



**Draft report of the Portfolio Committee on International Relations and Cooperation on the study tours to Israel and Palestine dated.....2013.**

Having undertaken a study tours to Gaza, Palestine from 7 December to 11 December 2011 and Israel and West bank, Palestine from 31 March 2013 to 5 April 2013, the Portfolio Committee on International Relations and Cooperation (the Committee) reports as follows:

**1. Background**

As a committee of Parliament, the Portfolio Committee on International Relations and Cooperation (the Committee), is mandated by sections 55 and 92 of the Constitution of South Africa (1996), to oversee and monitor the activities of the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (the Department) in execution of South Africa's foreign policy. In this instance, the Committee resolved to respond to the call by the President in his State-of-the-nation address 2011 for continued support to the efforts by the international community towards a lasting solution to the Israeli/Palestinian issue.

It will also be recalled that the Committee had in previous occasions dealt with the issues around the Israeli/Palestine conflict. The issue has been a recurring agenda item during this 4<sup>th</sup> Parliament since 2009. The successive State-of-the-nation-addresses since 2009 have been emphasising on the importance of South Africa engaging on the issue. The Committee has kept the issue alive under its engagement in global governance topic. Since 2009, the Committee has seen the conflict take many faces over the years. After the Goldstone Report on human rights abuses during the December 2008 conflict, the debate has been on whether a two-state solution or one-state solution would be more viable to address the long standing conflict in the Middle East. It has been in the Committee's interest therefore, to re-assess the situation and deliberate on possible ways that Parliament and the country could objectively and constructively engage in the matter and contribute to a way forward on the issue.

In order to be conversant with the issues around the conflict and come to an informed contribution on how Parliament could respond to the issue, during the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> term of 2012, the Committee had debates on the Israeli/Palestinian conflict and on the Palestinian bid for statehood in the United Nations Security Council. Amidst all these activities, the Office of the Speaker received a letter from the Minister of International Relations, highlighting the plight of Palestinian parliamentarians then held in Israeli jails. The letter had requested parliamentary intervention.

The Speaker referred the matter to the Committee for action and advice as to how Parliament should respond to the political conflict between Israel and Palestine and the treatment of Palestinians then held in Israeli prisons. As a consequence of the three scenarios above, the Committee resolved to educate itself more and allow further interactions on the issues around the conflict in order to advance an appropriate response.

As a building bloc towards the objective of advancing an appropriate and informed advice, the Committee held a symposium entitled "Experiences from South Africa: Thoughts on the Middle East and the Palestinian Question". The purpose of the symposium was to further capacitate the Committee and Parliament on how to respond to the continuing political conflict between Israel

and Palestine. The approach of an open dialogue was adopted to allow for divergent views to be heard from various constituencies and individuals with an interest in the matter.

The symposium was attended by the former Ambassador of Israel to South Africa: His Excellency Mr DovSegev Steinberg, and the late Ambassador of Palestine to South Africa: His Excellency Mr Ali Halimeh addressed the Committee and the Symposium on the perspectives of their respective countries. Individuals and organisations representing different views on the issue made presentations which would give the Committee useful information on how the crisis is viewed by the various stakeholders involved. Presenters included Mr Naeem Jeenah from the Afro-Middle East Centre, who delivered the keynote address; Dr Petrus de Kock, from the Cape Town offices of the South African Institute of International Affairs was the facilitator; and representatives from the Jewish Board of Deputies, Bridges for Peace, the International Christian Embassy of Jerusalem, the South African Zionist Federation, the Egyptian Community of South Africa, Open Shuhada Street, the Palestinian Solidarity Community of South Africa, and the Congress of South African Trade Unions.

Following the aforementioned symposium held on 16 November 2011, members of the Committee were invited to Gaza by the Council for European Palestinian Relations (CEPR), an independent non-profit organisation which has been established to promote dialogue and understanding between European, Palestinian and Arab parliamentarians and policy-makers. Initially, the delegation would have comprised of the following Members; Hon HT Magama, Chairperson and leader of the delegation; Hon C. September, Hon E. Sulliman, and Hon L. Jacobus; African National Congress (ANC), Hon K. Mubu; Democratic Alliance (DA), Hon LS Ngonyama; Congress of the People (COPE), and Hon B Skosana; Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP). Due to the number of withdrawals from the members of opposition parties, only the following members were able to attend: Hon Hon HT Magama, Chairperson and leader of the delegation; Hon C. September, Hon E. Sulliman, and Hon L. Jacobus During the visit, which took place 7-11 December 2011, the delegation met with various government officials, parliamentarians, groups and individuals.

The report emanating from this Study Tour was discussed by the Committee on 22 February 2012 however; concerns were expressed by some Committee Members that the report would be biased as the Committee did not have the opportunity to visit Israel to get a perspective from that side. Therefore the Committee did not report its findings to the House in 2011, because the Committee felt that a visit to Israel would enable it to provide a more balanced and objective report.

The Committee resolved to conduct a study tour to both Israel and the Palestinian territories of Gaza and the West Bank. The study tour began on 31 March 2013 to 5 April 2013. The delegation was led by the Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on International Relations and Cooperation, Mr HT Magama MP, accompanied by a delegation including Hon. E. Sulliman MP (ANC), Hon. C. September MP (ANC), Hon. M. Booie MP (ANC), Hon. I. Davidson MP (DA), Hon. S. Ngonyama MP (COPE), and Hon. C. Dudley MP (ACDP). The delegation was accompanied by the Committee Researcher Mr D Madlala and Committee Secretary, Mr L Sigwela.

## **2. Study Tour to Gaza**

### **2.1. Objectives of the Study Tour to Gaza**

The objectives of the Gaza Study Tour was for the Portfolio Committee to gain a deeper understanding of the situation in the Gaza Strip as it pertains to the blockade with an emphasis on the humanitarian conditions and its impact on the general population.

## **2.2. Meeting with TAWTHEQ: The Palestinian Independent Commission for the Prosecution of the Zionist War Crimes**

The first meeting that the Committee Delegation had was with TAWTHEQ: The Palestinian Independent Commission for the Prosecution of the Zionist War Crimes. This commission was established after the war of 2008 which began 27 December 2008 with the purpose of documenting and pursuing Israeli War criminals. It was founded by the Palestinian Minister of Justice based on a decision made by the Palestinian Prime Minister. TAWTHEQ is considered the sole official authority responsible for documenting the actions taken by the Israeli army on Gaza.

During their meeting, the organisation TAWTHEQ made a series of allegations which were noted by the Committee delegation. These allegations included the following;

Approximately 15000 crimes have been committed by Israel over a two year period. Over 1360 people were including 330 children. Israel does not allow any humanitarian aid into Gaza by sealing all borders, sea, land and air. The organisation further alleged that Infrastructure was damaged which included hospitals, and police stations, that Israel used human beings shields. The organisation continued to claim that Israel carried out attacks from the sea, land and air using various types of bombs resulting. The organisation asserted that 2 January 2009 a school was bombed which had many civilian casualties. Notably the organisation alleged that White phosphorus (a material made from phosphorous which can also be used in incendiary munitions. It can burn a person's flesh to the bone and can potentially kill when inhaled or ingested) was also used in the attacks against the Palestinians.

TAWTHEQ told the Delegation that medical staff were attacked while helping the injured. The organisation asserted that both Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and universities were attacked, 45 mosques were destroyed and 3169 homes were completely destroyed. The organisation argued that the actions of Israel constitute a policy of ethnic cleansing

Following this presentation, TAWTHEQ made the following suggestions to the Committee delegation:

- South Africa must set up a legal committee to probe the war crimes
- Parliaments around the world must cooperate through various exchange programs and agree to steps that must be taken to end the siege
- Relations with Israel which existed prior to 1994 must be redirected

## **2.3. Non-Governmental Organizations**

Following the presentation by TAWTHEQ the delegation met with different NGOs, the Ministry of Planning, two teachers Unions and 3 Trade Unions. These organizations met with the delegation to discuss some very crucial elements of this crisis. They alerted the Committee delegation to challenges associated with crossing the border from Egypt to Gaza. They argued that any development of Palestine is hindered under the guise of an Israeli security pretext. They alleged that use of land has been hindered in a variety of ways and that detentions are a routine and that there are many restrictions placed on the people of Palestine. The Committee Delegation was told that collective punishment of the Palestinians by Israel is condoned by the International Community. Additionally, the Committee Delegation was told that it is impossible for the people of Palestine to plan for their future under such conditions and the Goldstone Report was then highlighted.

The Committee Delegation was told that the national goals of the Palestinian people include achieving Independence and an end to the occupation. The various groups the Committee Delegation met argued that there are some key lessons from the case of South Africa which resonates with the Palestinian people. They argued that the isolation of Gaza is reminiscent of

the creation of Bantustans and noted that this is illegal as well as constitutes collective punishment. Additionally they feel that Gaza is deliberately being isolated from the West Bank.

