



Malaysia

Permanent Mission to the United Nations

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR MR. HUSSEIN HANIFF,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF MALAYSIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS,
AT THE OPEN DEBATE OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL ON
“THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST, INCLUDING THE PALESTINIAN
QUESTION”, NEW YORK, 24 JANUARY 2012**

Mr. President,

Allow me first to congratulate you on your Presidency of this Council and thank you for convening this open debate on the situation in the Middle East. Secondly, my delegation wishes to align itself with the statement made by Kazakhstan on behalf of the Organization for Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

Mr. President,

2. It is with deep concern and growing frustration that we continue to endlessly address the situation in the Middle East, particularly, the Palestine-Israel conflict. As we begin a new year, we do so, not with expectations that we will make tangible progress in the peace process, nor do we anticipate that we will even take a step closer to our noble goal of achieving a solution. On the contrary, we begin this New Year with a sense of pessimism - pessimism which my delegation believes is certainly well-founded based on troubling developments on the ground.

Mr. President,

3. Regretfully, Israel continues the expansion of illegal settlements in the West Bank as well as in East Jerusalem, against all norms of international law and condemnation of the illegal act by the international community. With the number of housing units being built in the West Bank growing to 1,850 for 2011, expansion of these illegal settlements is being done on an unprecedented scale since 2002. In East Jerusalem alone, the eventual construction of thousands of apartment units would almost certainly change the geopolitical realities on the ground.

4. In a recently published report by the Office for Coordination for Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), since 1967, Israel has established about 150 settlements in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. In addition to the unabated expansion of settlements, Palestinian structures and residences in both the West Bank and East Jerusalem are

being demolished. It has been found that over 60 percent of Palestinian structures demolished in 2011 were in areas allocated to settlements.

5. Furthermore, a greater expansion of settlements has been accompanied by a corresponding increase in settler violence against Palestinians and their property, which has become more systemic rather than a rarity.

6. The result of these activities is the continued suffering for the Palestinian people. While morally wrong, the settlements are also illegal under international law as they violate Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention and run contrary to Israel's obligations. In this connection, Malaysia supports the action taken by NAM to request Switzerland, in its capacity as the depository of the Geneva Convention relative to the protection of civilian persons in time of war, to reconvene at the earliest opportunity a Conference of High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention for the purpose of upholding the obligations and responsibilities incumbent upon the High Contracting Parties to the Convention in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. This is in accordance with recommendations contained in General Assembly resolutions 64/10 and 64/254.

7. Thus far, calls by the international community including the United Nations to stop these illegal activities continue to fall on deaf ears as Israel stays on its hastened path down the wrong side of history. This, it does so unapologetically and without an ounce of remorse, which begs the question – does Israel have any obligations at all to begin with?

Mr. President,

8. At this juncture, it goes without saying that Israel would need to halt illegal settlement activities that have resulted in great injustice to the Palestinian people. Illegal settlement activities have also, time and again, stalled peace talks. All sides must realize that in order to realize peace in Palestine and the Middle East, negotiations would need to begin in a spirit of sincerity, goodwill and trust. Obviously, this is not easy to accomplish, but for a start, all parties should refrain from engaging in provocative actions that would certainly do more harm than good.

Mr. President,

9. As the deadline set by the Quartet to come forward on comprehensive proposals on territory and security is upon us, Malaysia feels that the Security Council, serving as the custodian for international peace and security, must do its part to ensure that conditions are ripe for all parties to resume negotiations on finding a solution to the Palestine-Israel conflict. Malaysia is of the opinion that in order to achieve a fair and peaceful solution to the conflict, the onus to compromise and make way for negotiations does not fall on Palestine alone. Israel's insistence that Palestine should assume direct negotiations without any preconditions does not reflect Israel's willingness to be fair and to be more accommodating to its future neighbour.

10. While my delegation speaks today with a sense of pessimism, make no mistake that we remain resolute in our commitment towards finding a lasting two state solution based on the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine, where both sides could live side-by-side in peace and taking into account security concerns of both sides. It is our earnest desire to see future discussions on the issue take a different tone, one that is more positive and would reflect substantial progress on the ground. The time for peace is now and we must not miss this opportunity. Prolonging the conflict will only create more problems and is not in the interest of all.

I thank you Mr. President.