



# General Assembly

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## Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

### Summary record of the 399th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 4 February 2020, at 3 p.m.

*Temporary Chair:* Mr. Guterres . . . . . (Secretary-General of the United Nations)

*Chair:* Mr. Niang . . . . . (Senegal)

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*The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.*

#### **Adoption of the agenda (A/AC/183/2020/L.1)**

1. *The agenda was adopted.*

#### **Election of officers**

2. **The Temporary Chair** invited the Committee to consider nominations for the posts of Chair, Vice-Chairs and Rapporteur of the Committee.

3. The following nominations had been received by the secretariat of the Committee: Mr. Niang (Senegal) for re-election to the office of Chair; and Ms. Raz (Afghanistan), Ms. Rodríguez Abascal (Cuba), Mr. Djani (Indonesia), Mr. Gertze (Namibia) and Mr. Hermida Castillo (Nicaragua) for re-election, as the five Vice-Chairs. Ms. Raz had agreed also to serve as the acting Rapporteur until another Committee member was nominated for the post.

4. *Mr. Djani (Indonesia), Mr. Gertze (Namibia), Mr. Hermida Castillo (Nicaragua), Mr. Niang (Senegal), Ms. Raz (Afghanistan) and Ms. Rodríguez Abascal (Cuba) were elected by acclamation.*

5. *Mr. Niang (Senegal) took the Chair.*

#### **Statement by the Secretary-General**

6. **Mr. Guterres** (Secretary-General) said that in December 2019 the General Assembly had adopted all the resolutions on the question of Palestine recommended by the Committee, including the one on its mandate. That was a reaffirmation of how the Committee's work was firmly rooted in the Charter of the United Nations and international law. He commended the Committee for its unwavering dedication to the fulfilment of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including to self-determination and independence.

7. The position of the United Nations of the two-State solution had been defined, throughout the years, by relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions by which the Secretariat was bound. The United Nations remained committed to supporting Palestinians and Israelis to resolve the conflict on the basis of United Nations resolutions, international law and bilateral agreements, and by realizing the vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security, within recognized borders on the basis of the pre-1967 lines.

8. Resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remained key to sustainable peace in the Middle East. The persistence of the conflict reverberated far beyond

Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory and continued to further radicalization across the region. That was why the United Nations had repeatedly been raising alerts about actions that would erode the possibility of a viable and contiguous Palestinian State based on the two-State solution and that were contrary to international law and United Nations resolutions. That included the expansion and acceleration of illegal settlement activities in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, as well as ongoing demolitions and seizures of Palestinian-owned property and evictions.

9. The United Nations had also repeatedly stated that Jerusalem remained a final status issue, and the city's future could only be resolved on the basis of international law and through negotiations between the parties. Meanwhile, the human suffering that persisted throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory must never be forgotten, including the plight of the 2 million Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip, who continued to live under dire socioeconomic conditions.

10. Projects implemented by United Nations agencies and other donors were bringing a measure of relief, but far more needed to be done. On its own, no amount of humanitarian or economic support would resolve either the situation in Gaza or the broader conflict. Gaza ultimately also required a political solution. The restrictions on the movement of goods and people to and from Gaza must also be eased, with the goal of ultimately lifting them.

11. It was critical for the Egyptian-led intra-Palestinian reconciliation efforts to continue. He called on Palestinian leaders to engage constructively with Egypt and others to advance intra-Palestinian reconciliation, as well as on Member States to ensure reliable funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) so that it could fully continue its vital work on behalf of Palestinian refugees.

12. The holding of long overdue general elections in the State of Palestine, including East Jerusalem, would be a crucial step towards giving renewed legitimacy to national institutions and reuniting the Palestinian people under a single, legitimate and democratic Palestinian national Government. As the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process had recently said to the Security Council, it was to be hoped that the President of the State of Palestine would very soon issue the decree scheduling legislative and presidential elections and that Israel would also allow voting in East Jerusalem.

13. In marking the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, a renewed commitment was needed to uphold the values of its Charter as the shared framework of cooperation to realize the rights of future generations of Israelis and Palestinians. He and the United Nations were fully committed to a just and comprehensive peace between Palestinians and Israelis based on United Nations resolutions, international law and the two-State solution.