#### **2.4. Palestinian Women and the Siege**

The delegation was given information about how women have been affected by the Siege of Gaza. The Committee Delegation was told that the war of 2008-2009 resulted in many deaths and women struggle for representation in all spheres. They noted however that despite this, there has been some progress. They argued that women require specialized training in gaining certain skills and running businesses. They told the Committee Delegation that Palestinian women have collectively taken the initiative with regards to the rearing of children affected by the struggle. They then highlighted the fact that the siege prevents women from engaging meaningfully with the outside world

#### **2.5. Energy and the Siege**

The delegation was then presented with information detailing the consequences of the Siege, with some emphasis on how energy has been affected. The Committee Delegation was told that the Siege has destroyed infrastructure and has affected the people. Skilled workers have lost jobs and reduced to being grant seekers. It was alleged that Israeli fighter jets routinely target economic hubs which cripples the economic development of the region. Notably, the Committee Delegation was told that over 40% of Gaza is affected by electricity shortages because power stations have been affected by bombardment.

#### **2.6. The Economic and Social Impact**

Some details were given on the overall social and economic impact of the Siege. The Committee Delegation was told that the implications of the siege are humanitarian. It was alleged that citrus fruits have been uprooted by Israel. The Committee Delegation was told that Gaza once exported fish and now relies on imports through smuggling. The Committee Delegation was told that there is a need for 200 schools to be constructed because many have been destroyed; however, the shortage of materials makes it impossible to rebuild. There are 15000 to 17000 graduates annually but no opportunities for employment. The Committee Delegation was told that focus must be placed on the Siege and the impact it is having.

#### **2.7. The impact of the siege on Fisherman**

The Committee delegation then met with Fishermen who informed the delegation about the hardships they feel are imposed upon them by the Israeli authorities. The Palestinian Fishermen alleged that they are only allowed to fish 3 miles along the coast and failure to adhere to this results in being shot at by Israeli army boats in contravention of the Oslo Accord which allowed for 20 miles. They also alleged that theft of fishing nets is regularly conducted by the Israeli Navy but notably they also asserted that killing and detentions of Fishermen are a common occurrence. They cited an example of an alleged kidnapping of a Palestinian Fisherman by an Israeli Navy patrol vessel well within the authorised 3 mile restriction in the week preceding the arrival of the delegation. The fisherman then told the Committee Delegation that the result of these Israeli actions are food shortages and economic hardships for the Palestinian population in Gaza.

## **2.8. The Coastal Municipalities Water Utility (CMWU), on the Water and Sewage problem**

The Committee Delegation then met with Coastal Municipalities Water Utility (CMWU) to discuss problems associated with Water and Sewage. The Committee Delegation was told that there are 3 areas filled by seasonal rains from Negev with Israel building catchment areas. They told the Committee Delegation that 15% of water sources are contaminated and not drinkable. These water sources have high nitrate levels which exceed the World Health Organization's standards by 100-120 per cent. The United Nations has been assisting with water management but they alleged to the Committee Delegation that trans-boundary water sources are violated by Israel. They then noted that a report released by Amnesty International in June 2009 which they feel adequately describes the extent of the problems faced by Gaza with respect to water sources.

## **2.9. Al-Shefa Hospital**

The delegation was then taken to Al-Shefa hospital to witness the impact of the siege on the hospital and the provision of medical services. During this visit the Delegation was informed that the hospital has 700 beds and was dealing with 500-700 emergency cases per day and that the siege has impacted on the availability of medicines; 40% (per cent) of essential medicines are not available. The limitations of the electricity supply have had a detrimental impact on healthcare given that there are 8-12 power cuts a day. Generators are used but there are no spare parts so equipment failures are common and energy output is constantly fluctuating as a result. That hospitals are targeted and because there is a shortage of construction materials, development projects have been suspended. The Delegation was informed that 400 patients died because they could not be transported in time. It was also alleged that patients to Israeli hospitals are blackmailed and arrested during transportation to medical facilities. Additionally it was also said that Israel makes use of banned weapons such as white phosphorous which have long-standing serious implications for the affected victims. The Delegation was also told that 1500 have died and 500 wounded during the 2009 Gaza war. It was reported that told that the environment and the local population has been affected by carcinogens as well as depleted uranium fired by the Israeli army.

During the visit to the hospital, the delegation visited the Intensive care ward of a 12 year old boy named Youssuf Zalan. He was fatally injured by an Israeli bomb that completely destroyed his home. His father Mr Bhagjat Zalan 35 and younger brother 10 year old Ramaddan Zalan was killed in the explosion. Youssuf Zalan tragically died approximately 2 hours after the visit of the delegation to his ward. The survivors of this bombing were his 5 month old brother and Mother who were able to escape the blast with minor injuries.

## **2.10. Meeting with the Palestinian Legislative Authority**

The Delegation then visited the Palestinian Legislative Authority (PLA) and was received by the Deputy Speaker and Members of the PLA. During the discussions the following issues were raised and discussed

- The Legislative Authority cannot function properly because of the restrictions imposed by the siege
- Members of the PLA are not allowed to travel out of Gaza by the Israeli authorities
- The PLA's components in Gaza and Ramallah are forced to confer by video-link
- The PLA appreciates South Africa's progressive role in Palestine and its attempts inside and outside of the UN in pursuing the Palestinian question

- Palestinians regard South Africa as their friend in struggle
- South Africa serves as an inspiration for Palestinians because of the similarities between what Black South Africans experienced and the attainment of SA's liberation
- The PLA seeks to build formal relations with the South African Parliament
- They extended such a request in the past and didn't receive a response
- They hope that the visit of the delegation is a first step in building Parliament to Parliament relations and that they will follow this up soon

### **2.11. Meeting with Prime Minister Mr Ishmael Haniya**

The delegation then met with the Prime Minister Mr Ishmael Haniya at his residence.

- The Prime Minister expressed his gratitude and appreciation for SA's role in and support for the cause of the Palestinian people
- He reiterated the force of example set by the South African struggle and the impact the 1993 visit by Former President Nelson Mandela had on the morale of the Palestinian people
- That it was important that SA strengthens its relationship with the whole of Palestine including Gaza
- That relations between the 2 peoples should be extended beyond government to government relations into the legislative, business, social and other sectors
- That the Palestinians rely on the continued support of friends like SA to continue to champion the cause of Palestinians.

### **2.12. Ministry of Detainees Affairs**

The Committee Delegation then met with the Ministry of Detainees Affairs and families of political prisoners in Israeli prisons. Palestine has a special ministry of detainees established to fight for the liberation of detainees. The ministry aims to highlight the cause of the detainees and ensure that knowledge of their suffering is known across the world. More than 700 000 Palestinians have been detained since 1967. Currently there are almost 7000 detainees in Israeli jails including 720 detainees from the Gaza strip, 400 from Jerusalem and territory, and the rest are from the West Bank distributed among 23 jails and detention centres. The Ministry of detainee Affairs gave the Committee Delegation the following additional information;

- Among the detainees, 800 are serving life sentences once or several times with the most senior sentenced being detainee Abdullah Barghouti who is serving 67 life sentences
- There are 1700 suspended detainees, and 190 detainees are subjected to administrative detention (detention without charge or trial) while 7 detainees from the Gaza Strip are subjected to the law of illegal combatant (a law created to allow for detention without accusation for long periods)
- There are 306 detainees who were arrested before the Oslo Agreement and have spent more than 16 years in prison
- Among those 306 detainees, 124 have spent more than 20 years in prison, 24 have spent more than 25 years in prison and 3 have spent more than 30 years in prison
- The detainee Nael Saleh Barghouti from Ramallah is the oldest Palestinian detainee, and the oldest detainee in the world. He has spent more than 32 years in Israeli jails
- More than 20 per cent of detainees suffer from different diseases with 170 in need of surgical operations, 15 detainees with cancer, 25 suffer from kidney failure, 88 detainees suffer from kidney failure, 88 suffer from diabetes and 20 use a wheelchair and crutches for movement

- Since 1967, Israel has arrested more than 10 000 Palestinian women with 37 women still in various prisons
- Detainees are deprived of all basic rights. They cannot send messages to their families, they are subjected to routine nude inspections, and they are also deprived of education, visits from family and are subjected to a range of humiliations.
- Since the Al-Aqsa Intifada of September 2000, 8000 children have been arrested by the Israeli occupation
- There are more than 310 children under the age of 18 in Israeli jails
- Statistics show that 99 per cent of children who were arrested have been beaten and subjected to one form of torture used by the occupation authorities

This meeting was the final engagement that the Committee Delegation had in Gaza. The Committee Delegation then returned to South Africa.

