



Malaysia

Permanent Mission to the United Nations

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**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR HUSSEIN HANIFF,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF MALAYSIA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS AT THE SECURITY COUNCIL'S
OPEN DEBATE ON THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST,
INCLUDING THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION,
NEW YORK, 25 JULY 2012**

Mr. President,

I wish to thank Mr. Robert Serry, United Nations Special Coordinator and Special Representative of the Secretary-General for his briefing. Malaysia also wishes to associate itself with the statements made by Egypt on behalf of NAM and Kazakhstan on behalf of OIC.

2. The situation in the Middle East and North Africa has shown some encouraging signs of stability with political aspirations of its people manifesting into political reality. We continue to witness democratic process and participation of people in politics and its institutions as promising. Malaysia would like to highlight these positive developments as the semblance of normalcy and recovery has gained the interest of many countries across the globe, including this Council.

3. Malaysia welcomes the recent political developments in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia which have held elections over the passing months. Malaysia believes that the transition to democratic process in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia has shown that the people are at the forefront of political developments and undoubtedly would contribute to regional peace and stability.

Mr. President,

4. While the situation in those countries has improved the same cannot be said as what we are witnessing in Syria. The violence that we have witnessed over the months has left thousands of civilians maimed and dead despite of the six-point plan and presence of UN monitors.

5. Malaysia is appalled with the civilian losses in Syria. Malaysia calls for all parties in the conflict to cease their violent activities immediately. Malaysia believes the Syrian Government and the opposition should commit themselves fully to the six-point plan that would contribute to peace in the country. We further call the international community, the Syrian Government and all other parties to work together to find an amicable solution for the people of Syria.

Mr. President,

6. The Question of Palestine and the Middle East cannot be separated nor be overlooked or ignored. In order to achieve peace in the Middle East, the plight of the Palestinian people should be resolved with international determination. The sufferings of the Palestinians and the predicament of its people are currently the longest global tragedy in modern times. The solution has always been in sight, but it has been almost 20 years since the Oslo Accord endorsed by the two sides but never took off. Additionally, the Arab Peace Initiative of 2002 also never materialised. The long standing two state solution remains a vision but no more. Peace in the Middle East seemed so close and yet today, that solution is as far as it was first envisaged.

7. The continued occupation of Israel over Palestinian land and territory are as unlawful today as it was in 1967. Israel continued occupation of the Occupied Palestinian Territory has displayed sustained violation to international humanitarian and human rights laws. The Regime has displaced thousands of Palestinian people and killed innocent civilians. In short, Israel has failed in its obligation as an Occupying Power to protect civilians but instead committed extra-judicial killings and oppression. The Regime has continued down the degrading trajectory with impunity. Its persistent blockade of the Gaza Strip has further translated into misery for more than 1.6 million Palestinian people.

Mr. President,

8. I have just return from Gaza on a UN Mission under the Special Committee to investigate Israeli practices affecting the human rights of the Palestinian people and other Arabs of the territories occupied since 1967. While in Gaza we had the opportunity to observe the actual situation on the ground and meet directly with witnesses and victims affected by Israel's blockade. The blockade continues to have a devastating impact on the people of Gaza.

9. The Committee met fishermen who have their livelihoods ruined by Israel's enforcement of a less than 3 nautical mile limit, in flagrant disregard of the Oslo Accord. The fishermen used to bring in 4,000 tons a year. Now they bring in around 1,400 tons. Even within the arbitrary 3 mile limit, the fishermen are

subject to arrest, abuse and deprivation of their equipment. We met with farmers who have had their farms and agricultural equipment destroyed by Israeli bulldozers in the buffer zone. The farmers complained that the Israel declared security zone in effect expropriates 35% of Gaza's agricultural land. Again, their livelihoods have been devastated. Both groups shared stories of humiliating, brutal and sometimes deadly treatment at the hands of Israeli soldiers enforcing the blockade.

10. Businessmen in Gaza provided the Committee with detailed information regarding the impact of Israel's blockade on the economy. They noted that imports remain less than 50% of pre-blockade levels. They stressed the urgent need for imports of raw materials, especially to meet the demand for approximately 40,000 apartments needed for homes, since thousands of Palestinians had their homes destroyed during operation cast lead and remain displaced. Furthermore, children in Gaza need more schools built urgently. 85% of schools in Gaza work on double shifts, thereby curtailing their right to education.

11. One of the most frequent complaints the Committee received in Gaza concerned the lack of employment. The people of Gaza desperately want work. But Israel's near total ban on exports stifles economic growth and makes job opportunities scarce. As a result 30-40% of Gazans are unemployed.

12. The principal result of Israel's blockade has been to make 80% of the Palestinians in Gaza dependent on international humanitarian aid. I have to admire the resilience of Gazans for being able to survive on so little, especially in the face of the inadequate healthcare, frequent power outages and not infrequent incidents of violence that mark their daily lives. The blockade on Gaza is illegal. It amounts to collective punishment of 1.6 million Palestinians. The International Community must bring pressure to bear on Israel until it is fully lifted.

13. These Israeli practices lead the Special Committee to one over-arching and deeply troubling conclusion. The mass imprisonment of Palestinians, the routine demolitions of homes and the displacement of Palestinians, the widespread violence by Israeli settlers against Palestinians, and the blockade and resultant reliance on illegal smuggling to survive – these practices amount to a strategy to either force the Palestinian people off their land or so severely marginalise them as to establish and maintain a system of permanent oppression.

14. It is not a coincidence that Israel applies two different planning and zoning regimes in the West Bank, a favourable one for Israeli settlers and a prohibitive one for Palestinians. Israelis want to block Palestinians development and

expand their settlements. It is not a chance that the majority of the demolitions of Palestinian structures occur near Israeli settlements. Israeli settlers want to appropriate land and expand their settlements.

15. These Israeli practices are systematic. They are aimed at moving Palestinians off their land. And working together they increasingly discredit Israel's claim of a commitment to "two states living side by side in peace and security".

Mr. President,

16. Malaysia calls for the immediate cessation of Israeli military activity and a withdrawal from all Occupied Territory including East Jerusalem and the Syrian Golan to the 1967 border. Malaysia also calls for an immediate stop to the annexation of Palestinian lands by Israeli settler activities and for Israel to return those lands to the rightful people of Palestine.

17. Malaysia shall continue to support the aspirations of the Palestinian people for self-determination, a return of their inalienable rights and for the two-state solution to achieve its intended form, namely the State of Palestine based on 1967 border with East Jerusalem as its capital and the State of Israel, living in peace and security.

Thank you, Mr President.