#### **Statement by the Chair**

14. **The Chair** said that, while the parameters of a definitive solution to the Israeli-Palestinian dispute had been clearly identified and were known to all actors, the political horizon had never been so uncertain. Seventy-one years after the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 181 (II) and 25 years after the signing of the Oslo Accords, which were supposed to lead to the independence of the Palestinian people, the reality on the ground remained volatile and increasingly gave the impression that a single State was coming into being. In that context, a definitive solution was required to address the challenges that extended beyond the Middle East, including terrorism, violent extremism, poverty and exclusion.

15. The Committee, which was firmly committed to achieving a peaceful solution to the question of Palestine, condemned all forms of violence and incitement to hatred, regardless of the perpetrators or their motives. Despite the adoption of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), illegal settlement activity was continuing in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. The best way to reach sustainable peace and security was for the parties to renounce all forms of violence and fait accompli policies and to return to the negotiating table, with a view to attaining a comprehensive solution that assigned to each party the right to a sovereign State. The status quo should be maintained in Jerusalem pending the resolution of all final status issues in accordance with United Nations resolutions. Although the United Nations and Egypt had worked since 2014 to maintain the Gaza ceasefire in place, the risk of a fourth outbreak of hostilities continued to loom, and an upsurge of violence in March 2019 had caused a high number of casualties, including children. The UNRWA funding crisis had also had a negative impact, and he urged Member States to support that Agency so that it could continue to implement its mandate.

16. It was time to harness international engagement in support of the two-State solution as the only viable option to ensure security, peace, independence and sovereignty for Israelis and Palestinians. The peace

process should be relaunched in the spirit of multilateralism on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions, with the issues of settlements, the status of Jerusalem, refugees, security and Gaza squarely on the table. He called on the Quartet, the Security Council and influential States of the region to work towards that end through existing platforms, such as the Quartet road map, the Madrid terms of reference, including the principle of land for peace, the Oslo Accords and the Arab Peace Initiative, with a view to the creation of a sovereign, independent and viable State of Palestine within internationally recognized and guaranteed borders, living side by side with the State of Israel in peace and security.

#### **Statement by the Observer for the State of Palestine**

17. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for the State of Palestine), thanking the Committee for the work it had undertaken in advancing the cause of the Palestinian people, said that he had been pleased to hear the Secretary-General reiterate his position in support of a two-State solution on the basis of the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and an end to the occupation in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions.

18. The State of Palestine had made efforts to confront the political aggression by the Government of the United States against the national rights of the Palestinian people following the decision of the United States to move its embassy to Jerusalem, in clear violation of international law and Security Council resolutions, and the recent announcement of the proposed United States plan for Israel and Palestine. The plan, which failed to refer to the State of Palestine as a sovereign State, proposed that the return of Palestinian refugees be subject to the approval of Israel, that Jerusalem be unified under the sovereign control of Israel and that changes be made to the historic status quo at Haram al-Sharif. In response to the plan, which rather than a peace plan was a plan against peace, the State of Palestine had been working with the expanded Palestinian leadership to solidify national unity. There were also plans to dispatch a high-level Palestine Liberation Organization delegation to the Gaza Strip to decide on a strategy to confront the political aggression against the national rights of the Palestinian people.

19. At a recent meeting of the League of Arab States, ministers had rejected the plan proposed by the United States, which they believed would perpetuate the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by giving Israel licence to annex at least 30 per cent of the occupied West Bank, as well as all settlements, including in East Jerusalem, among other actions. During the meeting, ministers had

unanimously approved a proposal on the issue submitted by the Palestinian delegation, and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) had adopted a similar position against the plan at a recent ministerial meeting. There were plans for President Mahmoud Abbas to address the Security Council in New York, where the delegation of the State of Palestine would seek the broadest possible support for a draft resolution on the question of Palestine. It was a collective responsibility to defend multilateralism, justice and international law and to ensure that those who deviated from global consensus reversed their course.

20. **The Chair**, welcoming Mr. Cuéllar Suárez (Plurinational State of Bolivia), Mr. Vongnorkeo (Lao People's Democratic Republic), Mr. Elsonni (Libya) and Ms. Frazier (Malta), who had recently taken up their positions at Headquarters, said that he had received a letter from the President of the General Assembly (A/74/671) relaying the decision by the Government of Ukraine to cease its membership of the Committee, effective on 1 January 2020.

