

# The United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People



## 35 years of Demonizing Israel

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## Overview

The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (CEIRPP), created in 1975, the only United Nations organ devoted to a specific people, is the single most prolific source of material bearing the official imprimatur of the U.N. which maligns and debases the Jewish State. The CEIRPP has served as a forum for anti-Israel rhetoric and represents the worst example of institutionalized anti-Israel bias in the United Nations. The structural inclusion of such a body in the United Nations, the resolutions which created the committee and which have been promulgated by the committee, the statements and calls for actions made at conferences and meetings sponsored by the committee all convey that the agenda of the committee goes far beyond promoting Palestinian rights.

The meetings and conferences organized by CEIRPP are replete with anti-Israel statements such as false claims that Israel is an “apartheid state” and blatantly anti-Semitic comparisons to the Nazis. While the committee claims to endorse peace negotiations, their resolutions and calls to action omit any consideration of the Israeli perspective and prejudge many issues which both the Israeli and Palestinians have agreed must be negotiated.

Today, 34 years after the CEIRPP was established, as Israelis and Palestinians sit at the negotiating table, the committee is an anachronistic forum for bias against Israel and the most disturbing manifestation of institutional prejudice against the Jewish State within the U.N. Indeed, the very existence of the committee negates a commitment to a negotiated peace, and undermines the efforts and steps both parties have made towards peace. It discounts the progress parties have made and the genuine steps the Israelis have taken to improve the lives of Palestinians. Furthermore, by focusing exclusively and stridently on Palestinian rights, it implies

that the rights of Palestinians specified in the committee's mandate trump the rights of Israeli citizens to live in peace and security.

This report will examine and analyze the creation and current role of the CEIRPP in the U.N. system. By looking at the speeches, resolutions and meetings organized by the CEIRPP, the report will assess the committee's agenda and determine the impact it has on the larger U.N. system.

## Introduction

The U.N. has long been criticized for its anti-Israel bias and its overly critical and often prejudiced resolutions and policies towards Israel. November 10, 1975, however, put the bias of the U.N. on full display when the General Assembly (GA), created the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and passed the infamous Zionism is racism resolution.

The U.N. has more often than not demonstrated hostility and antagonism toward Israel by disproportionately criticizing Israeli policies, singling out Israel for human rights offenses, and prohibiting Israel from the full participation enjoyed by other members. One need look no farther than GA, the main body of the U.N., to see the overwhelming bias: of 10 emergency special sessions called by the GA, six have been about Israel. No emergency sessions have been held on the Rwandan genocide, ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia, or the two decades of atrocities in Sudan. The bias and singling out of Israel is also apparent in the committees and councils which have often been more vocal and blatant about their political agendas. In 1968, the GA adopted Resolution 2443 which created the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories to ensure the “respect for and implementation of human rights in occupied territories.” Additionally, the U.N. Human Rights Council (HRC), which replaced the Commission on Human Rights in March 2006, has been even more hopelessly ineffective than its predecessor, and is permanently engaged in criticism of Israel while ignoring pressing international human rights crises. While items on the HRC’s permanent meeting’s agenda are thematic and general, Israel has its own agenda number and more special HRC emissaries have been assigned to report on Israel and to investigate alleged Israeli offenses than any other

country. The Arab states have been a powerful force in ensuring that the HRC's resolutions and the rhetoric at the meetings are consistently incendiary and anti-Israel. The power of the Arab states is also evident in preventing Israel from obtaining membership in the Asian Regional Group, Israel's natural geopolitical grouping. As a result, Israel sought entry into the Western European and Others Group (WEOG) and in May 2000 was granted admission to that regional group in New York, but not in Geneva, the seat of several U.N. bodies and subsidiary organizations. Israel's participation in the U.N., therefore, is still limited and it is restricted from participating in U.N. Geneva-based activities.

