

STATEMENT  
by  
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Permanent Representative of the  
Republic of Mauritius to the United Nations  
in the  
General Assembly  
on  
Agenda Item 41  
Question of Palestine

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New York

Mr. President,

My delegation is pleased to participate in the debate on agenda item 41 entitled "The Question of Palestine" in the General Assembly today, coinciding with the commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people. On this very important day, I wish to reiterate the continued support of the Government and people of Mauritius to the people of Palestine in their quest for achieving their inalienable rights to self-determination and statehood.

I would also like to extend my thanks to Ambassador Papa Louis Fall, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and to the members of the Committee for the report contained in document A/56/35. Since its establishment in 1975, the Committee has spared no efforts in, and continues to work relentlessly towards the implementation of the mandate entrusted to it by the General Assembly. Today, at this very critical stage in the Israeli-Palestinian relations, the Committee's role takes an added dimension in advancing the Palestinian cause. At this juncture, the Palestinian people need more than ever before, the continued engagement of the international community in the search for peace in the Middle East.

As pointed out this morning by Ambassador Patricia Durrant, President of the Security Council at the solemn meeting held to commemorate today's event, the question of Palestine first came on the agenda of the General Assembly over half a century ago. In 1947, the General Assembly adopted resolution 181 (11) which provided for the partition of Palestine into two States, one Arab and one Jewish. More than fifty years later we are still struggling to see the full implementation of the resolution.

Today's Commemoration is yet another grim reminder that the second State, the Arab State provided for by the Partition Resolution is yet to be established. The fact that the Palestinian People have still not been provided with a homeland constitutes a gross injustice not only to them but to mankind in general. It is morally unacceptable that what has been given to one people is still being denied to another people. Such a situation has stifled the legitimate aspiration of the Palestinian people for too long and we understand their feelings and sympathize fully with them.

To add insult to injury the Middle East Peace Process has been subjected both willingly and unwillingly to several blows. During the past year the situation on the ground has deteriorated beyond anyone's imagination. Hundreds of civilians, mostly Palestinians have been killed; tens of thousands including hundreds of children have been wounded and permanently disabled. The economic blockade imposed by Israel has further exacerbated the sufferings of the Palestinian people. Israeli's policy of targeted extra-judicial killing of Palestinian activists and political leaders and their use of indiscriminate and excessive use of force, the occupation of Orient House and other Palestinian offices by Israel, the frequent Israeli incursions into areas under full Palestinian control have all seriously undermined decades of hard-won gains.

Mauritius has on several occasions unequivocally condemned these acts both in this Assembly and in the Security Council and today we once again call upon Israel to exercise utmost restraint in all its actions and to stop all acts of provocation, including the expansion of the settlement activities. We equally condemn all acts of terrorism which have only deepened the sense of anger, bitterness and suspicion between the two parties and at the same time have contributed in derailing the peace process. We appeal to both sides to stop the cycle of violence and to give a chance to peaceful negotiations. Because Mr President, Mauritius believes that despite all these tragic events, peace in the Middle East is not as elusive as we might think. In fact these events as well as those of September 11 should strengthen the resolve of the international community to pursue its efforts to take forward the peace process and build upon the various milestones reached in the protracted Middle East peace process - beginning from the Camp David Accords in 1978 through the Madrid Peace Conference and Oslo Accords to the Shann el-Sheikh understandings of last year.

Time has been lost, but how much more time and lives should be lost before the two sides decide to end the current stalemate. The physics of politics has always proved that the middle position always prevails upon the extremes. It is therefore imperative that the political leaders return without further delay and preconditions to the negotiating table and devise means for the unconditional implementation of the recommendations contained in the Mitchell Report. The latter having been accepted by both parties, remains the only viable option available today and contains all the ingredients for reviving the peace process. The report offers a balanced, sensible and coherent foundation for overcoming the current stalemate. We call upon the two sides to immediately seize the valuable opportunities provided by the Mitchell Report and the US broken ceasefire agreement - the Tenet Plan to move out of the impasse.

At this critical juncture in the Middle East crisis, it is imperative that all the concerned parties, the co-sponsors of the peace process, the European Union as well as the international community exert all

the necessary efforts to ensure the implementation of the recommendations of the Mitchell Report. We are thankful to the Secretary General, Mr Kofi Annan for his sustained efforts and determination to put an end to the violence and to work towards the resumption of the peace process.

We are reassured by the recent statement by President Bush pledging to work towards the day when both Israel and Palestine would live peacefully together with secure and recognized border, as called for by the various Security Council Resolutions. We also welcome the statement by Secretary of State Powell some ten days ago outlining the US vision for the Middle East and the US pledge for a greater involvement in the search for peace in the region. The new dynamics in world politics and the renewed efforts of the US Government in favour of a Palestinian sovereign State will in our view give a new impetus to the peace process. It is our strong hope that the Palestinian people will soon achieve their cherished goal of statehood while Israel will enjoy all the sense of security it so deserves.