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**Human rights situation in Palestine and other
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Written statement* submitted by the International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD), a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[2 January 2012]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

Human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories

Martin Luther said that peace is not merely a distant goal we seek, but a means by which we arrive at that goal. Throughout the world, nations and people from all walks of life seek peace and security. Ending wars is the path to progress and fulfillment of higher aspirations for unity and the advancement of humanity towards more universal horizons. Many are dedicated to the potential realization of such future. To the same degree, all are conscious that man is man in terms of frailty and rationalizations. History is full of lessons and examples of how few may distort the facts to make others see evil as good and good as evil; oftentimes resorting to violence and wars on the pretext of self-defense.

If we were to consider the Palestinian case from the viewpoint of a people who for more than half a century have faced transgressions on the hands of those who claim they are peacemakers, it is clear to see a case of such distortions. We witness how invaders who came from far to rival Palestinians on their own land and to uproot them from where they lived for thousands of years cannot make peace through force, yet blindly persist in a vicious cycle of denial and violence. Should a whole nation of people go on living under occupation until their occupier is satisfied with the conditions for surrender! Israel has to choose between peace and occupation. The occupiers and the occupied are not two equal parties to the conflict. After decades of negotiations, the lack of peaceful solutions is harming not only Palestinians but also Jews everywhere. Peace is important not only to Israelis and Palestinians but to the region and the world.

The question of who is responsible for the bloodshed of Israelis and Palestinians comes to the mind of sensible people seeking peace on both sides. Who is responsible for a tragedy lasting more than sixty years of eroding the humanity of others? Has the Israeli side not yet realized that Palestinians will never stop the legitimate struggle for their inalienable rights! Have they not yet recognized that Israelis will never live in peace and security as long as Palestinians continue to resist occupation and fight for self-determination!

Reason says that violence will only breed counter-violence. Hence, why speak of peace and justice but support repression and occupation, why preach freedom, democracy and human rights but deprive Palestinians of their self-determination, thereby subjecting both Israelis and Palestinians to an endless action-reaction cycle of mutual destruction. Could the Israeli leadership, despite centuries of eloquent, persuasive, and visionary examples in Jewish history, be delusional about the consequences of denying Palestinians statehood which is self-evident! If all of those concerned in the international community are certain of the tragic consequences for generations to come, what are Israeli leaders to conclude, and how far will they go to elude themselves and others? There must be some secret behind this endless perplexity facing both Israeli and Palestinian civilians who are eager for peace and have been driven instead to dead-ends of conflicts, bloodshed, and regrets.

The international community wants both sides to have a better future, but could the Israeli leadership ever respect the resolutions of the United Nations and Security Council as long as it can rely on United States veto power which so far has encouraged Israel to ignore its responsibility and trample on international law? How many more Palestinians need to be made homeless before the wolf is no longer entrusted with the hen house? Is America in favor of segregation and Jewish-only roads and settlements when such a practice is illegal in the United States? Palestinians do not want the international community to fund the occupation but to end it.

The future of Israelis and Palestinians is determined in the present. Israel can reach a fair settlement of peaceful coexistence with Palestinians and its Arab neighbors in good faith by

an act of bona fide will for genuine peace and justice. However, the misguided interference of veto power, force, and arrogance has so far stifled all hopes. Israel may want peace, but the condition for this seemingly unattainable goal is because the occupying power insists to be both the judge and jury.

This raises other unanswered questions which the international community must address. What is the reason behind the blind bias of United States toward Israel in a way that jeopardizes its own national interest in the Arab region and compromises Israel's best interests in the long term? Is it the result of the influence of the Zionist lobby? To some extent it maybe so, but there might be other significant factors in the terms of this complex equation, which have to be scrutinized and recognized by both Palestinians and Israelis if they really want to stop the bloodshed between them and end the deadlock to reach a final peace agreement.

Both parties must come to know that if peace were to be achieved, the war and destruction machine which has depleted their resources would stop. Aims of economic integration among all the races and religions in this region, which is the cradle of civilizations, would be slowly but surely realized. Be it agricultural and industrial development, scientific and technological progress, or sharing the diversely rich cultural and historical heritage. All can contribute to creating the desired bright future that will lead by example for generations to come; a shining example of tolerance and understanding to illuminate not only the Middle East, but the rest of the world.

There are those who are certainly interested in sustaining a state of lasting conflict and tension. For example, by supporting illegal settlers with funds, weapons, and other underhanded means to instigate divisions and incite hatred which impede all steps toward peace. Those who spread divisions feel at ease while both Israelis and Palestinians are fighting each other. Continuous fighting and killing means continuous demand for weapons and the uncontrollable requirement for supplying the destruction machine. Zionism went astray when it justified seizing Palestinian land by force and legitimized discrimination and racism as a means to achieving its aims.

In conclusion, it is evident throughout ancient and contemporary history that force cannot be used to achieve peace. For decades, through violence and counter violence, Zionism has targeted Palestinians in the name of religion, trampling on international law in the name of the Jewish people, occupying land by force in the name of Israel's security. Not every Jew, not every Israeli, is a Zionist. It is high time for Jews everywhere in general and for Israelis in specific to condemn the grave violations of international humanitarian and human rights law committed in their name. Ultimately, when all else fails, it will become clearer to Israelis, Zionists or not, that their freedom depends on Palestinians freedom. Making peace with Palestinians is the only way for Israelis to have peace.

Otherwise, occupation can only continue by the use of force again and again. The vicious cycle of conflict will only engender further conflict. Invaders cannot be peacemakers at the same time. How can there be peace as long as Israel is an occupying force! Occupation approached objectively, without denying or justifying, must end. Beginning with this fact without justifications, without rationalizations, should be unquestionable. Defensive attitudes build walls of separation. If Israel prefers to remain in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, there will continue to be a resistance to occupation; and where there is resistance there can be no peace, neither for the occupier nor for the occupied.