

Statement by
H.E. Mr. Desra Percaya
Vice-Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights
of the Palestinian People
at the special meeting in observance of the
International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People
23 November 2015

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we observe in advance the 29 November Solidarity Day, let us remind ourselves of the meaning of the Day.

The date of 29 November was chosen as the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People because of its meaning and significance to the Palestinian people. On 29 November 1947, the General Assembly adopted resolution 181, which came to be known as the Partition Resolution. That resolution provided for the establishment in Palestine of a “Jewish State” and an “Arab State”, with Jerusalem as a *corpus separatum* under a special international regime. The State of Israel came into being in the following year. The State of Palestine is now occupied, being denied the same rights the State of Israel enjoys, including the right to self-determination and the right to national independence and sovereignty.

Today, 68 years after resolution 181, we are witnessing a serious crisis on the ground once again. As Deputy Secretary-General Eliasson rightly said during his latest briefing to the Security Council, “this crisis would not have erupted if the Palestinian people had any perception of hope of a viable Palestinian State, if they had an economy that provided jobs and opportunities, or if they had more control over their security and the legal and administrative processes that define their daily existence — in short, if they did not still live under a stifling and humiliating occupation that has lasted almost half a century”.

In fact, the matrix of occupation continues to grow in the Palestinian Territory. Despite repeated calls of the international community to cease, Israel continues to expand illegal settlements in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem, in contravention of Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, to which both Israel and Palestine are States Parties. The applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, has been repeatedly confirmed by numerous Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, as well as by the Conference of High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention, the latest meeting of which was held last December. Also, in Article 8 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, to which the State of Palestine acceded this year, “The transfer ... by the Occupying Power of parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies” is defined as a war crime.

Israelis-only highways cut through the occupied West Bank, separating Palestinian cities and villages from one another. Israeli civilian law is applied to settlers in the occupied West Bank, while Palestinians are subjected to Israeli military law. While Israeli settlers in the occupied West Bank enjoy swimming in pools in summer, Palestinians suffer from shortages in drinking water. In the 21st century, we should not be seeing a system in which one group is treated favourably over another. Indeed, frictions between illegal Israeli settlers and local Palestinian residents often lead to unnecessary violence, resulting in injuries and deaths, as we have recently witnessed.

Gaza is often called an open-air prison, with access to the outside world is blocked through the land, sea and air. Prison is probably not the right word, as prisons have roofs, electricity, running water, and meals. Most of the over 150,000 homes destroyed during the 2014 war have not been rebuilt, with many people remaining homeless. Electricity shortages are disrupting the daily life of 1.8 million residents, disabling hospitals and sewage and desalination plants. Over 90 per cent of water in Gaza is unfit for human consumption. The poverty rate is staggering 40 per cent.

This is why there needs to be a two-State solution – two peoples enjoying the same rights in their own countries – the fully independent, contiguous and prosperous State of Palestine living side by side in peace with the secure State of Israel. History teaches us that when you have an unhappy neighbour, you are not safe. Palestinians' freedom is security for Israelis. Palestinians' prospect is peace of mind for Israelis. Development of the Palestinian economy is growth of the Israeli economy. A winner of the Nobel Prize in Economics famously said that development is synonymous with freedom. The Palestinian people must be freed from inhumane occupation, discrimination and subjugation.

While 29 November is dubbed as the Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, it in fact is a symbolic day for the Israeli people too, as the same resolution 181 led to the birth of their State. On this solemn occasion, let us all go back to the spirit of resolution 181 – two States for two peoples, with arrangements for the holy sites in Jerusalem to be accessible to people of all religions.

The United Nations that produced resolution 181 has a permanent responsibility until the question of Palestine is resolved in all aspects. Today, our Committee renews its call on all Member States of the United Nations and members of the international community to play their own part to contribute to the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

I thank you for your attention.
