



MALAYSIA

PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS



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**STATEMENT BY
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PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF MALAYSIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

**SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING ON SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST
(INCLUDING THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION)**

NEW YORK, 19 OCTOBER 2016

Thank you Mr. President.

2. My delegation is grateful to Special Coordinator Mr. Nickolay Mladenov and USG Mr. Stephen O'Brien of OCHA for their briefings.
3. Malaysia aligns itself with the statement delivered by Venezuela on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, and with the statement to be delivered by Kuwait on behalf of the OIC.

Mr. President,

4. As this is Malaysia's final Quarterly Open Debate on the Middle East in our capacity as a non-permanent member of the Council, I would like to take the opportunity to make several observations on Council's approach towards the issue of the Palestinian question.
5. First of all, despite persistent warnings by the Secretary-General and the Special Envoy on the unsustainable situation on the ground and the ever-increasing threats to the two-state solution, it is regrettable that the Council has not been able to offer either effective or even symbolic responses to address the situation.
6. For many years, Council product on the issue of Palestine was practically non-existent, which belies the worsening situation on the ground. Mainly, this is due to the inability to muster enough political will, or the familiar excuse – that the time is not right for the Council to act.
7. Today, we expect to hear, yet again, repeated calls from UN member states for the Council not to shirk its responsibility under the UN Charter, and to take urgent action

to salvage the two-state solution. As we speak, more homes are being destroyed, more deaths and despair inflicted.

8. Secondly, there is a tendency for the Council to accord equal treatment to both the Occupying Power and the occupied people, when in reality, no such balance or equality exists.

9. On the one side, we have an Occupying Power with great military might, which has been occupying a defenceless civilian population for almost half a century. On the other side, we have the occupied Palestinians who live under repressive occupation and a brutal blockade, who face discriminatory treatment and violations of their basic human rights on a daily basis, who are dispossessed of their homes and lands, deprived of natural resources and economic development, and restricted in their movement. All these are inflicting enormous hardship and sufferings.

10. It is misleading for us to assume that the Occupying Power and the occupied people have the same level of legal, political and moral obligations and responsibilities. Under international law, especially the Fourth Geneva Convention, substantial obligations are clearly imposed on the occupying powers to protect the general welfare of the inhabitants of an occupied territory. This includes protection from forcible transfer, and protection for their property. All of these had been violated.

11. Indeed, the international community didn't try to be "balanced" when we condemned and sanctioned apartheid in South Africa, just as we should not try to be "balanced" when we discuss about the holocaust. What is wrong cannot be right. The sooner we realise this, the clearer our focus on the issue will be.

12. Thirdly, the Council tends to focus on symptoms of the conflict, and conveniently ignores its root causes. It is much easier and palatable to condemn sporadic attacks and acts of violence, than addressing the bigger question of what creates, fuels and breeds such anger, frustration and despair in the first place, which gave rise to desperate albeit violent response.

13. The Secretary-General earlier this year said, and I quote: "As oppressed peoples have demonstrated throughout the ages, it is human nature to react to occupation." He also said that "no one can deny that the everyday reality of occupation provokes anger and despair, which are major drivers of violence and extremism, and undermine any hope of a negotiated two-state solution".

14. That statement should prompt us to think, reflect and act. It brings a humanistic angle to the conflict that the Palestinians should no longer be denied their fundamental right to self-determination and their quest for statehood.

15. Therefore, unless and until we deal with the root causes of the problem, which is the prolonged and repressive military occupation, the endless cycle of violence will continue and feed into the political narrative of those who thrive on it.

Mr. President,

16. Last Friday, Malaysia, together with Egypt, Senegal, Angola, and Venezuela, organised an Arrria-formula meeting of the Council on the issue of illegal Israeli settlements. We listened to various experts who provided factual analyses on the worrying developments relating to settlement expansion in Occupied Palestinian Territory. Their summation was decidedly clear. The settlement expansion and repression must stop. The politics of old has no place for world hunger for peace.

17. I have listened carefully to the statement by the Israeli Permanent Representative. Not a single sentence addressed the issue of settlement expansion, which is the topmost concern of the international community.

18. In the coming weeks, we hope to see effective Council action to use the various tools at its disposal to address the issue of settlements. The settlements are not only illegal under international law, they also constitute the most tangible and visible threat to the two-state solution and thus, to peace in the region.

19. Clearly, habitual verbal condemnations in the past decades have done nothing to halt or deter illegal settlements activities. Instead, the Occupying Power is further emboldened by our inaction and has further sought to legalise outposts and seize more private Palestinian lands.

20. With the recent announcement by Israel to build new settlement units in the occupied West Bank, the ball is now in the Council's court to act urgently, enforce its own resolutions, uphold the rule of law and prove its commitment to the two-state solution.

21. Similarly, the international community should also pursue all legal, political and economic channels to step up its pressure on the Israeli government to make it too costly for Israel to continue with its illegal settlement policy.

Mr. President,

22. I wish to highlight a recent attempt by a group of 15 women on board a Freedom Flotilla, which sailed from Barcelona and headed for the Gaza Strip last week, to highlight the ongoing illegal blockade of Gaza and deliver humanitarian aid. Among them were Northern Ireland's 1976 Nobel Peace Prize winner, and Dr. Fauziah Hassan, a female Malaysian doctor.

23. Although their attempt was subsequently blocked by Israel, their courageous non-violent resistance managed to raise awareness on the ongoing violations of international law, international human rights standards, and Security Council resolutions by Israel. It also provided a glimmer of hope for the Palestinians in Gaza, fostered solidarity and conveyed to them that the world has not abandoned or forgotten about them.

24. This is not about demonising Israel. It is about seeking justice and ending occupation and its repressive nature. It is about seeking policy shift and attitude change. It is about creating the enablers and conditions for a lasting solution.

25. We urge civil society worldwide to continue their struggle to call for accountability and to highlight gross violations of international law, including international humanitarian and human rights law, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Their role is especially important in shaping public opinion and providing pressure from the bottom up, in view of the collective failure by governments and world leaders to take effective action to resolve the conflict.

26. In concluding, I wish to reiterate Malaysia's request that a humanitarian briefing on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, be made a permanent feature of Council meetings on the issue. We believe the humanitarian situation on the ground demands particular attention and a separate briefing by OCHA.

27. Although this is our last intervention as a Council member in the Quarterly Open Debate, Malaysia remains committed to push for the establishment of an independent, democratic, contiguous and viable Palestinian state, living side-by-side in peace and security with Israel.

I thank you, Mr. President.