### **3. Study tour to Israel and the Palestinian Territories**

#### **3.1. Objectives of the study tour to Israel and the Palestinian Territories**

The aim of the study tour was to engage the Israeli and Palestinian (West Bank and Gaza) governments on the conflict in order to get a balanced view; and also to learn from non-governmental organisations and civil society groups from both sides of the conflict on their views on the matter, guided by the following objectives:

- Explore and understand the Israeli/Palestine conflict;
- Explore and learn the different perspectives on the conflict and proposals for a lasting solution;
- Explore perspectives on the 'Two-States solution' with a separate independent Palestinian State and the State of Israel;
- Explore ways and means for South African future involvement towards a lasting and peaceful solution of the conflict;
- Gather information to be able to respond to the questions raised by the Speaker relating to human rights and treatment of Palestinians;
- Visit places which could give an illustration of the situation on the ground; and
- On return, recommend to the House a course of action as a response by Parliament to the continuing conflict

## **3.2. Briefing by the South African embassy in Ramallah, West Bank**

### **3.2.1. Welcome by H.E Ambassador Professor Mlungisi Makalima**

The ambassador began by introducing his staff at the South African Representative Office in Ramallah as follows:

- Mr Solly Tshivula, Counsellor
- Mr Phadime Choshane, Counsellor
- Mr David Jordaan, Corporate Services Manager and further welcomed the Portfolio Committee on International Relations and Cooperation (the members of the Committee delegation).

### **3.2.2. Introductions by Chairperson Hon. HT Magama**

The Chairperson Hon. HT Magama thanked the ambassador and introduced the members of the delegation. He gave a brief overview of the various processes that had taken place regarding the issue of Israel and Palestine, as well as the intended outcomes of the study tour being conducted.

### **3.2.3. Presentation by Ambassador Makalima**

The ambassador then explained the programme and what the members of the Committee delegation would be exposed to during their stay in Ramallah.

In his presentation Ambassador Makalima further highlighted the following:

Due to the unique status of Palestine as a state under occupation, South Africa's representation was at the level of a Representative Office, based in Ramallah, with a satellite office in Gaza.

With the recent upgrading in November 2012 of the status of Palestine at the United Nations (UN), it was envisaged that Palestine would negotiate the upgrading of South Africa's representation to the ambassadorial level. However, that would be a move that South Africa would be required to carefully evaluate, in the context of relevant diplomatic privileges enshrined in the Vienna Convention of 1961.

Ambassador Makalima further stated that the Middle East Peace Process, at the core of which was to reach a just and durable negotiated resolution of the Israel-Palestinian conflict, has remained stalled since 2010. This was largely to Israel's inflexible positions on the freezing of the construction of Jewish settlements on Palestinian land, including East Jerusalem, earmarked as the future capital of an independent Palestinian state, as well as the right of return for Palestinian refugees expelled when the State of Israel was established in 1948.

Prospects for the resumption of peace negotiations between Israel and Palestine remained dim. Following the Palestinian upgrade at the UN, Israel responded by announcing plans to expand settlement construction in the Occupied Territories, as well as withhold tax revenues it collects on behalf of the State of Palestine.

Ambassador Makalima further outlined the following outstanding issues for final status negotiation:



- **Jerusalem**

Israel: The Israel government was unwilling to divide Jerusalem, claiming it to be the political and religious centre of the Jewish people.

Palestine: The Palestinians wanted East Jerusalem as the capital of the envisaged Palestinian State.

- **Borders**

Israel: insisted on the question of the borders being part of the final status negotiations.

Palestine: maintained that the 4 June 1967 Armistice line remain the border between the two states not a final status negotiations issue.

- **Refugees**

Israel refuses to take responsibility of Palestinian refugees from previous wars, denies the right of return, compensation and resettlement in third countries.

Palestine insists on the right of return as provided for by UN Resolution 194.

- **Security**

Israel insists that its security takes precedence over anything else.

Palestine argues that security would come from a stable two state solution, not the other way around. It was impossible to discuss security before establishing the borders.

- **Water**

Israel insists on retaining full control of the sources of Palestinian water.

Palestine maintains that the allocation of water should be governed by international law, and that it was crucial for future political stability in the entire region.

- **Settlements**

Israel insists on retaining the major settlements in East Jerusalem and the West Bank. It regards the settlement activity as legitimate.

Palestine maintains that all settlements built after 1967 were illegal and posed the greatest threat to a viable and contiguous future Palestinian state.

Despite their illegality under international law, Israel settlements have grown and have prospered over the last 50 years. That has resulted with the size of the Israel settler population on Palestinian land now estimated at half a million (500 000), of which 200 000 reside in East Jerusalem alone, earmarked as the capital of the future Palestinian state. By changing facts on the ground and fragmenting Palestinian land, Israel's settlement policies were viewed as rapidly limiting options for the realization of the two statesolution.

Ambassador Makalima elaborated on South Africa's position on the Israel and Palestine conflict. South Africa supports international efforts aimed at the establishment of a viable Palestinian state, existing side by side in peace with Israel within internationally recognised borders, based on those existing along the 4 June 1967 Armistice lines.

South Africa was firmly opposed to the blockade of Gaza, its inaccessibility with respect to humanitarian aid, and the general dire humanitarian situation that this caused. South Africa encouraged a just solution with respect to the right of return of the Palestinian refugees.

In May 2010, South Africa recalled its Ambassador to Israel for consultations. At the same time, a demarche was handed over to the Israel Ambassador in protest to a military assault on an international assistance flotilla to Gaza in international waters in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea, which resulted in the death of seven Turkish nationals aboard a Turkish vessel.

South Africa remained deeply concerned about Israel settlement expansion, especially in East Jerusalem. The South African government has called on Israel to abandon all settlement activities.

In July 2012, the Minister of Trade and Industry, Dr Rob Davis, issued a draft directive in which traders in South Africa would henceforth be required not to allow incorrectly labelled products that originate from the Occupied Palestinian Territories as products of Israel.

South Africa welcomed the unity agreements that were signed between Fatah and Hamas and smaller parties in Cairo in April 2011 and in Doha in February 2012.

#### **3.2.4. Comments on the security of the Mission**

Security concerns of the Mission were noted for future discussion by the Committee. The Ambassador then described some specific issues that the Representative Office has been grappling with in conducting its work.

#### **3.2.5. Comments by members of the Committee delegation**

Seeking further clarity, the members of the Committee delegation enquired as to what the main concerns of the Representative Office are and a request was made that these concerns be sent to the Committee in written form. The members of the Committee delegation felt that more details on the key issues would be most helpful in plotting a way forward in this particular context

The members felt that South Africa needed to be careful in dealing with the tensions at play and noted that Parliament is uniquely placed to make a meaningful contribution. The members expressed their full support of the Representative Office and its work under such difficult circumstances. Before the meeting was a concluded a request was made for the Representative Office to provide the Committee with a visual description of the conditions in Gaza.

### **3.3. Meeting with Prime Minister of Palestine Mr Salam Fayyad**

#### **3.3.1. Welcome by the Prime Minister**

The Prime Minister began his welcome address by highlighting the fact that South Africa's contribution was highly valued significantly by Palestinians. The Prime Minister noted that the human conditions of Palestine and the true impact of the occupation require more attention. He noted his concern that too much focus was being placed on politics. He argued that clear discrimination was being exercised. The Prime Minister then stated that the people of Palestine welcome the Committee with open arms and highlighted the fact that many Palestinians hold the words of former President Mandela "that South Africa's freedom is not complete unless Palestine is free" in the highest regard and wish him a speedy recovery from his illness.

#### **3.3.2. Introduction by Chairperson Hon. HT Magama**

The Chairperson of the Committee began with an introductory address aimed at ensuring those present were aware of the visit and its importance. The chairperson explained that the mandate of the visit was to gather information for the purpose of the enquiry being undertaken on this very crucial question. The Chairperson noted that South Africa has been a supporter of Palestine for many years. The Committee also wishes to make its contribution to the debate in a way that could hopefully improve the likelihood of a negotiated settlement being reached between Israel and the people of Palestine. The Chairperson thanked the Prime Minister for his best wishes for the former President and highlighted the fact that former president Nelson Mandela held the issue of Palestine close to his heart and noted that the Committee was equally saddened by news of his illness and wished him a speedy recovery. The Chairperson noted that during the visit, the Committee wished to be updated on the status of the peace process and given some clarity on the potential impact of President Obama's visit. The Chairperson concluded his introductory address by noting that the Committee was also concerned by the issue of Palestinian unity and the Committee emphasised the need for better collaboration between Palestinians. The Chairperson then dedicated some time to introducing the Members of the Portfolio Committee who formed part of the delegation.