Starting with the successful repeal of the "Zionism is Racism" resolution in 1991, and continuing in recent years, the U.N. leadership has worked to improve the environment for Israel at the U.N. However, the CEIRPP remains an anachronistic yet active reminder of the U.N.'s prejudice.

The creation of the CEIRPP stemmed from a resolution adopted the previous year in which the GA confirmed and established the rights of the Palestinian people as: the right to self-determination without external interference, the right to national independence and sovereignty and to return to their homes and property from which they have been displaced and uprooted, and calls for their return. The November 10<sup>th</sup>, 1975 resolution, Resolution 3376, stated that "no progress has been achieved" in ensuring the rights of the Palestinians and that in order to ensure the attainment of these rights, a Special Committee should be established.

The establishment of this committee for the sole purpose of upholding Palestinian rights and denigrating Israeli rights clearly demonstrates the pervasive bias which has existed within the U.N. since its establishment. Yet, considering the modern political climate and the advances and efforts made toward peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians the committee's

continued operations highlight this bias and convey an anachronistic view of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Indeed, the committee's very existence exclusively advocates for the rights of the Palestinian people while, in reality, the well being of the Palestinian people has been championed and advocated by the international community for decades. Peace plans, conferences and meetings such as the Madrid Conference, the Oslo Accords and negotiating process, the Road Map, and most recently, the Annapolis Conference, have all established mechanisms to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with recognition for the rights of Israelis and Palestinians. The committee's existence, continued meetings and declarations calling for recognition of Palestinian rights is superfluous and anachronistic, serving only to propagate a stridently one-sided view of the conflict, with no constructive mechanism for resolving the conflict.

Furthermore, the creation of the committee within the U.N. system and its continued activity represents the institutionalization of this partiality and tacit complicity with this anti-Israeli agenda. When one examines the resolution establishing the committee, the subsequent actions and statements made by the committee, and the nature of the meetings and conferences organized by the committee, it is clear that this is not just a partiality for the Palestinians, but a bias against Israel.

## **The Establishing Resolutions:**

On November 22, 1974, the General Assembly adopted resolution 3236, entitled the “Question of Palestine” in which it expressed “grave concern that the Palestinian people has been prevented from enjoying its inalienable rights.” According to the resolution, these rights include, “The right to self-determination without external interference,” “The right to national independence and sovereignty” and “to return to their homes and property from which they have been displaced and uprooted.” While the Palestinians have rights like any other people, their “right of return” is an extremely contentious issue and one which parties have agreed should be decided through negotiations and peace talks. While the resolution claims to advocate for a resolution to the conflict, it simultaneously grants the “right of return” to the Palestinians, negating any agreements made during peace negotiations. The establishment of the committee, therefore, discounts the peace efforts which have been made and ignores the Israeli perspective entirely.

The following year, on November 10, 1975, the General Assembly invoked resolution 3236 to establish the CEIRPP with Resolution 3376—one which is renewed each year. The mandate of the Committee serves as further evidence of its one-sided agenda. The committee was asked to focus solely on the Palestinian people and to design and recommend a program of implementation to enable the Palestinian people to exercise the rights recognized in Resolution 3236.

## **The General Assembly Increases the CEIRPP's Influence:**

Soon after the committee was created, the General Assembly expanded the committee's mandate and, through Resolution 32/40, established the Division for Palestinian Rights (DPR) to help promote its programs and efforts.

The Division is charged with providing substantive support and secretariat services for the CEIRPP, assisting the CEIRPP with exercising its mandate, promoting and implementing its recommendations, monitoring the developments relevant to the question of Palestine, planning and organizing the meetings and conferences organized by the CEIRPP and organizing the "International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People."

Throughout the years, the committee's and DPR's mandates have been expanded to: promote the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people; raise international awareness on the question of Palestine; mobilize international support for and assistance to the Palestinian people; work toward a peaceful settlement of the 'Question of Palestine.' Thus, each year, when the GA reaffirms this committee, it is restating the highly contentious claim on "the right of return" and taking a pro-Palestinian approach to the conflict.