21. He took it that the Committee wished to take note of the decision of the Government of Ukraine.

22. *It was so decided.*

#### **Adoption of the programme of work for 2020** (A/AC/183/2020/L.2)

23. **The Chair**, introducing the Committee's streamlined draft programme of work for 2020 (A/AC.183/2020/L.2), said that section I of the document gave an overview of the mandates of the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights, as set out in General Assembly resolutions 74/10 and 74/12 respectively; section II reviewed the activities of the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights; and section III dealt with the continuing review and assessment of the programme of work.

24. He took it that the Committee wished to adopt the draft programme of work.

25. *It was so decided.*

#### **Consideration of concepts for upcoming annual conferences and activities**

26. **The Chair** said that the Committee would organize an international conference in Kuala Lumpur on 28 and 29 February 2020 under the theme "Southeast Asian support for the rights of the Palestinian people". The conference would bring together stakeholders to help foster the promotion of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and raise awareness of the policies and processes that were under way to support the

Palestinian cause. On 2 and 3 March 2020, a delegation from the Committee would visit India to work on how to move towards a peaceful solution to the question of Palestine and to improve coordination in capacity-building projects for the State of Palestine, in particular in the context of South-South and triangular cooperation.

#### **Recent and upcoming Committee activities**

27. **The Chair** said that General Assembly resolution 74/11 on a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine had been adopted by an overwhelming majority of Member States in December 2019, which demonstrated that such resolutions were firmly rooted in the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and international law and confirmed the importance of the work undertaken by the Committee to support the Palestinian cause. On 21 January 2020, during an open debate by the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East, including the question of Palestine, the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan and Vice-Chair of the Committee had made a statement on behalf of the Committee requesting that urgent measures be taken to address the issue of Palestine.

28. The Division for Palestinian Rights would be holding its annual information meeting for delegates on 14 February 2020, focusing on the mandate and work of the Committee, and the Committee would organize a forum on the question of Palestine in the current context of geopolitical instability on 2 April 2020. A closed meeting would also be held on strategic communication on Palestine for civil servants and media professionals.

#### **Update by members and observers of the Committee on their activities in relation to the question of Palestine**

29. **Ms. Raz** (Afghanistan) said that over the past year her country had worked within the Committee to raise awareness of the urgent need to bring an end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Afghanistan had defended and advocated for the inalienable rights of Palestine to self-determination in several forums and platforms, including during a recent emergency meeting of OIC, held in September 2019. At the Extraordinary Session of the Islamic Summit Conference, held in May 2019, the President of Afghanistan had stressed that the failure to address the plea of the Palestinian people had denied several generations in the Middle East the opportunity to live in stability and prosperity.

30. As a country that had witnessed conflict and destruction first-hand, Afghanistan understood the importance of cooperation and solidarity in the midst of

crises. As a gesture of the strong bond that united the people of Afghanistan and Palestine, her Government had contributed close to Af 78 million to the budget of UNRWA, which served as both a monetary contribution and a message that the people of Afghanistan would continue to support Palestinians in efforts to bring peace, security and prosperity to Palestine and to the entire Middle East.

31. **Mr. Aidid** (Malaysia) said that his country would continue to support concrete and honest efforts to find a just and lasting solution to the Palestinian question on the basis of international law and relevant United Nations resolutions, and through negotiations involving the parties concerned. In that regard, Malaysia would host an international conference in Kuala Lumpur in February 2020 under the theme of “Southeast Asian support for the rights of the Palestinian people”. Malaysia would also host the third conference of the League of Parliamentarians for Al-Quds in February 2020, under the theme “Towards an effective strategy to end the occupation”.

32. **Mr. Djani** (Indonesia) said that the role of the Committee was more relevant and pressing than ever given the current developments following the announcement of the plan for Palestine and Israel of the Government of the United States. The situation on the ground required a redoubling of efforts to advance the cause of the Palestinian people. In that regard, the Committee needed to affirm its rejection of the plan of the United States, which failed to meet the minimum rights and aspirations of the Palestinian people in accordance with United Nations resolutions. The Committee should also continue to strengthen its engagement with other countries and its cooperation with the United Nations to ensure that the aspirations of Palestinians were taken into account and that Palestinian refugees received continued humanitarian assistance. It was necessary to anticipate the negative repercussions of the plan of the United States for the people on the ground, maintaining a spotlight on the issue and ensuring the continued attention of the international community. The Committee should reach out and share its stance with a wider audience, including universities, think tanks and social media influencers in order to advance the cause of the Palestinian people.

