

11.09.06
A.M.

Special Session of the Human Rights Council on the grave situation of human rights in Lebanon, caused by Israeli military operations

Statement by Ambassador Masood Khan of Pakistan on behalf of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference

Mr. President,

I am making this statement on behalf of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference.

This session of the Human Rights Council has been convened because of its obligations arising out of the UN GA resolution 60/251 to deal with gross and systematic violations of human rights and to respond promptly to a human rights emergency. [Reference OP-3, OP-5(f) and OP-10]

The situation in Lebanon is appalling. Death and displacement stalk Lebanon. More than 1,000 people have been killed in their homes and workplaces, where they thought they were most secure. Death struck them from the air and the land. Death pursued them as they were fleeing terror. Death did not spare those who were burying their dead. One million fled their homes, which were turning into their graves. The weakest and most vulnerable - children, women, and the elderly - died the most. Some died with white flags in their hands. Town after town is being targeted. When we finish speaking today more would have died.

Thousands of the displaced Lebanese are in areas where they do not have access to secure food or water. Their number is rising.

Critical infrastructure in Lebanon has been destroyed or disabled. Roads, bridges, ports, factories, power plants are in ruins. The harvest is lost. A blockade has been imposed by Israel on Lebanon.

The OIC leaders, who met in Putrajaya, Malaysia, on August 3, strongly condemned Israeli attacks and massive air strikes that resulted in massacres of innocent civilians and the destruction of houses, properties and infrastructure. They said all these acts violate the principles of the UN Charter, international law, international humanitarian law, and constitute flagrant violations of human rights.

Some ask which rights have been violated. Specifically, the right to life, the most sacred of all rights, the rights to food and adequate housing, and the

rights of the internally displaced people have been violated with impunity. Article 38 in the Convention on the Rights of the Child calling for the protection and care of children in armed conflict has been breached. The human rights regime is in tatters. In fact the gross and systematic violations of human rights give text book 101 of how rights can be violated without distinction as to race or religion. . Christians and Muslims have been killed with the same wantonness. Foreigners of several nationalities have also lost their lives.

More specifically, Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions of 1949, Articles 51 and 52 of the First Protocol to the Geneva Conventions have been violated. Common Article 3 says: "persons taking no active part in the hostilitiesshall in all cases be treated humanely". Article 51 : "The civilian population as such, as well as individual civilians, shall not be the object of attack." Article 52: " Civilian objects shall not be the object of attack or of reprisal".

There is compelling testimony about the ongoing carnage in Lebanon and authoritative calls to stop it forthwith. The OIC leaders, the UN Secretary General, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and other world statesmen have all condemned these killings. Condemnation is not enough. Killings must end. The UN Under Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Jan Egeland, finds the situation "disgraceful". The High Commissioner has alluded to war crimes and criminal responsibility.

While a human rights crisis explodes every day before our own eyes on TV screens, the Human Rights Council cannot choose to be in a state of paralysis. It is important that for its own credibility the Council sends a loud and clear message that Israeli human rights violations in Lebanon must end. The Council has to make a moral choice between humanity and inhumanity; between law and defiance of law; between caring for human life and acquiescing in its destruction. It should not be a balancing act guided by political interests and compulsions. Politics should not become so predominant that we cease to hear the cry of a dying child or fail to see a wasteland being created before our own eyes.

The killings cannot be embellished by the doctrines of just wars or disproportionate force or collective punishment. War must end; Israeli military operations must end; and human rights violations must end.

While this session is focused on Lebanon, the human rights and humanitarian disaster in Palestine has become worse. The people of Gaza

are losing lives every day, while the kidnapped Palestinian lawmakers and cabinet ministers suffer in Israeli captivity.

We call on this Council to condemn gross and systematic Israeli human rights violations and establish an inquiry commission with the mandate to investigate the extent and the adverse impact of the breaches of human rights and the international humanitarian law. We call for unhindered access to humanitarian and medical convoys and for the establishment of humanitarian corridors in Lebanon. We should step up our efforts to help the Government and people of Lebanon to deal with the rehabilitation of victims, return of displaced persons, and restoration of the essential infrastructure.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.