



**CHAIR OF  
THE COORDINATING BUREAU  
OF THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT**



**STATEMENT TO BE DELIVERED BY THE DELEGATION OF THE  
BOLIVARIAN REPUBLIC OF VENEZUELA, ON BEHALF OF THE NON-  
ALIGNED MOVEMENT (NAM), ON AGENDA ITEM 53, ENTITLED  
“UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE  
REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST (UNRWA)”, WITHIN THE  
FRAMEWORK OF THE FOURTH COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL  
ASSEMBLY OF THE UNITED NATIONS**

*New York, 03 November 2017*

**Mr. President,**

1. It is an honor for the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to take the floor on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) during the consideration of an agenda item to which we attach great importance; such as, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).
2. At the outset, we seize this opportunity to express our deep appreciation for the invaluable work done and the assistance provided by UNRWA to Palestine refugees, especially in light of the grave situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, as a result of the continued violations by Israel, the occupying Power, and crises and instability affecting other fields of operation in the region.
3. In this regard, we also reiterate our firm appreciation to the Agency's staff, including to Mr. Pierre Krahenbuhl, UNRWA's Commissioner-General, for their tireless efforts and their courage and dedication to serve the Palestine refugees, under adverse conditions, and which in some cases have led, regrettably, to the loss of their lives while in the line of duty.

**Mr. President,**

4. The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) underscores the importance of the work carried out by UNRWA, and reiterates its strong support to the Agency and its mandate to provide humanitarian and development assistance and protection for over 5 million Palestine refugees, pending the achievement of a just solution to their plight on the basis of relevant UN resolutions, including resolution 194 (III), which affirmed, inter alia, their right to return and fair compensation.
5. As we approach the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the General Assembly's partition of the Mandate Palestine and the Nakba that ensued for the Palestinian People, it is an understatement to



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say that such a solution is long overdue and remains central to the achievement of a just, lasting, comprehensive and peaceful solution to the question of Palestine as a whole.

6. As highlighted in the recent report by the Secretary-General on the “Operations of UNRWA”, contained in document A/71/849, the mandate and role of UNRWA, which has been providing essential assistance and humanitarian services to the Palestine refugee communities in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, since 1949, remain fully valid and indispensable until the achievement of a just, lasting, comprehensive and peaceful solution to the question of Palestine. The continued strong and generous support of the international community is thus necessary to ensure the Agency’s continuity of services, and is especially needed in light of the recurrent and severe financial shortfalls that continue to affect its vital humanitarian programmes.
7. Moreover, the Member States of the Movement also express their grave concern over the critical situation of the Palestine refugees as a result of the sustained volatility in the region and widespread violence, as well as the marginalization and poverty that continue to affect them, as noted by the Commissioner-General in the annual report to the General Assembly, contained in document A/72/13, of which we have taken note.
8. As a result of prevailing conditions, Palestine refugees continue to face serious protection challenges. The ongoing Israeli occupation, which has endured now for over 50 years, inflicting armed conflict, collective punishment and forced displacement on the Palestinian people, including refugees, constitutes a daily, constant and severe protection crisis. In many cases, they continue to face existential threats and are sinking deeper into poverty and desperation, as is the case for Palestine refugees in the Gaza Strip. Moreover, the protracted plight of the Palestine refugees has been exacerbated due to a series of crisis in the region, including the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, which continues to constrain the delivery of life-saving humanitarian assistance, and has forced thousands of refugees to flee to other countries for safety, most notably to Lebanon and Jordan, as well as Turkey and beyond.

**Mr. President,**

9. The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) expresses its grave concern regarding recent developments in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, in particular the unprecedented increase in forced displacement, the widespread settlers violence, and the continuation and escalation of both the demolition of homes and economic assets and the illegal policies and measures by Israel, the occupying Power, aimed at expanding its illegal settlement campaign and further entrenching its half-century occupation of the Palestinian land and encroachment and violation of the rights of the Palestinian people. In this regard, the Movement agrees with the Commissioner-General that these practices,



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along with the West Bank Barrier and other restrictions of movement, continue to negatively affect the living conditions and well-being of the civilian population in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Palestine refugees.

