

Statement by Hon. Mr. Carmelo Abela MP, Government Spokesman and Government Parliamentary Whip, at the United Nations International Meeting of Parliamentarians in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace on 21 November 2014 at the United Nations Headquarters, New York.

Mr. Chairman,

May I join other Representatives who have already taken the floor and who are participating here today in this International Meeting of Parliamentarians in support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace to commend and congratulate the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian on its timely initiative. We appreciate the statements delivered this morning which reconfirmed in no uncertain manner the contribution of the United Nations and of the international community in support of the realization of the rights of the Palestinian people.

Mr. Chairman,

It is also befitting and commendable for the Committee for organizing and inviting us Parliamentarians to contribute to the role of parliamentarians in ensuring respect for international law in support of the Israeli-Palestinian Peace. This initiative gains momentum as it is being held when we are observing the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People and just a few days before the United Nations and the international community observes the annual International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

Forty-years ago tomorrow, on 22 November 1974, the General Assembly defined the inalienable rights of the Palestinian People as the right to self-determination without external interference; the right to national independence and sovereignty; and the right of Palestine refugees to return to their homes and property, from which they had been replaced and uprooted.

It was also on the same year and day that the General Assembly invited the PLO to participate in its proceedings with Observer Status, as Representative of the Palestinian People.

These rights as set forth by the General Assembly have continued without fail to be reaffirmed every year for these last forty years. This therefore begs the question as to whether we, as Parliamentarians, can condone a situation where Palestinians have to wait more years to enjoy what other peoples have in their majority been enjoying for many years. Our obvious and natural reply should and must be 'absolutely no'. Indeed, our presence here today offers us an opportunity to once again give a clear and solemn reaffirmation of the provisions of that 1974 resolution and above all a strong reaffirmation of our solidarity with the Palestinian People for their legitimate and long-overdue rights.

Mr. Chairman,

Parliamentarians as well as national Parliaments and inter-parliamentary organisations can and must play a supportive and proactive role in promoting the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of the Palestinian People - the Palestinians inalienable rights.

We, Parliamentarians, can make a difference in standing in solidarity with the Palestinian People.

We, Parliamentarians, as Lawmakers, have an added responsibility to ensure that international law is strongly promoted, observed and implemented.

We, Parliamentarians, must uphold and strongly defend what our countries pledged when they joined this Organisation, namely

“to bring about by peaceful means and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations ...”

As the conscience and voice of the people in our respective countries, and a medium for influencing and shaping public opinion, Parliamentarians can and must strive to involve ourselves in raising more awareness of the serious and deteriorating situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. Likewise, us Parliamentarians must urgently engage with our colleagues Parliamentarians of both sides – Israeli and Palestinians – to discuss common concerns and to support and promote more vigorously a political solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict which is recognised as the longest unresolved question on the international agenda.

Mr. Chairman,

Since 1975, when this Committee was established by the General Assembly as the sole U.N. body exclusively devoted to the question of Palestine, Malta has had the honour and privilege to serve as its Rapporteur. As a result, Malta has been in the forefront in promoting the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People; in standing in solidarity with their suffering, sacrifices and challenges they have been facing for over six decades as a result of the Israeli occupation; in the search for a peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; and in the application of the norms on international law and international humanitarian law as well as respect for human rights.

In this regard, I must not fail to appeal for the release of our jailed colleagues Palestinian Parliamentarians.

Mr. Chairman,

It has long been recognised that the Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory are facing tremendous challenges which continue to have serious and detrimental effect on their daily lives, especially on the young and vulnerable.

We condemn all acts of violence by whomever and wherever these are perpetrated. We also deplore, among other things, the continuing Israeli settlement policies and activities, the demolition of Palestinian homes, evictions of Palestinian families, and the escalating violence by extremist Israeli settlers, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

Furthermore, the grave and unacceptable situation emanating in the Gaza Strip, should continue to be the focus of concern and attention of the international community, of the United Nations, of this Committee and of us Parliamentarians. The opening of crossings to allow humanitarian aid and persons to move freely and unhindered to and from Gaza, must be one of the priorities as must be the re-building not only of the infrastructural destruction caused by the recent conflagration but also of the very precious lives of the Palestinian population in Gaza. How can we ignore the hardships being experienced on a daily basis by families and their children?

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to once again reiterate Malta's commitment in its support to the efforts and initiatives being undertaken to achieve a long-lasting and sustainable peace in the Middle East.

In this context, Malta remains fully committed to the two-State solution of Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security within recognized borders, on the basis of the pre-1967 borders. I would like to encourage all parties, all interlocutors and all stakeholders, to press and work towards a political solution to the question of Palestine. We endorse the urgent calls for a resumption of meaningful negotiations with the ultimate and sole objective of achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine.

Mr. Chairman,

I commend the effective and significant role which the United Nations Committee on the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People is playing in supporting the People of Palestine and their Leaders in realizing their goals and aspirations in the establishment of a State of their own. Finally, I urge all parties to re build the lost trust. Without mutual trust and mutual respect we cannot hope that a solution is found to this long standing and sad conflict. Let us all be optimistic and work for peace and stability in the region and for the peace of mind of the families, especially the children who are the hope of a new era.

Thank you.