## **Annual Resolutions:**

Each year, the committee's mandate is renewed in a resolution entitled 'Question of Palestine' which, while there are often additions and changes depending on the political situation, always "Endorses the recommendations" the CEIRPP makes in its annual report and, "decides to circulate the report of the committee to all the competent bodies of the United Nations and urges them to take necessary action." In 1993, the efforts of the committee were accentuated when the language of the resolution was changed from simply authorizing the

committee to carry out its recommendations to stating annually that it: “authorizes the committee to continue to exert all efforts to promote the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people” (A/RES/48/158 December 20).

In addition to the ‘Question of Palestine’ Resolution, each year the GA adopts the recommendations the CEIRPP makes in its annual report. These reports reflect the one-sided perspective of the committee and the recommendations place the burden of the conflict on Israel’s shoulders. The report frequently contains anti-Israel statements and asks the international community to take up anti-Israel actions. In 1983, ( Resolution A/38/35) for example, the CEIRPP adopted the program of action created at a conference the committee ran that year called the International Conference on the Question of Palestine (A/CONF.114/42). As expected, many of the items the committee listed on the “Program of Action” were one-sided, such as: “Refrain from providing Israel with assistance of such a nature as to encourage it militarily, economically and financially to continue its aggression, occupation and disregard of its obligations under the Charter and the relevant resolutions of the United Nations,” “Request the General Assembly at its thirty-eighth session to designate a Year of Palestine,” and calling Israel an “apartheid regime.” Therefore, by accepting the recommendations of the CEIRPP, the General Assembly adopted these anti-Israel calls for action and accepted these prejudiced statements.

In 1993, the CEIRPP report endorsed a meeting record which stated: “participants expressed support for the intifada[h], through which the Palestinian people had expressed its national consensus in rejection of the occupation and for the establishment of a Palestinian State” (A/48/35).

There is also an annual resolution which reaffirms the creation of the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat which requests both member states and the Secretary General assist with the dissemination of information relating to the CEIRPP. While the language of the resolution changes from year to year, the resolution consistently stresses the importance of propagating the cause of the Palestinian people. For example, in 2003, the resolution “*requests* the Secretary-General to ensure the continued cooperation of the Department of Public Information and other units of the Secretariat in enabling the Division to perform its tasks and in covering adequately the various aspects of the question of Palestine” (A/RES/58/19). The call to action in this resolution highlights the bias the committee represents—by affirming this resolution, the GA is ensuring that the plight of the Palestinians is propagated while neglecting to mention any suffering on the Israeli side, let alone an inclusion of the Jewish State’s perspective.

This one-sidedness has existed for decades—in 1983, the GA stated that it was “*Convinced* that the world-wide dissemination of accurate and comprehensive information and the role of non-governmental organizations and institutions remain of vital importance in heightening awareness of and support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to the establishment of an independent sovereign Palestinian State” and called on the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat to:

Disseminate all information on the activities of the United Nations system relating to Palestine, Expand publications and audio-visual coverage of the facts and developments pertaining to the question of Palestine, Publish newsletters and articles in its relevant publications on Israeli violations of the human rights of the Arab inhabitants of the occupied territories, and organize fact-finding missions to the area for journalists, and Organize regional encounters for journalists... (A/RES/38/58).

After this request, each year the GA passes a separate resolution calling on Department for Public Information to assist the CEIRPP with their public relations efforts.

In 1993, the General Assembly added another resolution to those adopted annually, entitled the “Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine,” (A/RES/48/158). This resolution establishes “principles for the achievement of a final settlement and comprehensive peace” which negate any negotiations which have been made and ignore aspects of the conflict which must be decided by both parties. Amongst other requirements, the resolution calls for: “the withdrawal of Israel from the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem, and from the other occupied Arab territories” and “Resolving the problem of the Palestine refugees in conformity with General Assembly resolution 194 (III) of 11 December 1948, and subsequent relevant resolutions.” These calls by the GA serve no purpose but to ignore the progress and decisions made by both sides to pursue Israeli-Palestinian peace.

