part of foreign importers and a large degree of bravery on the part of the Palestinian producer to withstand all the pressures and threats from the Israelis. It would be helped greatly if governments would support, indeed instruct, their importers to proceed in the way I will now describe. Short of total economic boycott of Israeli produce which would never get past the Security Council, we suggest that those countries who insist on maintaining trade links with Israel should use their trading relationships to call for EQUAL and DIRECT access to Palestinian producers. This could be imposed as

a condition for buying Israeli products.

Are countries here present as participants and observers really sincere about the issue of human rights for the Palestinians? How many here represent countries who trade with Israel? Then this is not an unachievable position. It is an interim measure which is designed to sustain the Palestinians while further discussions continue.

If the Israelis refuse the request for EQUAL ACCESS then it will be further evidence against them which can be used in the opinion changing process. The favoured status granted to Israel as a trading partner is vital to its economy. The revision or reform of its apartheid policies can be attained by trade pressures, and must be. This action can be undertaken unilaterally by any nation or economic grouping without the risk of Security Council veto. We would urge your governments to respond.

LONDON FRIENDS OF PALESTINE