



PERMANENT
OBSERVER MISSION OF
PALESTINE
TO THE
UNITED NATIONS

115 EAST 65TH ST.
NEW YORK NY 10021

TEL 212 288 8500
FAX 212 517 2377



Statement by

*H.E. Dr. Nasser Al-Kidwa
Minister of Foreign Affairs*

before the

General Debate

of the

60th Session of the United Nations General Assembly

22 September 2005

United Nations, New York

Original: Arabic

Check Against Delivery

P R E S S R E L E A S E

Mr. President,

Unlike the Israeli Prime Minister, who a few days ago told you that he came to the United Nations from Jerusalem, I, son of the indigenous people of the land, was not able to do that, for East Jerusalem, the capital of Palestine, still remains under Israeli occupation despite the numerous United Nations resolutions concerning it. This abnormal situation of the city, sacred to the three monotheistic religions, is a clear indicator that we in the Middle East are, most regrettably, still far from peace. Only when East Jerusalem returns to its people, only when the resolutions of the United Nations are completely complied with and implemented, and when the leaders of both countries are able to come freely from Jerusalem – it is then that we will have truly achieved the peace we have long awaited.

Mr. President,

At this moment we are only at an important juncture that could constitute the beginning of the road to achieving peace. Israel, the occupying Power, has completed its disengagement from the Gaza Strip with its withdrawal of the settlers, dismantlement of the settlements there and the departure of the Israeli forces from inside the Gaza Strip. In the northern West Bank, some settlers were also withdrawn and four settlements were dismantled.

The end of the colonial settlement of one part of our land, even if it is only a small part, is an important development, as is the withdrawal of the occupying forces from within that part. It is an important development that resulted from the steadfastness of our people and the growing realization locally and internationally of the impossibility of the continuation of the status quo. We recognize that the implementation of the disengagement required political boldness, yet more important than the disengagement itself is how it occurred and in what context, as well as the steps that will follow. All of this will determine whether the disengagement will take us further steps forward, closer to a comprehensive settlement and peace, or whether it is actually a step imposed by the realities on the ground and intended to facilitate the continuation of the occupation and colonization of the West Bank and to obstruct a final settlement. On our part, we dealt positively with these matters and we exerted strenuous efforts to prepare ourselves for assuming our responsibilities, to coordinate the steps to be taken with the Israeli side and to ensure a peaceful and safe atmosphere during the implementation. Indeed, we achieved reasonable results in all of this, despite the fact that the basic nature of this plan remained the same: unilateral and it did not take into consideration the Palestinian interests and positions.

Mr. President,

Israel, the occupying Power, has left the Gaza Strip completely devastated. Over the years, Israel has destroyed the infrastructure, the economic capabilities, the social fabric and the Palestinian Authority's security apparatus. Even the areas that had been under the control of its settlements were almost totally destroyed by Israel when it withdrew and left behind piles of rubble, which in itself constitutes a serious problem economically, environmentally and psychologically. Adding another problem, Israel left behind and did not dismantle what it called houses of worship, which were not supposed to be there to begin with and in total disregard of its legal obligation to return the land to its original condition prior to the occupation.

In addition to all of the above, the Gaza Strip, after the disengagement, still remains under the control of Israel, which effectively continues to control the airspace, the territorial waters, and the

borders and thus continues to control the movement of persons and goods into and out of Gaza. On that basis and on the basis of the principle of the unity and territorial integrity of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the Israeli occupation of the Gaza Strip has not ended and the legal status of Gaza has not changed and it remains part of the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem.

In general, Israel's occupation and colonization of the Gaza Strip constitutes one of the worst injustices in recent history. In addition to that, it must be clear that the Gaza Strip, which is only 6% of the area of the Occupied Palestinian Territory and is the most densely populated area in the world, cannot attain economic or political sustainability in isolation from the West Bank, i.e. without a permanent link to the West Bank and without freedom of movement and tangible progress and similar steps taken therein.

Mr. President,

What Israel is doing in the West Bank, particularly in East Jerusalem, is cause for us to be even more pessimistic. Israel has continued its construction of the Wall in disregard of the unprecedented Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice and the resolution of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly in this regard. As you have all been hearing and seeing with your own eyes, Israel has persisted in committing this grave crime, continuing to seize the land and continuing in its attempts to annex it *de facto*, and it is destroying the livelihoods of tens of thousands of Palestinians, isolating them and imposing on them a totally different way of life and an unacceptable political situation. Israel, the occupying Power, has also continued to establish and expand settlements and has even devised a plan called E-1, which is intended to completely seize East Jerusalem and connect it to the settlement called "Maale Adumim" and which will completely sever the West Bank into two separate parts. All of this, in short, is not only unlawful, and not only inhuman, but will also destroy any hope for a settlement and peace based on the two-State solution. The central mission for us now – for the international community - if we wish to safeguard the future of the Middle East and maintain the prospects for peace, is to bring about a real and complete cessation of all settlement activities and the construction of the Wall and enforce the law, the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice and relevant United Nations resolutions. This must be the central mission, whether there is political progress or not, and we must accomplish this mission.