#### **3.3.3. Response by Prime Minister**

The Prime Minister then responded to some of the issues highlighted by the Chairperson and gave clarity on other matters. He stated that in his opinion the peace process has eroded since the Oslo Accord. He argued that the erosion has hindered the prospect of a negotiated settlement being reached. He further added that Palestinians continue to seek the goal of two states living side by side in peace, a sentiment which was articulated by the late Yasser Arafat. Peace would require concessions but Palestinians had placed much faith in the Oslo process.

He noted that since Oslo, settlement activity has only accelerated. A solution does not seem around the corner but they will continue to seek peace. He felt that the ideal articulated by Israel does not meet the minimal desires of Palestinians. He felt that Israel essentially sought to give Palestinians a "left-over" state and the international community was not seemingly likely to add pressure. Obama has focused on negotiation and diplomacy but there has been little progress. There was a need for the face of the

occupation to be projected. Palestine should be seen as a state. The continued existence of Palestine was the truest form of resistance. Palestine has shown the world that good governance is valued by the people. The current human conditions had eroded the faith of many Palestinians that a settlement can be reached. In places like the Jordan Valley, Israel has been systematically preventing Palestinians from using the water resources. He added that olive trees have been uprooted because of their cultural and economic value to the people of Palestine. Palestine has spoken with Obama and he did show sympathy for the plight of the people, unfortunately that has not translated into substantial efforts. The Prime Minister felt that the goal of Palestinians should be to draw attention to their plight and delegitimise the occupation. Palestine is committed to pursuing non-violence because it is seen as the most viable approach. South Africa, India and the Civil Rights Movement of the United States were seen as key examples to follow in ending their struggles. As a people, Palestinians would continue to persevere. He then thanked South Africa for its continued support and once again welcomed the Committee.

The floor was then opened for questions from the members of the Committee delegation

#### **3.3.4. Questions and comments by the Members of the Committee delegation.**

The Committee delegation began by expressing its appreciation for the input made by the Prime Minister, then the members of the Committee asked a range of questions. Such questions included whether Palestine could sustain its efforts under such continued pressure; whether there were any steps that could be taken by the Palestinian people to change the dynamics and; also a question about whether it would be more useful for Palestine to focus on delegitimising the settlements rather than delegitimising the state of Israel. The Committee delegation also raised a question around what potential approaches South Africa could adopt to assist Palestine; what role South Africa could play in minimising tensions between Fatah and Hamas; and finally, whether the Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa forum (BRICS) could be of assistance to Palestine.

#### **3.3.5. Response by then Prime Minister**

In his response, the Prime Minister began by stating that the existing architecture focused on the Quartet and did not allow the active participation of other countries. He noted that there have been some major steps, one of which was the European Union not giving preferential treatment to products from settlements. He felt that Israel may be planning to eliminate the prospect of a viable two states solution in order to create one large state whereby Palestinians are forced out. He advised that South Africa use its bilateral relations strategically and added that other multilateral processes must be used in addition to UN processes. He argued that the British mandate demarcated land fairly and added that Palestinians are prepared to accept certain concerns that Israel has, but feels that accommodation is more sustainable than a focus on security through force. He emphasized that Palestinians do not wish to oppress anyone and have adopted a policy of non-violence as a testament to this position. He expressed the view that violent campaigns resulted in Palestinians losing a further nine per cent of the land sending a clear signal that it would be ineffective and must be rejected. He concluded his response by noting that the fortress mentality of Israel should come to an end.

The meeting was then brought to a close, and gifts were exchanged.

### **3.4. Meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr Riad Malki**

#### **3.4.1. Introductions by Ambassador Makalima**

Ambassador Makalima described the relations that the representative mission has enjoyed with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Ramallah. He then introduced the members of the Committee delegation.

#### **3.4.2. Address by Hon. Chairperson Mr HT Magama**

The Chairperson began his opening address by explaining the mandate of the study tour and its intended objectives. Additionally, he explained the role that Parliament wished to play in the resolution of the conflict. He then explained the work the Committee has done on the issues and the how the various debates have unfolded during the Committee's deliberations. He articulated South Africa's policies and concluded by thanking the Foreign Minister for giving the Committee delegation his time.

#### **3.4.3. Address by Minister of Foreign Affairs**

The Minister of Foreign Affairs began his opening address by highlighting the fact that Palestinians respect South Africa and value the relationship. He added that the Palestinian people were honoured to receive the parliamentary delegation. Ultimately the goal of the Palestinian people was to end the occupation. He noted that the occupation was not only military in nature. It was a multifaceted situation that affected all aspects of Palestinian lives. Basic rights were violated, but Palestinians only wished to coexist peacefully and have both freedom and self-determination. He noted that Palestine has already agreed to 22% of historic Palestine. Israel understood the value of power and Israel has also been protected by the United States veto.

He felt that the prospect of one state did not appeal to Israel because of the demographics potentially working in the favour of Palestinians. During his recent visit, President Obama acknowledged that Israel's legitimacy should come from meaningfully resolving the Palestinian issue. For Palestinians to recognize Israel, the people of Palestine should be given their rights. Israel's focus on security would not give them peace, only recognition of Palestine would give peace. He added that the occupation also compromised the recognition that Israel is given in the region and emphasized that ending the occupation would create peace.

He argued that settlements compromise the integrity of a future Palestinian state. He added that the settlements were illegal according to international law and concluded that the existence of buses and roads designed to be used exclusively by Jews was a form of apartheid. Citing an example, he noted that Hebron has been divided and while settlements control only 25 per cent of the city, settlers are protected by 5000 Israeli soldiers. The Minister claimed that on Shuhada Street, Palestinians can only walk in one direction. The Minister added that Palestinians are not allowed to even look an Israeli soldier in the eye. He also stated that Jerusalem has been cut off and most Palestinians born after the occupation have never seen it despite it being only 10km away. He argued that the permit system being used by Israel was the same as the pass system used by apartheid. He also noted that fifty per cent of Palestinians were below the age of 29 but one has to be above the age of 50 to pray at al-Aqsa mosque.

He further highlighted that, at the end of 2011, there were 102 checkpoints inside the West Bank. Twenty-two of these were in Area H-2 of Hebron City, where the Israeli settlements are located. Forty of the check points were the last inspection point prior to entering Israel, although most of them were actually located a few kilometres east of the Green Line or the entrance to Jerusalem. Seventy-six were permanent, regularly staffed checkpoints, and the remaining 26 checkpoints have infrastructure but were staffed periodically.

Along the Separate Barrier, there were 66 agricultural gates meant to enable limited Palestinian access to land west of the Barrier, which is defined as a closed military zone. Some of the gates were opened daily for a few hours. The others were opened only during certain agricultural hours.

Four check points restricted Palestinian access to the Jordan Valley, Tayasir, Hamra, Maale Efrayim and Yitav. The first were permanently staffed and did not allow Palestinians to cross unless their identity cards indicate they live in the Jordan Valley. Israel continued to block the northern entrance to Jericho and restrict movement.

He felt that Palestine needed friends like South Africa and South Africa's parliamentarians could be very helpful to the Palestinian cause. The people of the West Bank have embraced non-violence, and as a whole Palestine has many of the characteristics of a state, but has been under occupation and that should be put to an end.

The floor was then opened to questions from the members of Parliament.

#### **3.4.4. Questions and comments by the members of the Committee delegation**

The members of the Committee delegation made a series of comments and asked some questions. The Committee wanted clarity on whether Palestinian Christians were allowed in Jerusalem. They also sought clarity on whether at that point, negotiations would continue and whether Palestinian leaders were truly committed to living side by side peacefully with Israel. They enquired as to whether Palestinian leadership supported the use of suicide bombers and sought to ascertain the level of freedom enjoyed by Jews and Christians in Palestine. Then focus was shifted to the role played by the international community and whether Palestinians felt that the international community could play a role in mediating between Fatah and Hamas. They then enquired about how people to people relations could be strengthened as a way to deal more effectively with the conflict. A comment was made about the important role Mandela played in easing tensions within South Africa by understanding the fears that people of all races had during Apartheid. A suggestion was made that perhaps it would serve the Palestinian people well to understand the fears of Israeli's and a foundation to continuing peace talks.

#### **3.4.5. Response by the Minister of Foreign Affairs**

The Foreign Minister began his response by noting that no Palestinian could enter Jerusalem without meeting very stringent requirements. Immigration has been used by Israel strategically and it could result in even more settlements being constructed. He felt that in East Jerusalem there was a clear plan to eliminate the Palestinian character of the city. He told the Committee it takes 10 to 15 years for Palestinians to be given a permit to construct in their own land and the permit often costs as much as 5 times the amount it costs to actually build a house. The European Union Consul General reports on Israel

policies were published every year and reveal the truth of the occupation. He noted that Obama did not feel that the current Israeli government would be helpful.

