



THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY FOURTH COMMITTEE: SPECIAL POLITICAL AND DECOLONIZATION

Purview of the Simulation: The Fourth Committee deals with a variety of political issues on most topics including the political components of decolonization and economic and social issues (excluding disarmament). As the Committee's focus is strictly political, its recommendations should be broad in nature. The Fourth Committee is also charged with the coordination and operational aspects of UN peacekeeping missions. This is an important distinction from the Security Council, which develops peacekeeping missions and objectives. The Fourth Committee deals solely with

the Department of Peacekeeping Operations' procedures and policies. Similarly, while the Committee may discuss the political problems in funding Palestine, it cannot discuss the details of how to properly fund Palestine, as would the Second Committee. For more information concerning the purview of the UN's General Assembly as a whole, see page 16.

Website: www.un.org/ga/61/fourth/fourth.shtml

REPORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE ISRAELI PRACTICES AFFECTING THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE AND OTHER ARABS OF THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

The situation of the Palestinian and Arab peoples residing in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights has been of concern to the United Nations since the beginning of Israel's occupation of the respective territories. On 19 December 1968 the General Assembly created the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the human rights of the Palestinian People and other Arabs of the Occupied Territories. The General Assembly requested that the Government of Israel cooperate with the Special Committee; the Committee, in turn, was directed to report its findings to the Secretary-General as soon as possible and whenever needed thereafter.

The Human Rights Council has condemned Israel's recurring military attacks and incursions on the occupied territories, most recently those occurring in the occupied Gaza Strip. These attacks have resulted in casualties of over 125 lives and hundreds of injuries among Palestinian civilians. Specific concerns about the human rights of the Palestinian people were enumerated in the 6 June 2008 report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The recent closing of the Gaza Strip is of particular concern. With the exception of humanitarian imports, a small number of international visitors, patients requiring emergency care, and Palestinians who receive exit permits from Israel, Gaza has been closed off from the outside world. There have been significant fuel shortages, which have been exacerbated by the restriction of fuel shipments through the Nahal Oz crossing point, the only one through which Gaza is permitted to receive fuel. Shipments were diminished following an attack by Palestinian militants on the crossing point which killed two Israeli civilians. Israel has permitted Gaza's power plant to receive 2.2 million liters of industrial diesel per week, allowing the plant to produce electricity at two thirds of its normal capacity. However, The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) and Palestinians Authority officials allege that Hamas is seizing half of the quantity of fuel transferred each week for its own military purposes.

As a result of these conditions, there has been a significant decrease in standard of living among the population of the Gaza strip. A wide range of human rights, specifically those pertaining to economic, social, and cultural freedoms but additionally to life, human dignity, and freedom of movement, have been curtailed. Water and sewage networks have been adversely affected by the absence of space parts and equipment. Up to 70,000 cubic meters of partially treated and untreated sewage are being dumped into the sea on a daily basis. Other waste has reached the aquifer, polluting the drinking water. The cost of basic food in Gaza has increased by 31 percent since June 2007. According to a joint agency report issued 6 March 2008, 80 percent of Gaza's population is relying on food aid assistance.

The closure has also impacted patient access to health care outside the Gaza Strip; in March four patients died after being denied permits to cross Erez, including a 12 month old baby girl with liver disease. Israeli human rights organizations have condemned the security services for the lengthy procedures relating to permits for cancer and heart patients crossing into Israel for treatment, or crossing through Israel to be treated in Jordan or Egypt. Fuel shortages have also paralyzed Gaza's transportation system, and absenteeism in schools ranges from 20 - 50 percent as a result. Aid agencies have reported that political pressure from the American-European community as well as Israel not to collaborate with Hamas officials in Gaza has hampered their effectiveness.

According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 221 Palestinians were killed between 25 February and 25 April 2008 as a result of the international armed Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. During the same period, 10 Israeli civilians were killed and approximately 24 injured. The Israeli Air Force has conducted approximately 75 air strikes on different targets within the Gaza strip during the same period, and it is estimated that Palestinian militants have fired around 640 mortar shells and 450 rockets from Gaza into southern Israel, specifically into the cities of Sderot and Ashkelon, most of which were indiscriminate. There have been at least 30 IDF incursions into Gaza, and 348 into various locations within the West Bank.

The High Commissioner's report concludes that the human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory remains grave, particularly in Gaza, and that the establishment of accountability mechanisms has not been implemented.

Questions to consider from your government's perspective on this issue include:

- What are some means of addressing Israel's security concerns while allowing greater mobility for residents of the Occupied Territories?
- What accountability measures can the Committee suggest or implement that would monitor and deter human rights violations?
- How can the international community help support the NGOs currently monitoring the situation to continue to improve the human rights conditions in the Occupied Territories?
- To what extent can the international community improve the human rights condition of the Palestinian people while respecting Israel's sovereignty?

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- A/RES/62/104
- A/RES/62/102
- A/RES/61/116
- A/RES/60/104
- A/RES/59/121
- A/RES/56/59
- A/RES/54/77
- A/RES/23/2443
- A/HRC/8/17

Additional Web Resources:

- www.palestinefacts.org – Palestine Facts
- www.pchrgaza.org – Palestinian Centre for Human Rights
- www.unhcr.ch/html/menu2/7/a/moatsc.htm - Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories

ASSISTANCE IN MINE ACTION

A landmine is an explosive device designed to be placed on or in the ground to explode when triggered by an operator or the proximity of a vehicle, person, or animal. The two most commonly used landmines today are Anti-Personnel Landmines (APLs) and Anti-Tank Mines (ATMs). Assistance in mine action refers not only to removing anti-personnel mines, but also to danger prevention and the advocacy for a mine free world. Mine action is about people and societies. The program is not exclusive to anti-personnel mines; unexploded ordnance--military devices such as bombs, mortars, grenades, and missiles that fail to explode on contact--also known as munitions and explosives of concern (MECs), are also included. The five pillars of mine action are clearance and marking of hazardous areas, mine risk education, victim assistance, destruction of stockpiled landmines, and advocacy for international agreements related to landmines and explosive remnants of war.