### **Structural Bias:**

Upon looking at the language of the resolutions endorsed and the statements made by the committee, the one-sided nature of the CEIRPP is evident. Yet, the existence of the CEIRPP becomes even more troubling when one looks at the position of the committee within the context of the broader U.N. structure. While there are fourteen committees within the U.N. system, the CEIRPP is the only subsidiary committee which was created to assist a specific people. In the U.N. there are two Assistant Secretary Generals and under each of them there are three divisions. Among these six divisions, the Division for Palestinian Rights is the only one devoted to one populous. Indeed, the others are much more general with assignments such as “Americas & Europe Division” and “Africa 1.”

## **The International Community creates the CEIRPP through slander and bias:**

At the time of its creation, the committee consisted of the following countries:

Afghanistan, Cuba, Cyprus, German Democratic Republic, Guinea, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Laos, Madagascar, Malaysia, Malta, Pakistan, Romania, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, Yugoslavia.

Today, 34 years later, as the world has changed, politically and geographically, the make-up of the committee is slightly different. (Countries in bold are the replacements): Afghanistan,

**Belarus**, Cuba, Cyprus, Guinea, **Guyana**, India, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Madagascar, Malaysia, **Mali**, Malta, **Namibia**, **Nigeria**, Pakistan, Senegal, Sierra Leone, **South Africa**, Tunisia, Turkey and Ukraine.

Unsurprisingly, during the meeting which established the CEIRPP, many anti-Israel statements were made, further highlighting that this committee was not just established to assist Palestinians but to serve as a bastion of anti-Israel sentiment and a forum for anti-Israel rhetoric.

At the opening of the meeting on November 5, 1975, the Israel bashing began and did not stop for the remainder of the meeting. (A/PV.2394):

**Union of Soviet Socialist Republics:** “Israel's policy of aggression and expansion directed against the Arab countries and peoples and pursued by those leaders and their Zionist protectors has been represented to us as, so to speak, an international good deed, while the legitimate struggle of the Palestinian people for their inalienable rights is portrayed by them as what they describe as terrorist activity. But this is deliberate slander...the slander of the Zionists has been focused on the assertion that the whole Palestine movement consists of terrorists and extremists. In order to justify that slander the Israeli authorities have continued to act arbitrarily in the occupied territories. They are driving Arabs from their homes and carrying out mass arrests and repression. Tens of thousands of Palestinian patriots are languishing in Israeli gaols, many of them on the routine charge of having violated the so-called occupation laws, which are themselves nothing but sheer lawlessness.”

**Mauritania:** "...an international conspiracy rooted in a racist theory, Zionism, appeared on the horizon of the land of Palestine. Gradually this land was overrun by the advocates of that theory, and, on the basis of an ownership claim whose fallacious nature we shall never cease to denounce, has served to salve a European conscience in search of a new victim...Also, the sophisticated system of propaganda which made it possible for so long for the Zionist authorities to mislead a certain sector of international public opinion by presenting lies as truth, the victim as the aggressor or the aggressor as the victim, exploded under the pressure of facts which became more obvious with every passing day..."

The following day, the slander continued (A/PV.2395):

**Turkey:** "I should like to reaffirm that the Republic of Turkey, its people and its Government stand firmly behind the Palestinian people in their just struggle. The march of history indicates the inevitability of the victory of the oppressed."

**Oman:** "The *raison d'être* of that cause lies in the dispersal of an entire people from its homeland and in the fact that they have been deprived of their rights in order to bring in foreigners from other parts of the world, as a result of the plot laid by international Zionism, with encouragement of certain countries, a plot that until very recently has been ignored by the whole world.... For over a quarter of a century, Israel through its propaganda machinery has continued in a doomed but constant effort to disguise the true situation of the Palestine Arab people and to level various accusations at the PLO. However, this Assembly has become aware of these efforts and will no longer be taken in by such tricks."

