



PAKISTAN

PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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STATEMENT

BY

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ON BEHALF OF THE OIC**

**ON "THE GRAVE VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN
THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY
INCLUDING THE RECENT ISRAELI AGGRESSION ON
THE OCCUPIED GAZA STRIP"**

AT THE

**NINITH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE
HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL**

**Geneva
9 January 2009**

Statement by Ambassador Zamir Akram, Permanent Representative of Pakistan on behalf of the OIC, at the 9th Special Session of the Human Rights Council on “the Grave violations of human rights in the OPT including the recent Israeli aggression on the occupied Gaza Strip”, 9 January 2009, Geneva

Mr. President,

I am making this statement on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference. The OIC's Expanded Executive Committee met at the Ministerial level for an emergency session on 3 January 2009. The Committee condemned the ongoing assault on the Palestinian people in Gaza as a blatant violation of international law which constituted a war crime. It called for bringing the culprits to international justice.

The OIC welcomes the overwhelming cross regional support extended to both the convening of this special session as well as the draft resolution. This reaffirms the importance attached by a vast majority of member states to universal human rights values as well as to alleviating the suffering of the Palestinian people.

Mr. President,

Less than a month ago, we celebrated the 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. At that occasion, high level dignitaries made solemn pledges to uphold the values of the Declaration. And yet, barely one month after hearing resounding statements on the inviolability of human rights, the international community has been forced to watch the massacre of a defenseless people.

In considering measures to address the on-going tragedy in Gaza, it is useful to bear in mind a few facts.

First, the people of Palestine have been under foreign occupation for many decades. They are deprived of their right to liberty and the right to determine their lives in accordance with their own aspirations. As an occupied people, the only right they still retain is the right to resist, and that is also sought to be denied to them.

Secondly, in recent years, the suffering of the Palestinians in Gaza has been especially acute. The 1.5 million people of Gaza, over half of them children, have been subjected to a crippling economic blockade for the past eighteen months. The choice given to them was starve or submit. Faced with a resolute refusal to submit, the occupying power unleashed its vast military might on the people of Gaza. The choice now offered to them seems to be between death and submission. In the past thirteen days more than 700 people have died of which more than 200 are children.

Gaza today resembles, in the words of a Vatican spokesman, "a big concentration camp." Its people are incarcerated, deprived of the most basic human necessities, and are relentlessly pounded with high explosives from the air, sea and land.

Mr. President,

The ostensible pretext for the unleashing of this latest atrocity against the Palestinian people is the firing of rockets. The OIC is against all violations of human rights and calls upon all parties to respect human lives especially those of innocent civilians, women and children. The killing of any innocent civilian is unacceptable and we condemn it. However, Professor Avi Shalim of Oxford University has recently reminded us that between 2005-2007, 11 Israelis were killed by rocket fire. In this period, the Israeli armed forces killed 1,290 Palestinians in Gaza, including 222 children. Also, in considering this issue the internationally accepted principle of proportionality cannot be cast aside.

Mr. President,

UNRWA's Commissioner General Karen Abu Zayd has expressed horror at the extensive destruction visited upon the Gaza Strip. The High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory have condemned the Israeli aggression as a disproportionate act that flagrantly violates all human rights and humanitarian law principles including the Fourth Geneva Convention. The UN Secretary General and the High Commissioner for Refugees too have condemned the Israeli aggression, and the resultant suffering of the civilian population, and have called for an immediate end to all violence.

Mr. President,

The unrestrained use of force, the scale of destruction, the killing of innocent civilians, including women and children, the violation of UN safe havens and the collective punishment of an entire people are blatant breaches of international law. In their totality, these constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Mr. President,

The Human Rights Council adds its voice to the Security Council to end all hostilities. The Security Council's call for a cease fire should be immediately implemented. The Security Council and the international community must live upto its responsibilities to:

- i. end the Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip;
- ii. ensure cessation of all hostilities and provide immediate protection for the Palestinian people;

- iii. secure a ceasefire and return to calm; and
- iv. compel Israel, the occupying power, to lift its oppressive blockade on the Gaza Strip, open the crossings and ensure unhindered provision of humanitarian supplies by the international community.

We also hope that both the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Special Rapporteur on human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory will be able to report comprehensively on the ongoing human rights situation in Gaza with specific recommendations to address this situation in Gaza during the March 2009 session of the Council. We believe that independent, objective reporting and with actionable recommendations should have the support of the Council.

Mr. President,

The root cause of all violence, insecurity and instability in the region is Israel's protracted and forcible occupation. If this cycle of violence and retaliation is to be effectively countered, the international community will need to step up its efforts to end this occupation. The international community must live upto its commitments under international human rights and humanitarian law.

Israel should not undermine an amicable solution of the Palestinian issue on the basis of the Security Council resolutions, the Quartet's Road Map and the targets outlined in the outcome of the Annapolis Summit.

The Organization of Islamic Conference hopes that in dealing with the grave and tragic situation in Gaza, the Council members will respond to the call of conscience and rise above political and ideological orientations. We hope that the draft resolution under consideration, which calls for a minimal moral response, will be adopted by consensus.

I thank you Mr. President.