Expanding further, he stated that Israel has occupied and declared the West Bank a disputed territory. He highlighted the fact that the Roadmap requires a freeze on settlement construction; however, the Israeli strategy has been to buy time while they make a Palestinian state impossible to create. The bid for statehood emerged out of frustration and Palestine has been punished for pursuing that option. Palestine has always wanted to have peace with Israel. Palestinian leaders might not be thinking in the same way but the same could be said within Israel. He pointed out that Hamas did not recognize Israel and Israel did not recognize Palestine either. As a party, Hamas could believe what they want, but as a government there were certain conditions a government should adhere to. There has been a lack of trust acting as an impediment on both sides in this conflict with Israel, but the Palestinian people saw Israeli's as occupiers, soldiers and settlers. He noted that his government believed in working in parallel with political processes. When an agreement is reached then they would begin a referendum process. He felt the image of Islam has been distorted in many ways. The reality was that Christians were an integral part of Palestine and have rights. The Palestinian people want to strengthen the cultural visibility of Christians in Palestine. Palestine as a secular state has been deeply concerned about the emergence of the Islamic Brotherhood as a strong force in the region. He added that his government would accept Jews but would not allow exclusion.

He concluded by stating that Palestinians wanted to be an example to the region and wanted to be a democratic state that values human rights. The Palestinian people would not give up on the international system. The government has tried to resolve issues with Hamas, namely, that there should be a concerted effort to reunite Palestinians and have agreed to the importance of elections. He added that the wall was not just about security but was intended to divide the people. The wall also acted as a barrier that allows Israeli's to psychologically disengage from the plight of the Palestinian people.

After the response the Chairperson Hon. HT Magama then thanked the Foreign Minister for the meeting.

### **3.5. Meeting with Dr Saeb Erekat: Head of the Negotiations Affairs Department of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO)**

#### **3.5.1. Welcome Address by Chairperson Hon. HT Magama**

He described the usefulness of previous engagements as well as the mandate of the mission, and the history of the Committee's work with regard to the Israeli-Palestine conflict. Additionally, a previous question about the Camp David Accords was mentioned as an issue that would require Dr Erekat's personal experience.

#### **3.5.2. Address by Dr Saeb Erekat**

In his address to the Committee delegation, Dr Erekat noted that the Occupation began when he was 12 and now he was a grandfather of 4. The Palestinian people recognised Israel based on the 1967 borders. Israel was a powerful country but the goal was merely to live by its side as a good neighbour. He feels that racism has been justified in many ways but in the case of Palestinians security was used. Palestinians have never suspended talks

when meaningful concessions were made. Agreements have been signed but Israel has never met its obligations. Camp David was an exchange of ideas intended to bring about an agreement. The Palestinian people want democracy, human rights and peace. It was important to note that ideas could only be defeated by better ideas. Dr Erekat then suggested that a friendship group be established which would include Quartet countries but also allow other states to be included. He concluded his opening address by noting that Israel's options were: a one state solution, a two states solution or a continuation of apartheid policies.

### **3.5.3. Questions and comments by the members of the Committee delegation**

The questions and comments included a suggestion that new forums such as BRICS presented Palestine with new platforms to articulate its message. Questions around the prospect for further negotiations and whether Netanyahu would be willing to alter his position under the right circumstances emerged. They enquired as to whether Palestinians had been in contact with progressive voices in Israel looking for change. They also enquired about the ideological direction of Hamas and whether any potential changes in negotiation tactics would be affected by the "Arab Spring".

### **3.5.4. Response by Dr Erekat**

In his response,, Dr Erekat noted that Seeds of peace and other initiatives have attempted to bridge gaps but anger continues to be an impediment. The Palestinian Authority monitored shifts in the world very closely and considered innovative ways to approach the situation. The United States has contributed significantly. Additionally, the Arab Spring has brought with it some new dynamics as well; however, Netanyahu saw the status quo as manageable. He felt that Netanyahu wanted autonomy without authority for Palestinians. He further saw the Occupation as unsustainable and noted that regardless of the challenges facing them, the Palestinian people were working towards a meaningful democracy. He concluded by stating that their tactics would reflect what they saw as potentially effective.

### **3.5.5. Closing by Chairperson Hon. HT Magama**

Chairperson thanked those present for their participation and valuable inputs, he also informed those present that their inputs would form a crucial part of the Committee's discussions on this very important matter.

## **3.6. Meeting with Mr Jamal Juma of Stop the Wall**

### **3.6.1. Introduction by Ambassador Makalima**

The meeting began with Ambassador Makalima introducing Mr Jamal Juma to the members of the Committee delegation.

### **3.6.2. Presentation by Mr Jamal Juma**

The following is a summary of Mr Juma's presentation to the members of the Committee delegation.



Mr Jamal Juma began his presentation by describing what he asserted was a deliberate strategy by Israel to make the West Bank not viable as a future Palestinian state. Mr Juma argued that the economic centres of the West Bank are isolated from each other, these centres include the following:

- 1 – Northern ghetto (centre for agriculture and industry)
- 2 – Central ghetto (centre for services)
- 3 – Southern ghetto (centre for industrial and dairy production)

Mr Juma highlighted that Jerusalem was completely isolated from the West Bank and asserted that Palestinians actively pressured to leave their capital.

Mr Juma then shifted his focus to giving a brief historical summary. In his description the following dates and events featured:

- 1916 – Great Britain occupied Palestine.
- 1917 – Balfour Declaration
- 1918 – Palestine became a British mandate colony.
- 1919 – The “Jaffa Revolution” initiated Palestinian resistance.
- 1920 – establishment of the Zionist Histadrut
- 1925 – Palestinian Arab Workers Society established in Haifa
- 1929 & 1931-1936 – Uprisings with long and powerful workers strikes
- Until 1948 – 600,000 Zionist settlers immigrated to Palestine

Mr Juma then gave his description of what allegedly took place in 1948. He began by noting that 1948 was known as the “Nakba” to Palestinians because it was seen as a Catastrophe. For Mr Juma, 1948 was the foundation of Israel and argued that the foundation was based on the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian people. He claimed that 531 villages were destroyed and eight hundred thousand Palestinians were forced to flee out of a total population of 2.5 million. For him, while this moment was the foundation of Israel, it was also the moment where Palestinian Nationalism began to emerge. In 1964 the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) was established. Three years after the PLO was established, war engulfed the region. Mr Juma told the Committee delegation that it was known to Palestinians as the “Nakba” because it resulted in the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. He wanted the Committee delegation to understand that since the 1950's, Palestinian resistance had began forming among Palestinian refugees but once Israel occupied the West bank, Gaza, the Sinai in Egypt and the Golan Heights in Syria, Palestinian resistance was strengthened from outside until 1983. After 1982 the Palestinian struggle outside experienced some challenges with the war on Lebanon and the PLO being forced out.

Mr Juma then moved to the Oslo talks and what he saw as key features of the current discourse. He summarised these features as follows:

- Colonisation through Settlement Expansion
- Bypass roads slice Palestinian land
- Isolation and colonisation of Jerusalem
- Economic siege
- Continuation of the Occupation
- No implementation of agreements
- Planned destruction of the spirit of resistance

Mr Juma concluded his discussion of what he perceived as the post-Oslo discourse and then shifted his attention to “Israeli 2025: Vision Toward Sustainable Ghettoes”. He articulated what he felt was Israel's “Master Plan” and in the description argued firstly that in Israel, trends were further augmented by a general political consensus, bridging all political parties, that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would not be resolved within the next few decades. As a result of that, he argued the view that Israel should see itself as a “marathon runner” and build a strategy for long term resilience. The Master Plan first phase was launched in 1992 and involved 250 Israeli professionals from the academia, ministries, private sector, unions, military and some Israeli NGOs and international Jewish agencies. In 1997, or after 6 years, they came out with 18 reports to the general public. Mr Juma told the Committee delegation that these reports provided a pioneering example for comprehensive long range Israeli national planning in major three lines: The WAR atmosphere, the PEACE atmosphere and Israel and the Jewish communities around the world.

He then discussed the composition of the groups that formulated the Master Plan and the reports which followed. He noted that the “professionals” included Professors from Dublin and Walberg universities in Denmark, Hawaii, Cambridge University, the Royal Technical Institute in Sweden, Toskopeh university in Japan, Nijmegen in Netherlands, Lille in France, Harvard in the United States of America and the Technical University in Berlin. He argued that the experts were needed to understand and measure the new and expected international trends in politics, aid, economic, religious, tourism, Hi-Tech, military, national security among others.

He noted that new international trends identified by those experts included the following:

- Qualified industrial zones, border industrial zones etc
- Green energy, green housing, environment
- Aid theories & Foreign relations theories
- Theories related private sectors role in peace building
- Trade trends within bilateral agreements, multilateral agreements, WTO
- Economical coalitions: EU, OECD, Mercusure
- Developed countries, developing countries and the rest of the world.