In addition to that, how can we deal with the situation and proceed forward? First, we need to find rapid solutions for the outstanding issues regarding the Gaza Strip, including, first, the Rafah crossing, the airport, the seaport and the removal of the rubble from the Gaza Strip, as well as the link between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. These issues, if we solve them, may be able to change the living conditions of the Palestinians there.

Second, the Sharm el-Sheikh understandings should be implemented, particularly the Israeli withdrawal from cities to pre-September 2000 positions as well as the release of prisoners and detainees. These issues can bring about a new reality and begin the building of confidence between the two sides.

Third, and in parallel with the above-mentioned, it is necessary to return to negotiations and an expeditious start of the implementation of the Road Map. This is the essence of political movement and it is the path for resolving the conflict. On our part, we are ready for that and we are ready to begin final status negotiations immediately, as called for by President Abbas in his speech a

few days ago. We hope that the Quartet will firmly push in this direction, and we also hope that the international community as a whole, represented by the United Nations, will provide the needed support in this regard.

It is necessary to stress here the importance of the international assistance being extended to the Palestinian people and the Palestinian Authority. We express our gratitude and our appreciation to all donor countries for all of their important and considerable contributions. In this regard, I would like to express our appreciation as well for the role being played by Mr. Wolfensohn and his team and for their presentation of an appropriate program for aiding the Gaza Strip in a rapid manner and also for promoting economic development in the whole Occupied Palestinian Territory. In this regard, the importance of the G-8 initiative must be emphasized, and we express our hope that all donor countries will support this initiative.

Mr. President,

We look forward to enjoying a dignified life like all other peoples of the world; we look forward to our right to self-determination and national independence; we look forward to building our institutions and to having democracy as a way of life and as a means of governance; we look forward to a peace based on two States, Palestine and Israel, in conformity with the 1949 Armistice Line, and on a just, agreed-upon solution for the Palestine refugees in accordance with resolution 194.

Mr. President,

We have worked seriously to get out of the cycle of military attacks and counter-attacks. We undertook a national dialogue that led to a unilateral declaration of ceasefire and that has been upheld until now despite Israeli obstructions and provocations. This has led to an improvement in the general atmosphere and it is incumbent upon both parties to develop it. On our part, we will continue in our national dialogue in order to advance the situation towards a permanent and mutual ceasefire in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, while reaffirming the right in principle of the Palestinian people to resist occupation and to self-defense. We must also reach a commitment by all groups for a complete cessation of the targeting of civilians in Israel, which we have repeatedly condemned and which has been harmful to our national interest.

On the other hand, we will continue to exert efforts to impose law and order and to enhance our political system on the basis of real democracy, including political pluralism and elections at all levels, including municipal and legislative. Israel must stop its attempts to interfere in and sabotage these elections. We will also continue to advance the development of our national institutions in the various fields and will continue to try to rebuild the Palestinian economy and to improve living conditions. We must do this comprehensively throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including of course in the Gaza Strip, which has suffered the most extensive destruction. We are going to exert our utmost efforts to achieve this, although we understand that these tasks constitute post-conflict tasks that no other people achieved while under occupation. Our achievements will inevitably be limited since Israel, the occupying Power, still controls most aspects of life. Any progress in this regard will be directly and inherently linked to the achievement of real progress in the resolution of the conflict and the achievement of a comprehensive settlement between the two parties.

Mr. President,

It seems that Israel and some of its friends now feel that they have succeeded in imposing many illegal conditions on the ground and in creating a degree of vagueness regarding some aspects of the conflict. And they feel that this is the opportunity for them to attempt to undermine the legal foundations of the question of Palestine and to also undermine international legitimacy in this regard and to try to neutralize the United Nations, even if just partially. In contrast, we believe that situations created illegally will not stand. We affirm that the facts are clear and indisputable, that justice and the rule of law will eventually prevail over power, and that the United Nations, the embodiment of the international community, will not forsake its responsibilities and will not give up in the face of continuous violations of its resolutions. We hope that the Israeli authorities will begin to seriously think about changing their policies and positions instead of trying to market these policies and positions in the United Nations and in other international forums, and that they declare their respect for United Nations resolutions and their readiness to implement them, instead of blaming the United Nations for adopting these resolutions. This will be the start of the solution and the start of the final, peaceful and permanent settlement, which must be based on law, legitimacy and United Nations resolutions.

I thank you, Mr. President.