



PAKISTAN

PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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STATEMENT

BY

**AMBASSADOR DR. MALEEHA LODHI
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF PAKISTAN
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

AT

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

ON

“THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE”

New York,
29 November 2016

Statement by Ambassador Dr. Maleeha Lodhi,
Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the UN at the General
Assembly on “The Question of Palestine”

New York, 29 November 2016

Mr. President,

We commemorate the 'International day of solidarity with the Palestinian people' every year. Yet, for far too long, this day has become a somber and grim reminder of the unending suffering of the Palestinian people at the hands of an occupier who has shown utter disregard for the principles of international law and the mores of humanity.

The resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is essential for peace and stability throughout the Middle East. It is also essential to enable us to address some of the drivers of extremism and terrorism. It is this conflict that has contributed most significantly to the anger and frustration in the Arab and the Islamic world.

The continued spread of illegal Israeli settlements on Palestinian lands, the blockade of Gaza, the provocations around the Holy Al Aqsa Mosque and the continued imprisonment of Palestinians, are all real and present obstacles to a two-state solution.

These actions, along with the recent proclamations emanating from Israel that a two state solution no longer needs to be pursued, reflect a willful defiance of the international consensus that the only viable option for durable peace lies in such a solution. They are also a testimony to the fact that the occupying power is being emboldened by the lack of resolute action by the international community.

Mr. President,

The 5.2 million Palestinian refugees, forcibly displaced from their homes nearly 70 years ago, and denied their inalienable right to return, are a travesty of justice and morality. Their right to return is pivotal to the vision of a peaceful and stable Middle East.

Expropriation of Palestinian lands and continued expansion of illegal settlements in occupied territory is another egregious Israeli inequity, in total defiance of its international obligations.

The so-called 'Legalization Bill' in the Israeli Knesset aims at providing a veneer of legality to this shameless land grab. Demolition of Palestinian homes and expulsion of Palestinians from their properties further compounds the suffering of the people.

And the collective punishment meted out through the blockade of Gaza, now in its ninth year, continues to wreak havoc on the lives of the residents of the enclave. It also seriously impedes the ability of the UN and other humanitarian agencies to deliver much-needed support to embattled communities as they try to rebuild shattered lives after the devastation caused by the Israeli aggression in 2014.

Mr. President,

Through all this, the UN has remained seized of the Palestinian question. Countless UN resolutions testify to the political and diplomatic capital spent by the international community on this cause. And yet none of this has been able to transform the grim reality of daily existence for the Palestinian people.

Through its resolution 2535 B of 10 December 1969, the UN General Assembly expressed grave concern at the denial of basic rights to the Palestinians through 'collective punishment, arbitrary detention, curfews, destruction of homes and property, deportation and other repressive acts'. Half a century later, the resolution that we will adopt tomorrow will speak to the same travails.

This lack of progress is not an indictment of the commitment of the many, including my country, that have steadfastly supported the Palestinian cause, but of the few, who have the capacity to bring about material change but lack the willingness to do so. Renewed demands for recognition of the State of Palestine are a clarion call that must be heeded.

Inaction by the Security Council has not only undermined its own credibility, but has also weakened the ideals that the organization espouses; the

ideals of human dignity, of peaceful coexistence based on sovereign equality of all nations and of the right to self-determination of all peoples.

Resumption of negotiations is the only way forward. The Security Council should live up to its obligations and responsibility, and summon the political courage and vision to adopt a resolution, with parameters and timelines to end occupation.

Talks, however, should be meaningful and result-oriented and not a means to provide space to Israel to further shrink prospects of a contiguous state of Palestine.

Mr. President,

Another dimension of conflict in the Middle East is the Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan. Israeli settlement policy and illegal practices of controlling resources and changing the demographic composition and legal status of the occupied Syrian Golan is a blatant disregard of UN resolutions.

Lasting and sustainable peace in the Middle East would need bold decisions. Withdrawal of occupation forces from all Arab lands, including from Lebanon and the Syrian Golan Heights is not only vital for the future of the next generation of Palestinians, but for international peace and security.

In conclusion let me reiterate Pakistan's unwavering solidarity with the people of Palestine, which has been consistently manifested by its support over the decades. We call for an end to the constant delays in the realization of the legitimate and inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, which is an essential prerequisite to sustainable peace in the Middle East.

The construction of an architecture of global stability and prosperity at this seminal juncture of world history cannot be built on injustice and denial of the rights of the Palestinian people.

I thank you.