



International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People
29 November 2012

Statement by Ambassador H.E. Dr. Palitha Kohona,
Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the United Nations

and

Chair of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human
Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories

Mr. Chairman,

I am honoured to speak today in my capacity as the Chair of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories. The observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People at the General Assembly underscores the international community's commitment as well as the responsibility to achieve a comprehensive peace in the Middle East. Peace in the Middle-East has eluded us for far too long and it is a sad commentary on humanity that we have failed in this pressing task.

A few weeks ago, I presented the 44th report of the Special Committee examining the human rights situation in the occupied Palestinian territory and the occupied Syrian Golan. The Committee was seriously disturbed by the situation in the occupied territories. At the time of our visit in July, in the light of the testimony received by the Committee, we were of the view that the situation on the ground, especially in Gaza, was unsustainable and that renewed violence was likely unless measures were

taken immediately to ameliorate the conditions. The events of the past few weeks would seem to support the conclusions of the Committee.

The continued demolition of homes and the resultant displacement of Palestinians, the blockade of Gaza and the consequent reliance on illegal smuggling simply to survive, led to one deeply troubling conclusion that these practices would amount to a strategy to either force the Palestinians off their land or to so severely marginalize them as to establish and maintain a system of permanent occupation.

The Committee was especially concerned about the condition of Palestinian children detained by Israel who do not benefit from the basic legal, judicial or social safeguards to which they are entitled under international law. Between 500 and 700 Palestinian children are arrested every year. The Committee was particularly disturbed to learn that 12 per cent of these children were kept in solitary confinement.

The Committee called on Israel, consistent with its international law obligations to adopt, the recommendations among others, relating to the arrest, detention and sentencing of Palestinian children, the demolition of Palestinian homes, the violence against Palestinians by Israeli settlers, and the blockade of Gaza. Similarly, the Committee called on Palestinian armed groups to comply with international humanitarian law and cease the indiscriminate firing of rockets and mortars into Israel.

While we welcome the suspension of hostilities last week, we are conscious of the continuing tense situation in Gaza. The international community must not lose sight of the overarching goal of the two States living side by side in peace and security. Palestinians and Israelis could enjoy security and peace as neighbours through a political solution, with human rights at its heart.

We express our deep appreciation of those countries, especially those in the regions which played a key role in arranging the cessation of hostilities.

I take this opportunity to read the statement of H.E. Mahinda Rajapaksa, President of Sri Lanka for International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

***“ Message of H.E Mahinda Rajapaksa, President of the Democratic Socialist
Republic of Sri Lanka on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian
People***

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The International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People serves to remind the international community that the Palestinians are still denied their right to self-determination, independence and sovereignty, and dispossessed from much of their land. The people of Sri Lanka have steadfastly stood with the Palestinian people in their decades long struggle for justice, and the fulfillment of their inalienable rights and will continue to do so.

Every possibility for peace, with a view to ultimately establishing an independent State of Palestine, existing peacefully, side by side with Israel, must be actively pursued. Thus, the peace process needs to overcome its current impasse. Resolving this issue will also bring about peace in the entire Middle East. The political unity and economic advancement of the Palestinian people will contribute to the viability of the Two State solution, which Sri Lanka resolutely supports, in accordance with the UN resolution. We are pleased that the Palestinian Authority, despite severe political and economic constraints, has made progress in institution-building.

Sri Lanka supports Palestine’s application for admission as a full member in the United Nations.”

I thank you Mr. Chairman.