He then discussed the Herzliya Conference. He said that the conference started in 2000 and was held on yearly basis to discuss the following issues:

1. Galilee Development (Judaisation) plan
2. Negev Development (Judaisation) Plan
3. Greater Jewish Jerusalem
4. Disengagement Plan from WB & Gaza

He described what he called “The Apartheid Wall & The battle of Jerusalem” and began by noting the following quote:

“The need for a viable Palestinian state with contiguity on the West Bank” George Bush

Mr Juma then gave information regarding the West Bank Post- 1967. He stated that the 810 km “Apartheid Wall” was the single largest infrastructure project in Israel. The total cost of the project has been estimated at approximately NIS 13 billion (US\$ 3.3 billion). He stated that the Wall construction involved (as of January 2007) 700 different subcontractors: around 60 planning offices, 53 major construction firms, 5 wire-fence firms, 11 civilian security firms and about 34 producers of surveillance and communications. In 2005, the

Israeli army announced that they needed to install USD 400 million worth of hi-tech to secure the Wall & checkpoints. Mr Juma then claimed that the “Apartheid Wall” confiscates 12 per cent of total West Bank land, including Jerusalem. He added that 'Military zones continue to control 30 per cent of the West Bank'. He emphasized that 82 per cent of the water resources would remain under Israeli control, forcing Palestinians to re-purchase their own confiscated water.

He then described the different types of industrial zones which were comprised of the following:

- Settlement Industrial zones – of the largest 12 settlements, many announced projects to expand industrial zones in 2006-2007
- “Joint industrial zones” – Jenin, Hebron, Jericho and Gaza
- “Border Industrial zones”
- Agro-Industrial zone – located in the Jordan Valley
- Tourist industry
- Other industries – Electricity, Water, Services, Banking etc

To conclude his presentation, discussed what he described as “the way out”. He felt that nationally, popular resistance and unity should be key features. Internationally, he asserted that a coordinated international Boycott, Divest and Sanction (BDS) movement as well as a focus on international law will be crucial. He said that the primary focus of the BDS Movement was to support the re-building of a Palestinian National Liberation Movement based on democratic values and the respect of human rights; which was capable of uniting and representing its people and ending international support to Israel as preconditions to Free Palestine. He described the BDS and noted that it was a long term strategy that was essentially non-violent resistance based on the moralities of people. It was based on and calling for the implementation of the International law in order to expose the whole crime of the occupation by adopting a rights-based approach.

Mr Juma described the BDS call and stated the following:

“Signed by over 170 Palestinian organizations, political parties, trade union federations, and mass movements, expresses the collective aspirations of the Palestinian people by asserting that only the fulfilment of the Call's three basic demands would satisfy the minimal requirements for the people of Palestine to exercise the inalienable right to self determination”

He noted that the BDS Call in 2005 identified the fundamental rights that correspond to the three main segments of the indigenous people of Palestine. Based on international law and universal principles of human rights, the Call urged various forms of boycott against Israel until it fully complied with its obligations under international law by:

- Ending its occupation and colonisation of Arab lands occupied in June 1967 and dismantling the Wall;
- Recognising the fundamental rights of the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel to full equality; and
- Respecting, protecting and promoting the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in UN Resolution 194.

He added that governments and international institutions that are to implement international law are part of the “colonising system”. He felt that “only if we free international law from their claws and global struggle tears down the pillars of this system, international law and

institutions can become effective tools for our liberation”. He ended with the assertion that international coordination was necessarily a crucial element of the Palestinians struggle.

Following the completion of the presentation, Mr Juma was asked to give clarity on what he felt would be Prime Minister Netanyahu’s strategy in coming years and whether a withdrawal from the West Bank in a similar fashion to the 2005 Israeli disengagement from Gaza was possible. Mr Juma argued that the status quo would continue unless pressure was exerted. Following this response the meeting was brought to a close and Mr Jamal Juma was thanked for his efforts.

### **3.7. Meeting with FATAH – Office of Dr Nabil Shaath**

#### **3.7.1. Opening address**

Dr Nabil Shaath noted that many reports have confirmed the realities for Palestinians. He argued that Palestinians were under the oppression of an apartheid state and lived under an occupation which has affected all of their lives. The Boycott, Divest and Sanction Movement (BDS) is a strategy that he felt would be effective in changing the situation for all Palestinians in the future. He noted that their struggle was a long one but they were determined. He added that the Palestinian people prayed for the good health of Nelson Mandela, a man he felt has given the Palestinians a reason to never give up.

#### **3.7.2. Introduction by Chairperson Hon. HT Magama**

The Chairperson highlighted the fact that the Palestinian question was a struggle for the end of an occupation and the right to self determination of a people. The Chairperson noted that while South Africa achieved democracy in 1994, the country continued to grapple with serious challenges. South Africa was of the view that a settlement could be reached between Israel and Palestinians. That would require the political will on the part of those who wield the power. What was clear, was that such an agreement would only be the start of a long process which would amongst others, require state-building on the part of Palestinians and peace-building between peoples who have been in conflict with each other for more than 60 years. Such would inevitably require reconciliation as has been the case in South Africa. South Africa as has been committed by its government on numerous occasions will stand ready to assist and share its experiences should it be invited to do so. He then noted that the Committee was prevented from entering into Gaza but the Committee remained committed to complete the mission of this visit, which was to gather information and learn what was necessary to ensure that Parliament resolves on this matter from an informed perspective. He concluded by noting that the members were a multi-party delegation with a clear mandate and a determination to make an impact.

#### **3.7.3. Presentation by Mr Omar Barghouti of the BDS Central Committee**

In his presentation to the members of the Committee, Mr Barghouti made the following points:

- The BDS movement was inspired by the African National Congress(ANC) and has strong connections with South Africa.
- In 1948, 50 per cent of Palestinians were exiled, 12 percent were living in Israel and the remaining 38 percent were living in Gaza and the West Bank.

- Their purpose as a movement was to end discrimination, ending the occupation and the construction of settlements.
- They also wished to see the right of return implemented.
- The system of discrimination they were living under is similar to the crime of apartheid.
- There were 30 laws in Israel that discriminated against Palestinians.
- Ninety-three percent of Israel was not accessible to Non-Jews.
- In the West Bank that form of discrimination was clear.
- They felt that BDS was a key strategy.
- South Africa has made many strides and they have seen South African academic institutions cutting ties with Israeli institutions.
- South Africa has also taken steps to ensure that products from Occupied Territories are labelled as such.
- BDS was becoming a global movement embraced by many people around the world.
- Finally, a military embargo could be very important for BDS and that has been supported even by institutions such as Amnesty International.

The floor was then opened to questions and the members of the Committee delegation raised various points and asked key questions. They began by enquiring about which companies were alleged to be involved in the trade of military equipment. They wanted exact details on the laws which discriminate against Palestinians living in Israel. They then shifted their questions to the machinery of the BDS Campaign and where funding for its efforts originated from. Questions were then raised around the large number of Israeli products being used by Palestinians. The Committee delegation was curious as to what platform Palestine was now using to push issues and a suggestion was made that there was a need for a strong moral position to aid Palestinians in strengthening their campaign. Finally, the Committee delegation enquired about the provision of electricity in Palestine:

#### **3.7.4. Response to the questions posed: by Mr Omar Barghouti of the BDS Central Committee**

He felt BDS should be the key orientation of their approach in ending the occupation. He informed the Chairperson that he would be provided with information regarding companies doing business with Israel. He felt Israel was not interested in a two-state solution. He then described the 4 pillars of Fatah which were as follows;

1. Resistance – They now focus on popular resistance and have moved away from an armed campaign.
2. International Activism – This was embodied in the BDS campaign.
3. Building a political system – They wished to have a good administration by building own institutions and to reconcile with Hamas.
4. Keeping Palestinians resolute so that they never give up on a state of their own.

Additional responses included the following:

- The economy is captive and completely controlled by Israel.
- They don't have control over their own resources.
- Their own products are sold back to them at higher rates.
- They cannot export or import and have no control over their resources.
- It was not hypocritical for them to buy products from Israel because they have absolutely no other choice. But to end their plight they feel that others can help by boycotting Israel.

- They are strengthening their international campaign and will be seeking membership in organisations such as the World Trade Organisation, the World Health Organisation and the International Criminal Court.

### **3.8. Meeting with Dr Aziz Dweik, Speaker of the Palestinian Legislative Council**

#### **3.8.1. Introduction by Ambassador Makalima**

The meeting began with Ambassador Makalima's introduction of Dr Aziz Dweik to the members of the Committee delegation.