33. **Ms. Mudallali** (Lebanon) said that, given the new threat posed by the proposed plan of the United States for Israel and Palestine, it was necessary to step up efforts to ensure that the Palestinian people enjoyed their right to build a viable and independent State. To defend the people of Palestine and their inalienable rights was to defend human rights and legitimacy, and it was therefore an issue that concerned all countries. On

the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, it was necessary to renew solidarity with the Palestinian people in line with the Charter of the United Nations, which reaffirmed the importance of justice and respect for the obligations arising from different sources of international law.

34. It was also necessary to strengthen the role and responsibilities of the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights at a time when some countries had questioned the role of those bodies, including at the General Assembly. However, the occupation continued and violations had been documented, and it was the role of the Committee to study the abuse committed by Israel. It was therefore essential to reaffirm the aims and objectives of the Committee, to strengthen the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, in particular the right to self-determination, to bring an end to the Israeli occupation and to promote a two-State solution.

35. With regard to the recent developments stemming from the announcement of the proposed plan of the United States, Lebanon continued to support the Palestinian people and reiterated their right to build an independent State with Jerusalem as its capital and for Palestinian refugees to return to their homeland. Negotiations needed to take place within accepted parameters and in accordance with international law, and any attempt to achieve partial peace would not lead to the creation of a Palestinian State.

36. **Mr. Gertze** (Namibia) said that, despite the challenges recently faced by the Committee, it was encouraging to witness the support given to the Committee through the renewal of its mandates by the General Assembly, as well as the concern expressed by many Member States with regard to the flagrant violations of international law and United Nations resolutions, and the increasing and unabated attacks against multilateralism. The seeming inability to effectively confront violators of United Nations decisions and resolutions and to strongly defend multilateralism made Member States vulnerable to possible accusations of being accomplices in the crime of undermining the principles and obligations of the Charter.

37. The Committee had been entrusted with the responsibility to assist the peoples of Israel and Palestine in resolving their differences. However, despite the adoption of resolutions and decisions aimed at enabling the Committee to promote the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, to assist in ending the Israeli occupation and to mobilize international support for and assistance to the Palestinian people, there was no end in sight to the

conflict and injustices committed. Despite the condemnations directed against the Government of Israel and its supporters for the unilateral actions it had committed, the rights of the Palestinian people continued to be diminished and Member States were being rendered powerless to stand up for justice.

38. The Committee had a collective duty and moral responsibility to guard against further violations of international law and United Nations resolutions and to ensure that both parties met their commitments towards a peaceful and just resolution to the conflict. The recent developments, which appeared to have deepened the divide between the two parties and risked further setting back prospects for a two-State solution, were a matter of grave concern.

39. Namibia had been through the yoke of colonialism and had confronted many of the challenges experienced by the State of Palestine, including the illegal expansion of settlements, the destruction and confiscation of property, illegal and administrative detentions, inhuman treatment and conditions, unemployment, poverty and food insecurity. Those challenges reinforced the need for the ongoing presence of UNRWA and other human rights organizations. His delegation therefore welcomed the renewal of the mandate of the Agency by the General Assembly, as well as the concerted efforts by the Agency and its partners to ensure that vital services were provided to the more than 5 million vulnerable Palestinian refugees. His delegation recognized the importance of the priority issues set out in the Committee's programme of work and welcomed its continued engagement to support the people of Palestine. The world needed stronger multilateral cooperation in order to support sustained peace.

40. **Mr. Mehdiyev** (Observer for the Organization of Islamic Cooperation) said that his delegation was confident that the Palestinian people, with support from around the world, would overthrow any attempt to undermine their legitimate rights and achieve those rights in accordance with international law. OIC rejected any attempt to undermine the rights of the Palestinian people and reaffirmed that international law, United Nations resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative were the only terms of reference for the resolution of the conflict, which required the establishment of a Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, the return of Palestinian refugees and an end to the Israeli occupation, in accordance with relevant General Assembly resolutions.

41. The Executive Committee of OIC had rejected the plan proposed by the United States for Israel and Palestine because it undermined peace and the

international parameters agreed upon; violated the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people; undermined the rules of international law, including the inadmissibility of annexing land by force; strengthened the occupation; undermined international peace and security; failed to meet the minimum requirements for the rights and aspirations of the Palestinian people; and ran counter to the peace process.

