

Shahroo Abdul Sattar
Chargé d'Affaires

Statement during Special Session on OPT

Thank you Mr. President,

The Maldives strongly supports the right to the people of Palestine to freely determine their own political and economic system, including the right to resist forcible deprivation of their right to self-determination and the right to live, in peace and freedom, in their own State. We also support the inalienable right of the people of Israel to live in peace and security. Perhaps the greatest tragedy of the Gaza conflict is that, although fought to assert these rights, it in fact pushes them further away.

Mr. President,

The Maldives believes that the report of the fact-finding mission led by Justice Goldstone is detailed and thorough, although we do regret Israel's decision not to cooperate with the fact-finding mission.

In particular, the Maldives endorses the following conclusions:

1. The blockade amounts to collective punishment intentionally inflicted by the Government of Israel on the people of the Gaza Strip. As such the blockade violates international law and should be immediately lifted.
2. The launching of rockets by Palestinian armed groups into Israeli civilian areas constitutes a grave violation of humanitarian and human rights law.
3. The Israeli military incursion into Gaza in response to those rocket attacks was massively disproportionate, while the destruction of houses, factories,

schools and hospitals and the large number of civilian dead demonstrates, at best, a blatant disregard for the fundamental principle of distinction.

Mr. President,

The Maldives believes that the clear and manifest violations of human rights and humanitarian law that have occurred in Gaza warrant careful and verifiable scrutiny. Accountability must be established, and justice pursued. The Maldives therefore supports the recommendation, contained in the report, that all alleged violations by both sides in the conflict be independently investigated and that those investigations together with any subsequent prosecutions, be monitored by the Security Council.

Mr. President,

The Maldives also welcomes the report of the High Commissioner which mirrors many, but not all, of the conclusions reached in the Goldstone report. The Maldives is particularly concerned by information on the rapid growth of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and by reports of settler violence against the Palestinian population – violence which usually takes place with impunity. The Maldives believes that settler activity in the Occupied Palestinian Territory not only represents a flagrant violation of international humanitarian and human rights law, but also represents a key obstacle to the achievement of long-term peace and security in the region.

The Maldives therefore takes this opportunity to call for an immediate freeze in all settlement activity, as a vital precursor to the resumption of comprehensive peace talks.

Finally Mr. President, while taking note of assurances by the Israeli Government that no digging or excavation work is taking place beneath and around the Al Aqsa mosque; the Maldives would like to express its concern at reports of such activities, and reiterates its call for Israel to lift restrictions on Palestinians wishing to enter the Mosque.

Thank you.