#### **3.8.2. Opening Statement by Chairperson Hon. HT Magama**

In his opening statement, the Chairperson emphasized that reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas is an issue that members of the Committee have shown a lot of interest in and noted that any clarity that Dr Aziz Dweik could give on prospects for that taking place would be useful. He also described the purpose of the mission being to gather information for the purposes of informing the position of Parliament on the matter. He then elaborated that the members of Parliament with him were a multi-party delegation with a clear mandate and a determination to make an impact.

#### **3.8.3. Presentation by Dr Aziz Dweik**

In his presentation to the Committee delegation, Dr Aziz Dweik made the following points:

He began by welcoming the Committee delegation from South Africa. Dr Dweik emphasised that the people of Palestine value Nelson Mandela and his words about Palestine. The occupation was a long-term struggle, Palestinians were scattered around the world and many Palestinians living in poverty. Occupation was the main source of their problems as a people. The expansion of settlements was considered detrimental to the prospect of a Palestinian state. Palestinians call for peaceful means to end occupation. Israel was urged to release all political prisoners. Many prisoners were currently on hunger strike with one of the prisoners having done so for over 150 days. He informed the Committee delegation that he personally has spent 6 years in an Israeli prison and added that 20 members of the Palestinian Legislative Council were currently in prison. He considered the administrative detention as an illegal tool being used by Israel. He felt that Israel is responsible for failed reconciliation efforts. Israel was withholding taxes and international aid.

Dr Dweik concluded his address by expressing thanks and admiration to South Africa for overcoming its struggle. He also thanked Ambassador Makalima for organising the meeting.

The Chairperson Hon. HT Magama then introduced each member of the Committee delegation and opened the floor to questions.

Questions by the members of the Committee delegation included a question about how the outcome of the election resulted in a Parliament controlled by Fatah but have a Speaker who was Hamas. They enquired about whether negotiations were taking place in the future and what format they would take. They then enquired as to whether South Africa could play a role in the negotiations between Fatah and Hamas.

#### **3.8.4. Response by Dr Dweik**

Hamas gained majority in Parliament after elections but was hindered by the blockade. Some fellow Palestinians took the side of the west in preventing Hamas from administering its affairs. Hamas saw resistance as ideal because Fatah has pursued the failed approach of Oslo. Reconciliation required compensation and healthcare which has been hindered by the blockade. Some have rejected democratic process and polarisation emerged

### **3.9. Meeting with the Palestinian Legislative Council**

#### **3.9.1. Welcome by Dr. Nabil Shaath**

The meeting began with Dr Shaath introducing the members of the Legislative Council who were present at the meeting. Dr Nabil Shaath articulated Mandela's importance to the Palestinians movement and then informed the members of the Committee delegation that key issues would be articulated during the meeting.

#### **3.9.2. Opening statement by Chairperson Hon. HT Magama**

The Chairperson thanked Dr Shaath for welcoming his delegation. The importance of the Palestinian issue was then described as well as the purpose of the mission as it related to determining a way forward for Parliament. The Chairperson then introduced each member of the delegation.

#### **3.9.3. Presentation by Mrs Khalida K. Jarrar**

She highlighted the fact that 180 children and 14 women were currently under administrative detention. She noted that many detainees were on hunger strike and were at severe risk. During the Gilad Shalit exchange some Palestinians were released and many were rearrested. She then highlighted the case of Macer Abuhamdir who was dying of cancer in prison, and she emphasized that the Israeli authorities were refusing to release him. Additionally, 14 members of the Palestinian Legislative Council were under administrative detention, with some even being sentenced to 30 years in prison. Expanding further, she told the delegation that administrative detention was arbitrary arrest based on a 'secret file'. She noted that 17 April was the Day of Prisoner and assured the delegation that they would continue their campaign for their release.

#### **3.9.4. Presentation by Dr Najat Al-Astral**

He began by noting that the impact of the occupation was quite serious and added that basic movement around their own territory required permits. This was worsened by the fact that 1.5 million people were forced to live within 360 km. Ultimately, the people of Palestine need the occupation to end.

### **3.9.5. Presentation by Dr Abdullah Abdullah**

He highlighted the fact that 8 obligations that were part of Roadmaps agreed to by Israel were not being adhered to. Because of settlements there was virtually no viable state remaining. He said that Palestinians have no free movement and people were being detained all while the olive trees of the Palestinian people have been uprooted. He said that people were attacked in streets by settlers and described what he felt was an attempt by Israel to change the land. He said the Palestinian people were planning to plant many olive trees as a symbol of their Palestinian resistance taking a new form.

### **3.9.6. Comments by Dr Nabil Shaath**

Dr Nabil Shaath noted that the Goldstone Report provided many with clarity on the conditions of the Palestinian people and the assertions made by the Goldstone Report were confirmed by the European Union (EU) reports.

### **3.9.7. Questions and comments by Members of the Committee delegation**

The members of the Committee delegation were curious as to the number of detainees who were released and re-arrested. They enquired about whether there was any communication with voices of dissent in Israel. They sought clarity on whether any Israelis were building in Area C. Additionally, clarity was sought regarding whether Parliament was playing a role in Palestine utilising a rights-based approach. There were additional questions about whether perceptions about Gaza being under considerable Hamas control being accurate. Furthermore, they asked whether the international community was interfering in reconciliation efforts between Hamas and Fatah. Finally a question was asked about the potential role that South African can play.

### **3.9.8. Response**

The following responses were given to the Members of the Committee delegation:

Fourteen prisoners have been re-arrested. Some have been deported. There were Israeli's who participated in marches that have been arranged. Only one Israeli party spoke of a solution to the situation but got only 6 seats in Parliament. Mikhail Iden helped block a law in Israel which linked citizenship to Jewishness. Most settlements were in Area C. Israel was becoming immune to international condemnation. The Mitchell Report gives clarity on many of the issues they face. The Inter-Parliamentary Union intends on investigating the prisoner issue. The European Union and the UN Secretary General Mr Ban Ki Moon have made strong statements in that regard. People should not forget that this is an occupation. Negotiations were used as a stalling tactic to construct more settlements.

### **3.9.9. Closing by Chairperson Hon. HT Magama**

The Chairperson thanked the members of the Palestinian Legislative Council for their presentation and ensured them that the Committee delegation took the mission very seriously.



### **3.10. Briefing by Dr Mahdi Abdul Hadi – The Palestinian Academic Society for the study of International Affairs (PASSIA)**

He noted the fact that the Palestinian President Mr Mahmoud Abbas was in Jordan but was completely alone. He felt that that meeting was a sign that an agreement of some kind was reached between the King of Jordan and President Abbas. In his view, the agreement confirmed Jordan as custodian of Jerusalem and its holy sites. What stood out for Dr Hadi was that there was no mention of ending occupation. He then described some history and noted that the Ottoman Empire controlled the area between 1500 and 1915, from 1917 to 1922 it was the British Mandate, in 1947 United Nations Resolution 181 partitioned the land. War took place and an agreement was reached with Jordan. The 1967 War followed then the result was occupation, from 1980 till today the struggle continues.

#### **3.10.1. Questions and comments by the members of the Committee delegation**

They wanted clarity on the perception of South Africa within Palestine. They wanted a perspective on whether the two-state solution was genuinely viewed as a viable option. They were curious about whether regional dynamics influenced Palestine. Additionally there were questions around why a confederation is seen as suicide for Palestine, why Abbas visiting Jordan is so significant and what vision do most Palestinians have of a future Palestinian state. Final questions were about whether the international community could support a one-state solution and whether a 3<sup>rd</sup> intifada would receive support from the majority of Palestinians.

#### **3.10.2. Response by Dr Mahdi Abdul Hadi**

The following points were made by Dr Mahdi Abdul Hadi in his response to the delegation:

Many acknowledged the struggle and the achievements of South Africa but some questioned if it was genuine. South Africa has a historical role to play in Africa and is part of the Non-Aligned Movement. President Morsi has tried to copy Gamal Abdel Nasser but was having to cope with a series of challenges that may force his hand. South African missions should be visible and have a presence throughout the Middle East. President Obama has shown that there was no two-state solution. One state only would be viable if one removed Zionism which was considered exclusionary. A continuation of the status quo was likely but the question becomes for how long. Demography was considered a threat.

A confederation with Jordan has been discussed as a solution and President Abbas may be considering this option because his power was seen as waning (this option was seen as suicidal for Palestine). Another option could be to bring fear back to Israelis through non-violent resistance. The Israelis were imposing their narrative on the land using name changes. For many Palestinians, Ramallah is seen as plastic (fake freedom) and Fatah are acting as though we are already free. Obama has shown that he was powerless. The EU has been making statements but were considered hypocrites. In Dr Mahdi Abdul Hadi's view, a confederation would destroy Palestine. President Abbas would be seen to be transferring responsibility to Jordan. He did not see a 3<sup>rd</sup> Intifada as possible. In his view, a future Palestinian state would require the 1967 borders and a commitment to concessions. The Chairperson then closed the meeting and thanked PASSIA for meeting the delegation.