42. OIC had conducted a number of activities in support of Palestine since the beginning of 2020, including a meeting held on 8 January to provide an update on a plan to support vital sectors in Jerusalem such as education, housing, health and youth. It would also be holding an international conference on the situation in Jerusalem.

43. **Mr. Edrees** (Egypt) said that, as part of its efforts to support the Palestinian people and pursue the question of Palestine bilaterally and in other forums, his country had taken part in deliberations held in Cairo to strengthen coordination between the two States. Egypt continued to endorse the common position held by the League of Arab States and reaffirmed its commitment to a just and lasting solution to the Palestinian cause on the basis of a two-State solution along their pre-1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the parameters of the Arab Peace Initiative and Security Council resolutions. The upcoming Arab Summit Conference, during which the Prime Minister of Egypt would address the conference to reaffirm the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, would provide an opportunity to renew African support for the Palestinian cause and the rights of the Palestinian people.

44. **Mr. Baati** (Tunisia) said that the people of Palestine were under threat from the continued unilateral occupation and expansionist settlement policy of Israel. His delegation reiterated its unfailing support for the Palestinian people and would continue to assist them in promoting their rights to self-determination and to an independent State. Ensuring the rights of the Palestinian people was the only way to ensure peace in the region, and any initiative needed to be based on a two-State solution in accordance with internationally agreed parameters, United Nations resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative. A failure to deal with the question of Palestine in the context of international law would only exacerbate tensions in the Middle East and worldwide. As a non-permanent member of the Security Council, Tunisia would continue to support the Palestinian people by promoting multilateral actions to defend lasting peace and safeguard the legitimacy of an independent and sovereign State of Palestine,

established within the pre-1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital.

45. **Mr. Zambrana Torrelío** (Plurinational State of Bolivia) said that the humanitarian, socioeconomic and human rights situation in the world had deteriorated as a result of the systematic occupation by Israel of Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. The Government of Israel should therefore bring an end to the occupation in compliance with relevant United Nations resolutions. Any attempt to change the historic, demographic and multicultural nature of Jerusalem and control the area would ignore the global position calling for a two-State solution, which was viewed by most Member States as the best possible path towards peace, as reflected in General Assembly and Security Council resolutions.

46. Firmly committed to international efforts aimed at bringing an end to Israeli occupation through peaceful means, the Plurinational State of Bolivia had expressed its full support for the performance-based road map to a permanent two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Madrid terms of reference and the Arab Peace Initiative. It also reaffirmed its support for a two-State solution that would allow for a free, sovereign and independent Palestinian State, within the pre-1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital.

47. **Mr. Bahr Aluloom** (Iraq) said that it was necessary to stand in solidarity with the Palestinian people and take the necessary measures against any unilateral plan that could violate their rights and undermine the peace process. States needed to work together to implement General Assembly resolution [194 \(III\)](#), which stipulated the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes. His delegation renewed its principled position that a just settlement of the question of Palestine would only be achieved by means of the establishment of an independent Palestinian State along the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in line with the Arab Peace Initiative, international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions. His delegation also called on all States that had not yet done so to support the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people and recognize the State of Palestine. As stated by the League of Arab States at its ministerial meeting, the so-called peace plan proposed by the United States would not achieve a just and comprehensive peace based on international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

48. **Ms. Bahous** (Jordan) said that her country would continue to support the work of the Committee and to stand with the Palestinian people until they achieved their aspiration to build a viable independent Palestinian

State along the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. Jordan, which was the custodian of Islamic and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem, would continue to preserve the Arab, Islamic and Christian identity of Jerusalem and maintain the current historic situation.

49. Any initiative and peace plan must take into account the rights of the Palestinian people, in line with a two-State solution, as well as international terms of reference and relevant United Nations resolutions. In accordance with international law, it was essential to ensure the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homeland and to receive reparations.

50. **Mr. Hermida Castillo** (Nicaragua) said that there were significant challenges in ensuring the rights of the Palestinian people and attaining the desired peace. It was therefore important for the Committee to redouble its efforts to comply with United Nations resolutions that defended the international rights of the Palestinian people to establish the State of Palestine within the pre-1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital. Nicaragua reiterated its solidarity with the cause and the rights of the Palestinian and the Arab people and would continue to stand with them in their longstanding struggle to achieve peace and justice and, most of all, to ensure the achievement of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

*The meeting rose at 4.45 p.m.*