**India:** "They have a rightful claim on the United Nations to redress the wrongs and injustices inflicted upon them in their own country. They have now come to the United Nations with an olive branch... can we stand by and watch the Palestinian Arabs being subjected to the sort of treatment whereby the European Jews were hounded out of Europe 35 to 40 years ago?"

**Hungary:** "In our view, the whole Middle East question and the question of Palestine, which is the key problem of the area, impose upon us a task whose solution brooks no delay. A solution, however, cannot come but by way of a sober analysis of the facts and by looking to the future. No one can deny that the massive banishment of Palestinian Arabs from the land of their ancestors has been a consequence of imperialist aggressions... Shall we permit Israel's aggression, occupation, annexation, to stand, just because it calls itself 'a free and socially advanced country in the Middle East'?"

**Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic:** "The Israeli leaders are very fond of saying that whatever Israel is doing is being done to ensure the 'security' of its boundaries. But that is not a new thesis: it has been used by all aggressors, including the Hitlerite Fascists."

**Tunisia:** “Zionism is a political movement carried out by a minority of Jews designed to set up an artificial State in reaction to the oppression that befell the Jews in Europe and that culminated in the acts of the Nazi regime. Thus, using terrorism and continued violence, it has usurped the land of a peaceful people and brought in settlers from abroad, replacing the original indigenous population, who paid the price for a crime they did not commit and who became the victims of oppression and aggression. Thus the Zionist movement changed from the defence of the Jews to enmity towards the Arabs. Its racist character was revealed by its opposition to another part of the Semite race, namely, the Arab people of Palestine, and the Arabs in general.”

### **The CEIRPP and the Security Council:**

In 1976, the committee also attempted to gain legitimacy from the Security Council. At the Security Council’s meeting on June 29<sup>th</sup> 1976, (S/PV.1938), the members of the committee sat at the Council table while they presented their report and awaited the Council’s vote. The United States was the only country to veto the resolution while Benin, China, Guyana, Japan, Libyan Arab Republic, Pakistan, Panama, Romania, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Republic of Tanzania voted for the resolution and France, Italy, Sweden, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland abstained. In his explanation of the veto, American Ambassador Sherer stated:

We are convinced that resolutions and committee reports are not the most effective way of dealing with the question of the political future of the Palestinians. The United States will do its utmost to bring about the early resumption of serious negotiations looking towards a settlement of all the issues, and we believe it is through such negotiations that we must seek a solution to the issue of the Palestinians....There are, in our view, two fundamental flaws to this draft. First, the text is totally devoid of balance, stressing the rights and interests of one party to the Middle East dispute and ignoring the rights and interests of other parties. Secondly...the political interests of the Palestinians and their role in a final Middle East settlement constitute, in my Government's view, a matter that must be negotiated between the parties before it can be defined in resolutions of the Council. For those reasons, my delegation intends to vote against this draft resolution.

In his comments, Ambassador Sherer articulated the problem with the nature of CEIRPP and the one-sided resolutions and reports it consistently produces.

### **International Solidarity Day for Palestinian People:**

The most infamous event organized by the CEIRPP is the “International Solidarity Day with the Palestinian People,” held annually on November 29. In resolution 60/37 which passed on December 1, 2005, the GA mandated that each year the CEIRPP and the Division for Palestinian Rights should organize an annual exhibit on Palestinian rights or a cultural event in cooperation with the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the U.N. The U.N. began observing International Solidarity Day for Palestinian People in 1977 when the GA adopted resolution 32/40 B on December 2. The observance marks the 1947 partition of Palestine—when the U.N. was going to partition the then-land of Palestine into two states—one Jewish and one Arab. The U.N. offices in New York, Geneva and Vienna commemorate this day with Palestinian films, art exhibits, and panel speakers. Each year, the organizers and participants take advantage of the forum to vilify Israel and ensure that the events marking the day are replete with anti-Israel statements. Yet, the 2005 observance marked a new low. At one event, Secretary General Kofi Annan, President of the General Assembly, and the President of the Security Council took part in a panel discussion. Behind the panelists, there was a map of the State of Israel which was labeled “map of Palestine” and was prominently featured. Not only did the map incorrectly imply that there was a State of Palestine, but it erased Israel from the map.