The purpose of mines was originally to maim, rather than kill, enemies. This was based on the assumption that more resources are expended on a wounded man than a dead one. When parties in conflict realized that landmines could cripple the movement and development of a population, minefields were laid to achieve this end. During conflict, when mines are laid, identification of mines is neglected. The use of landmines is widely considered to be unethical when used in the area-denial role, because their victims are commonly civilians, who are often killed or maimed long after a war has ended. Although efforts to curtail landmines have been successful, much remains to be done as the majority of the over 15,000 annual casualties of landmines are civilians. In the wake of conflict, communities are confronted with the sobering reality that while landmines are inexpensive to put into an area, they are much more costly to remove. States emerging from conflict rarely have the resources to address the problem systematically, so often the poorest regions are the last to receive the time and resources necessary for mine removal.

The landmine crisis presents itself throughout the world, and in many cases, governments do not have the resources to provide information or issue warnings regarding mine threats, limiting the ability for civilian populations to recover from conflict. Identification is an expensive process and mine removal is very time consuming. This prevents LDCs (Lesser Developed Countries) from taking advantage of arable land, for fear it may be peppered with mines. This is just one of a host of developmental issues presented by the fear of mines and unexploded ordnance, such as the toll on communities taken by those injured by landmines and incapacitated or sent away for treatment, the diversion of health care resources to landmine victims from other much needed services, the deterrent to education due to fear of travel, and the general impact on transportation and the flow of commodities and services.

Gravely alarmed by the increasing presence of mines and MECs resulting from armed conflicts, the United Nations passed a resolution in 1993 calling on the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly "a comprehensive report on the problems caused by the increasing presence of mines and other unexploded devices resulting from armed conflicts and on the manner in which the United Nations contribution to the solution of problems relating to mine clearance could be strengthened." The growing proliferation and indiscriminate use of anti-personnel landmines around the world has been a particular focus of attention.

In 1995, a review of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (so-called Inhumane Weapons Convention or CCW) produced the Amended Protocol II, strengthening restrictions on certain uses, types, and transfers of anti-personnel landmines. This Protocol, however, was perceived by some to be an inadequate response to a serious humanitarian crisis. Therefore, a group of like-minded States negotiated an agreement for a total ban on all anti-personnel landmines, the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines on Their Destruction, also known as the Mine Ban Treaty or Ottawa Treaty. The Treaty opened for signature on 3 December 1997 in Ottawa, Canada. The entry into force of the Convention in 1999 has spurred the campaign to reduce needless human suffering by increasing resources for mine clearance, mine awareness and mine assistance. It has been proposed that the Conference on Disarmament negotiate a ban on mines transfers, a measure which a number of States that have not adhered to the Mine-Ban Convention would find acceptable.

A decade after the international community committed itself to elimination of anti-personnel mines, the United Nations can celebrate a number of collective achievements: declining casualties from mines and explosive remnants of war; effective implementation of many key aspects of a strengthened international legal framework; explicit recognition of the importance of gender equality and the rights of persons with disabilities across the mine action sector; and a well-coordinated approach among the many United Nations system partners engaged in mine action on the ground and in New York. UNICEF provides assistance to children affected by landmines; the World Food Program initiates the clearance of access routes for food distribution; the World Health Organization plays a significant role in the treatment and rehabilitation of mine victims, as well as a host of other UN programs included in the mine assistance portfolio. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have also had a significant role; more than half of all mine assistance programs are carried out by non-governmental programs. The coherent inter-agency approach taken by this sector serves as a model for other cross-cutting issues addressed by the United Nations system.

Although the Mine Ban Treaty has been the most significant step toward addressing the global landmine problem, the problem has not been entirely alleviated. This is made evident by the Landmine Monitor, which is updated every year on the progress of the Mine Ban Treaty and details implementation problems. There are several states that have not signed the Mine Ban Treaty, and some signatories have been unable or unwilling to pursue the programs necessary to comply with the Mine Ban Treaty. Other state signatories still use landmines for defense purposes, which is a direct violation of the treaty. Furthermore, efforts at clearance are complicated by the fact that many mines are not confined to a delimited mine zone, but are scattered, making detection and removal more costly and dangerous.

The major problem confronted by mine assistance programs is funding. The funding gap for next year's mine action is estimated at \$365 million. As Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon has pointed out, mine action is all about the individual; the international community can create treaties but individual states must be willing to devote the resources necessary to clear mine fields and eradicate the threat of mines and unexploded ordnance.

Questions to consider from your government's perspective on this issue include:

- What can the UN do to encourage compliance with the Mine Ban Treaty by its signatories?
- How can current Mine Assistance programs be bolstered to help subsidize the cost presented in the identification and removal of landmines and unexploded ordnance?
- What role should technology play in increasing the availability and decreasing the cost of demining equipment?
- What alternatives can the international community support in place of the use of landmines to limit the number of casualties each year?

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A/RES/60/97
A/RES/60/80
A/RES/58/53
GA/SPD/301- Press Release
SC/7926-Press Release
Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction

Additional Web Resources:

- www.icbl.org/lm - Landmine Monitor
www.mineaction.org - Electronic Mine Information Network