

**Statement by Mr. Mounir Tabet**  
**Deputy Executive Secretary of ESCWA**  
**on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People**  
**Beirut, 26 November 2018**

Mr. Ehab Bseiso, Minister of Culture of the State of Palestine,  
Mr. Jean Ogasapian, Minister of Women's Affairs of Lebanon, representing Prime Minister Saad Hariri,  
Ambassadors and representatives of the diplomatic corps in Lebanon,  
Members of Parliament,  
Colleagues and friends,

"Peace be upon a land created for peace, yet never witnessed a peaceful day..."

With those words, the revered Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish concludes a verse in which he summarizes the reality that Palestine and its people have lived for 70 years.

Every year, we come together to mark the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. A day observed by the United Nations pursuant to General Assembly resolution 32/40 of 1977 that declared 29 November a day of solidarity with the Palestinian people; a day which coincides with the anniversary of resolution 181 on the Partition Plan of historic Palestine.

The world commemorates this day, not because the Palestinian people deserve solidarity more than others, but because they have been denied the most basic human rights enjoyed by others.

They have been deprived freedom and a dignified life, and denied the right to self-determination.

They have a right to development. They have a right to statehood. They have a right to justice.

Those rights are immutable and inalienable, as annually reaffirmed in General Assembly resolutions. It is unacceptable for a people to remain deprived of such basic rights in this day and age.

For that reason, we stand in solidarity with the Palestinian people today. However, the symbolic solidarity that we commit ourselves to every year is insufficient. It must be complemented with action to free the Palestinians from injustice, and help them exercise their rights in full.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Palestinian people are subjected to an aberrant reality of fragmentation, oppression, poverty and injustice. Palestinians, wherever they may be, are one people that have been fragmented, to segments living in various forms of suffering and deprivation caused by Israeli

policies and practices, many of which violate international conventions and resolutions and principles of international law.

Palestinian refugees suffer because they have been denied the right to return to their land and homes. Generation after generation are languishing in refugee camps, with catastrophic living conditions that are set to deteriorate further because of funding crises and political pressures faced by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

Palestinians in Jerusalem live under occupation and annexation, and suffer from discriminatory policies and daily threats of eviction and displacement, and from marginalization and poverty. They are isolated from the West Bank by illegal settlements and the wall, which the International Court of Justice ruled unlawful around 15 years ago.

Palestinians in the West Bank face discrimination and oppression from direct military occupation, under whose watch settler violence is increasing and settlements are spreading, creating a reality in which Palestinians are denied access to cultivate their land and exploit its resources and are distanced from their family members and communities, and in which their safety and existence are exposed to constant risk.

People in Gaza are living a true humanitarian tragedy as a result of occupation, blockade and repeated military offensives by Israel. Thousands have died, and tens of thousands of injured and ill persons are refused exit from Gaza to seek medical care and the import of means for their treatment is banned. Economic and social indicators in Gaza have reached alarming figures, up to the point of de-development: 55 per cent of the population is unemployed, 71 per cent of young people are out of work, 54 per cent live in poverty, and 80 per cent rely on humanitarian aid. Moreover, the Strip suffers from pollution and water and energy scarcity. The United Nations Country Team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory summarized the situation in Gaza by warning that the Strip will become uninhabitable in 2020.

All that I have said is documented in United Nations reports, including the 2018 note of the Secretary-General on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation that reaffirms the cumulative effects of Israeli practices and policies on the Palestinian people. The report also confirms that there is no alternative to adherence to international law and that no party should violate international law with impunity, as a prerequisite to achieving peace and justice in the region.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The purpose of observing the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People is not to list Israeli violations of international law, or to shed additional light on the immense suffering of the Palestinian people living under occupation, in the diaspora or in refugee camps. Today is an opportunity to stress the right of the Palestinian people to a life like other peoples across the world, and the need to support the Palestinian people in their decade-long tireless struggle for their rights. They have become a role model for patience, determination, will and commitment to their right to life.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Palestinian people affirm that they have never lost hope in attaining their rights, or in their ability to build their economy, society and human capital. Palestinians insist on educating their children, Palestinian civil society is determined to implement initiatives and projects, and Palestinian institutions persist in building their capacity and in formulating plans and strategies to achieve development.

Palestinians deserve more than solidarity. They deserve all possible efforts to support them in regaining their rights.

The Palestinian people are striving alone to achieve justice. They try not to rely on anyone to advance and move forward. It is however our individual duty as human beings, firstly, and our shared duty as an international community, secondly, to provide every support to Palestine and its people, in the hope of achieving justice and peace for them. If we believe that development and peace are a right that should exclude no one, this right will remain incomplete if the Palestinian people are overlooked.

I would like to conclude like I started, with a poem by Mahmoud Darwish:

As you prepare your breakfast, think of others.

Don't forget to feed the pigeons.

As you conduct your wars, think of others.

Don't forget those who want peace.

As you pay your water bill, think of others.

Think of those who only have clouds to drink from.

As you go home, your own home, think of others

don't forget those who live in tents.

As you sleep and count the planets, think of others

there are people who have no place to sleep.

As you liberate yourself with metaphors think of others

those who have lost their right to speak.

And as you think of distant others

think of yourself and say

"I wish I were a candle in the darkness."

Thank you.