In response, the U.N. Ambassador to the United Nations, John Bolton, wrote a letter, dated January 3, 2006, to Secretary General Annan, expressing that “it was entirely inappropriate for this map to be used. It can be misconstrued to suggest that the United Nations tacitly

supports the abolition of the State of Israel...given that we now have a world leader pursuing nuclear weapons who is calling for the state of Israel to be ‘wiped off the map,’ the issue has even greater salience.”

While Bolton’s letter shows that Israel does have *some* friends in the U.N., the very fact that the map was part of the proceedings and that the U.N. leaders participated in the panel at which it was featured, conveys the implicit acceptance of bias against Israel at the U.N. and explains how the CEIRPP, as anachronistic as it is, still exists.

### **Other Meetings:**

Over the years, the CEIRPP has organized many international conferences. While these meetings frequently have seemingly innocuous names, they serve as forums for anti-Israel statements and biased rhetoric. Some examples are: United Nations Meeting in Support of Middle East Peace, United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People, and the Inter-Parliamentary Conference on the Question of Palestine.

Behind the names of these conferences is a concerted effort to create fodder for resolutions and to give legitimacy to anti-Israel statements in the U.N. system. For example, on September 7-8<sup>th</sup> 2006, the committee organized an International Conference of Civil Society in Support of the Palestinian People in Geneva. At this conference, while the theme was “Realizing the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people,” the statements made and the final document produced conveyed that the conference was also meant to serve as a forum for bashing Israel. As the final document states “We face a new crisis of war and occupation, a crisis in which Palestinians continue to suffer, even beyond the suffering imposed by decades of brutal occupation and apartheid....12 years after the end of apartheid in South Africa, we are reminded

that Israel continues to practise a system of apartheid and, further, is perpetuating the longest occupation in recent history.” Furthermore, in their call to action they asked U.N. member states to, among other things, “encourage and impose sanctions, especially in the form of ending the murderous arms trade with Israel, and to end sanctions that have been imposed against the elected Palestinian Authority and the collective punishment of the Palestinian people.”

While many of the conferences and meetings organized by the committee claim to endorse international efforts for peace, their statements and conclusions convey their disdain and ignorance of peace negotiations. In April 2008, the committee organized a conference entitled “United Nations International Conference on Palestine Refugees” in Paris, France. The conference members stated their support of the Annapolis process and “had committed themselves to meaningful and ongoing negotiations.” Yet, in opposition to the negotiating process and, defying what had been decided on as an issue to be negotiated, the conference participants expressed support for the Palestinian “right of return,” stating:

As the participants analyzed the various practical approaches to resolving the issue, they stressed that a durable solution to the Palestine refugee problem, and by extension to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a whole, could only be achieved in the context of their inalienable right of return to the homes and property from which they had been displaced. The participants underscored the abiding relevance of the provisions of General Assembly resolution 194 (III) and subsequent United Nations resolutions on the question of Palestine embodying this principle, and of the Arab Peace Initiative.

Such strong statements leave little room for any negotiations and serve to impede peace rather than facilitate it.

**Conclusion:**

The CEIRPP's creation and mandate exemplify the bias and prejudice against Israel within the U.N. system. The comments made at meetings and the resolutions passed are unacceptable in an institution created to combat hate and promote international tolerance. Committee members falsely claiming to support peace while preaching hatred and making statements which ignore the existing negotiations does little to promote peace and serves no constructive purpose. While the committee was created to promote Palestinian rights, the findings of its reports and the various conferences have done little to change the reality for the Palestinian people. The ramifications of such an anachronistic committee are the further vilification and isolation of Israel at the United Nations.







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