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Committee on the Inalienable Rights
of the Palestinian People
350th Meeting (AM)

PALESTINIAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE DISCUSSES POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS, WEST BANK UNREST.

LOOKS AHEAD TO MID-MONTH MEETING IN CARACAS ON STATUS, SOLIDARITY

Amid growing tensions, it was a “critical time” for Member States to put pressure on Israel to comply with international law in order to “open the door” to a meaningful political process that would lead to a two-State solution, Riyad Mansour, Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations, told the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People this morning.

Israel continued “tightening the siege” of Palestinian communities in East Jerusalem, deepening East Jerusalem’s separation from the occupied West Bank, continuing its “immoral” and “illegal” blockade of the Gaza Strip, and intensifying its illegal settlement activities, Mr. Mansour said.

Moreover, he said Israeli treatment of Palestinian prisoners had taken a dangerous turn, with Israel refusing to release prisoners and neglecting to offer treatment to those who suffered from cancer and were on hunger strikes. The recent death of Maysara Abu Hamdiyeh, following what the Palestinians deemed neglect by Israel, sparked demonstrations in the northern West Bank city of Tulkarm, where two Palestinian teenagers were killed this week in clashes with Israeli forces.

Those deaths, said Mr. Mansour, were a continuation of the crimes being perpetrated by Israel, the occupying Power, against Palestine. He described as “very tense” the situation on the ground and, amid the hostile exchanges, Israeli leaders were threatening a possible large military operation. He had sent letters to the Presidents of both the Security Council and General Assembly on the matter.

He called for the release of all prisoners who had been jailed prior to the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993, and added that Israel had not made good on its promise to free the 1,000 Palestinian inmates, following the release of Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit in October 2011.

At the same time, he lauded efforts made by United States President Barack Obama, who had visited Ramallah and Bethlehem last month, meeting with both Israeli and Palestinian leaders. Noting the visit to the region of the country’s Secretary of State, John Kerry, he said the visit was a demonstration of a serious effort to “open doors” on a meaningful political process.

Although Mr. Mansour hoped that Mr. Kerry’s efforts would be successful, he remained concerned that Israel continued to present obstacles to the process by defying international consensus and building additional illegal settlements. He called on it to end its illegal behaviour in order to create an atmosphere that was conducive to negotiations. He hoped Secretary of State Kerry would base his talks on President Obama’s vision as outlined in 2011.

“On our side, we are doing everything possible to allow this to succeed,” he said. Agreement had emerged at the Arab League Summit in Doha to dispatch an Arab ministerial delegation, led by Qatar, to Washington, D.C., to discuss the situation with Secretary Kerry later this month. The delegation would also travel to the United Nations, as a demonstration of effort from the Arab side to open the political process. He invited all colleagues to participate in that debate at the Security Council on 24 April. He also said he looked forward to the Committee’s next meeting, to be held in Caracas, Venezuela, on 17 April, which he said demonstrated solidarity and support to the Palestinian People.

Following his presentation, the representative of South Africa echoed his deep concern in the impasse in the Middle East peace process, but said he was hopeful that the new Israeli Government would remove obstacles — especially the settlements issue — and return to the negotiating table in good faith. He urged it to ensure the transfer of tax revenue to Palestinians, which he said should never have been withheld.

He also expressed deep concern at the “illegal” imprisonment of Palestinians and condemned the recent death of Mr. Hamdiyeh. He urged Israel to abide by international humanitarian law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention. The Committee might wish to focus anew on the issue of prisoners, as Israel had been unwilling to make any positive adjustments on that topic, he suggested.

Also outlining recent developments since the Committee’s last meeting on 5 February, its Chairman Abdou Salam Diallo of Senegal noted that Cyprus, Sweden and Lithuania had upgraded the status of the Palestinian diplomatic missions. On 10 February, Israel had approved the construction of 346 new settlement homes. On 22 February, Palestinian officials had demanded an international investigation into the death of prisoner Arafat Jaradat in an Israeli jail. On 27 and 28 February, the Committee had convened the United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People at the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Headquarters in Rome.

He drew attention to the release of a report by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), on 6 March, on the ill treatment of Palestinian child detainees. On 13 and 14 March, Japan and the State of Palestine co-organized in Tokyo the Conference on Cooperation among East Asia Countries for Palestinian Development. On 19 March, the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee meeting in Brussels called on donors to help close the Palestinian Government’s financing gap for 2013, estimated at \$1.2 billion. During a visit in the region, on 21 March, President Obama had met with President Mahmoud Abbas and said that while the settlement activity was an obstacle to peace, it should not prevent a return to the negotiating table.

On 22 March, he noted, the United States unblocked almost \$500 million in Palestinian aid, and a few days later, Israel resumed the transfers of Palestinian revenues. On 26 March, participants at the Arab Summit in Doha called for a \$1 billion fund for East Jerusalem and offered to contribute \$250 million. Qatar called for a mini-Arab League summit in Cairo to promote Palestinian reconciliation.

Committee members’ attention was also drawn to a meeting to be held in Caracas, Venezuela, on 17 and 18 April. Venezuela’s delegate, Jorge Valero Briceño, reiterated his country’s solidarity with Palestinians and described events leading up to the decision to hold the Caracas meeting. He also noted the Venezuelan leadership’s intention to “step up” solidarity with Palestinians to counter the sanctions imposed on them, following the General Assembly’s passage of resolution 67/19 (2012), granting Palestine non-Member observer State status in the United Nations, all of which would be the focus of the upcoming meeting.

In other business, note was taken of the report, introduced by Committee Rapporteur Christopher Grima of Malta, of the United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People, held on 27 and 28 February at the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in Rome, on the theme of: “Assistance to the Palestinians — challenges and opportunities in the new reality of a State under occupation”.

The provisional programme was approved for the United Nations International Meeting on the

Question of Palestine, to be held in Addis Ababa on 29 and 30 April. Under the theme “African solidarity with the Palestinian people for the achievement of its inalienable rights, including sovereignty and independence of the State of Palestine”, the meeting would discuss lessons drawn from Africa’s experiences in ending colonization and achieving sovereignty and independence.

The African Union representative spoke today, as did representatives of the delegations of Cuba and Mali.

The Committee will reconvene on 17 April in Caracas, Venezuela.

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