10. Moreover, the economy of Gaza has been crippled by the illegal blockade imposed by Israel, the occupying Power, for over ten years, with disastrous impact on the livelihoods and welfare of Palestine refugee families. This unilateral and inhumane action continue to severely affect every aspect of life of the entire Palestinian civilian population there, including the Palestine refugees, including by obstructing humanitarian aid and basic materials from reaching them, impeding the reconstruction of the thousands of homes and infrastructures that have been destroyed, including refugee shelters and infrastructure in the refugee camps, and obstructing economic and social recovery, deepening need and aid dependency that UNRWA is then compelled to respond as more and more families descend into poverty and become food insecure, unable to ensure even the most basic needs.
11. The Member States of the Movement seize this opportunity to stress that the crisis in Gaza must be comprehensively addressed, in accordance with international law, including humanitarian and human rights law, and the relevant UN resolutions, in the context of the overall efforts to bring and end to the illegitimate, belligerent, Israeli foreign occupation of the Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, since 1967. Similarly, we call once again for the full and immediate lifting of the illegal Gaza blockade, which is the only way for the Palestine refugee population in Gaza to decrease its dependency on UNRWA.
12. Moreover, we reiterate our concern over the increased movement and access restrictions faced by Palestine refugees and UNRWA's staff within the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. In this regard, we call upon Israel, the occupying Power, to immediately meet its obligations under international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law, including relevant UN resolutions, and the Fourth Geneva Convention, in order to enable UNRWA to discharge its duties freely, without hindrance or additional costs. Similarly, we call for the full respect of the immunity of the United Nations and the inviolability of United Nations premises and installations, including of UNRWA, and for an end to all violations in this regard.

**Mr. President,**

13. The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) remains seriously concerned by the continuing financial shortfalls of UNRWA, which in 2016 peaked at \$126 million, and which undermine the Agency's efforts to promote human development, meet the basic needs of Palestine refugees, and fulfill its humanitarian mission, without interruption. In this regard, we regret the inability of the General Assembly to follow-up in a timely and comprehensive manner the important recommendations made by the Secretary-General in his report,



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contained in document A/71/849, pursuant to resolution 71/93, aimed at ensuring more sufficient, predictable and sustained funding to UNRWA for the duration of its mandate. Nonetheless, we hope that the Member States of the Organization will support the relevant provisions included in this regard in the draft resolution on the “Operations of UNRWA”, currently before this Committee, as a clear reaffirmation of the international community’s strong and long-standing support for the Agency and for the alleviation of the plight of the Palestine refugees in the absence of a just solution.

14. We also appeal to all States and Organizations to redouble their ongoing efforts in this regard, with a view to ensure adequate, sufficient, predictable and sustained funding for the agency for the duration of its mandate, including for ensuring the implementation of UNRWA’s Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) 2016-2021. Moreover, we urge all Member States, especially the traditional donors, to increase their contributions to UNRWA, which will contribute to avoid creating uncertainty and precipitating instability among the refugees, and we also urge new donors to come forward with generosity to meet the growing needs, in line with the permanent responsibilities and obligations of the international community, until a just solution is realized.
15. In this regard, the Member States of the Movement reiterate their support to UNRWA’s unwavering efforts to provide assistance to the Palestine refugees in all fields of operation, despite the many prevailing difficulties, while also reiterating the need to continue all efforts to bring an end to the illegal occupation of Palestine and to find a just solution for the Palestine refugee problem, on the basis of the principles of international law and the relevant UN resolutions. All these are central components of a just solution for finally achieving the inalienable rights and legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people, including to self-determination and freedom in their independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and achieving a lasting and comprehensive peace.

I thank you, Mr. President.