This was the final meeting which took place in Palestine. During this period the members of the Committee delegation were taken on a political tour. It included seeing the impact of settlements and understanding the geographical consequences of the current impasse in addition to the political tensions.

### **3.11. The Political Tour: coordinated by the Negotiation Affairs, Department of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation**

The political tour was coordinated by the Negotiation Affairs included detailed elaboration on the following:

- A description of the “Palestinians’ Historic Compromise” which involved an illustration of how borders have changed since the 1967, the de facto Line.
- The consequences of an occupied East Jerusalem which was described as the “source of cultural, historical, and spiritual heritage”.
- The revocation of residency in East Jerusalem whereby Palestinian inhabitants were given the status of “permanent resident” and a residence permit which could be revoked if they left the city.
- The different types of identification given to Palestinians and their meaning.
- The rights of Palestinians.
- The demolition of Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem since 1967.
- The members were taken to a neighbourhood where they were shown Palestinian houses that have been ‘occupied’ by Israelis and were under the protection of Israeli police.
- The consequences of the separation walls constructed in occupied territories.
- The delegation then went to the Mount of Olives and also discussed the potential impact of the proposed E1 settlement construction which they felt would divide East Jerusalem.

The delegation was then handed over to the South African mission in Tel Aviv, Israel following a lunch with the officials from the South African mission in Ramallah, whereby the Chairperson Hon. HT Magama was able to thank them for their assistance during the first leg of the visit. Upon arrival in Tel Aviv, the Committeemembers were taken to the South African mission in order to be briefed by the mission and meet with AmbassadorSisaNgombane.

### **3.12. Briefing by the South African embassy in Tel Aviv, Israel**

#### **3.12.1. Welcome by His Excellency AmbassadorSisa Ngombane**

The Ambassador briefed the Committee delegation on the local media reaction to the Committee’s visit. The programme was described and clarity was given on the key elements of the programme. The delegation was briefed on issues affecting the then current situation between Palestine and Israel. Furthermore, a historical overview of relations between South Africa and Israel was given. The complexities of the region were also described to the delegation. The Ambassador then introduced Mr Eugene Grobler (Counsellor) and Mr Freddie Jordaan (First Secretary).

### **3.12.2. Comments by members of the Committee delegation during the briefing**

The Chairperson described the purpose of the mission and emphasized how seriously the Committee was committed to making a positive impact on the debate. The members noted that the Committee sought to gain as much information as possible. The members also thanked the embassy for preparing a programme that would allow the Committee to gain as much information as possible in a short space of time.

### **3.13. Tour through Jerusalem conducted by Advocate Daniel Seidman, President of Terrestrial Jerusalem on the impact of settlements on the future of Jerusalem in a two-state solution.**

Terrestrial Jerusalem was described as an Israeli non-profit organisation devoted to the illumination of Israeli-Palestinian relations in Jerusalem. This was achieved through delivering information, maps and analyses to stakeholders in Israel and the international community, towards the goal of upgrading the quality of decision-making processes relating to Jerusalem, its current management and its future political status.

Adv Seidman took the delegation to various holy sites around Jerusalem and described the implications of settlement construction. He gave the delegation both a historical analysis of the situation and used individual cases to illustrate the impact on people. The political dynamics at play as well as the key figures that had the biggest impact at key periods in the past were described to the delegation. The geographical nuances were described to the delegation he pointed at the potential construction site of E1 as well as what he felt would be a severe impact on the future of Jerusalem if constructed. He also took the delegation to view the Dome of the Rock and the challenges that this particular area presented. He also commented the successes and failures of people such as Former Prime Minister of Israel Ariel Sharon and Former Prime Minister Ehud Olmert.

Members of the Committee delegation then posed questions to Adv Seidman which included seeking clarity on what form Adv Seidman thought a negotiated settlement would take given the difficulties that Jerusalem presented. A question was asked about the progressive forces in Israel and clarity was sought on why they have not had a significant impact on the Israeli political space. A question was also asked about whether there was a role for other powerful countries in the international system given the failures of the quartet. The Committee delegation was curious about how the general public in Israel view the situation. Finally, a question was posed about whether the progressive elements in Israel could have an impact.

In addressing the questions posed by the delegation, Adv Seidman described what he felt was denial on the part of some Israeli's and explained that it was a way of psychologically grappling with the overwhelming challenges this issue presents. He did however clarify that while the issue didn't feature prominently in the recent election, the Israeli political system was considered broad. The leftwing elements in Israel needed a clear form with which to direct their ambitions regarding the Palestine which he felt was lacking at the moment. He noted the role played by people like Tzipi Livni. He further discussed the role that other countries could play in the situation and how South Africa could help channel those in the right way if it was strategic in its orientation.

### **3.14. Visit to Yad Veshem – Holocaust Memorial**

The Committee delegation undertook a tour of the Holocaust memorial to gain deeper understanding on the horrors of the Holocaust and their impact in the creation of the state of Israel.

### **3.15. Meeting with the Coalition Against Racism and ADALAH on the status of Arab Citizens of Israel.**

#### **3.15.1. Welcome by Ambassador Ngombane**

The Ambassador began the meeting by welcoming those present. The Ambassador introduced those invited to speak on behalf of the various organisations which were present. The organisations included the Mossawa Centre, ADALAH, Al-Tufula Women's Empowerment and Early Childhood Centre and the Follow Up Committee for Arab Education. The Ambassador then invited the Chairperson to give his opening address.

#### **3.15.2. Address by Chairperson Hon. HT Magama.**

The Chairperson began by thanking the organisations present at the engagement for agreeing to meet with the Committee delegation. He described the importance of the mission, its mandate and explained that the members of the Committee delegation were there to listen and gather as much information as possible. He then introduced the members of the Committee delegation.

#### **3.15.3. Presentation by Mr Jafar Farah, Chairman of the Mossawa Centre**

Mr Farah began his presentation by noting that Palestinians were 14 percent of the Israeli population. He said that Palestinians were separated from their people and systematically discriminated against. He said that there were 30 laws that discriminate against Palestinians. He argued that Palestinians suffer from land confiscation and economic discrimination through the inadequate provision of service. He added that access to education for Palestinians was limited. He felt that recognition of Israel as a Jewish state rather than a state for all its citizens was a problem. He saw basic laws as causing problems for Palestinians. He argued that Palestinians need reconciliation and as such value South Africa's potential role. He saw South Africa's approach as offering peace-building and reconciliation; an effort which would need financial support rather than construction of walls. He highlighted the fact that Palestinians need the solidarity and support of South Africa. Additionally, he argued that peace-building could begin with an end to the occupation.

#### **3.15.4. Presentation by Dr Thabet Abu Rass, Director of the Adalah Negev Office**

Dr Thabet Abu Rass began by articulating his love for South Africa and respect of its history. Visiting South Africa taught his organisation a lot. He noted that the legal aspect of discrimination was crucial because it stemmed from Israel being a Jewish state. He said 20 percent of Israelis were non-Jews meaning that those who were not Jewish did not enjoy the same legal status. He saw discrimination in Israel as increasing and respect for human

rights as decreasing. He felt that Israeli society was driven by fear but noted the fact that land was a matter of identity. Additionally, he highlighted the fact that Israel controlled 97 percent of its geographical space. He relayed to the members of the Committee delegation a personal account, noting that half of his family lived in refugee camps. Bedouins were being attacked and the Negev was being developed by confiscating land and using urbanisation as an excuse. In conclusion, he informed the Delegation that Palestinians living in Israel only sought true democracy and human rights.

#### **3.15.5.Presentation by Ms Nabila Espanioly, Director of Al-Tufula Women's Empowerment and Early Childhood Centre**

In her presentation, Ms Nabila Espanioly highlighted the fact that South Africa has many lessons to teach Palestinians. In her view, peace was about life, not just peace agreements. Her party sought to create Arab-Jew harmony and peaceful co-existence. She felt that non-governmental organisations were playing a role that government didn't in some cases. She felt that in many instances men and women were not equal, particularly among Palestinians in Israel. The only time men and women were equal was when they worked the land. At the time 60 percent of poverty in Israel was Palestinian and of those who were poor many were working. She said there was a glass ceiling preventing the development of Palestinian women and Palestinians were also fighting against racism. She again highlighted the fact that South Africa's role could be crucial. She concluded her presentation by emphasising the fact that Palestinians would not disappear and only wanted to exist in a democratic state.

#### **3.15.6.Presentation by Mr Raja Zaatry, Spokesman for the Follow Up Committee for Arab Education**

Mr Zaatry noted that Arab members of the Knesset play a key role by helping with strategic votes. However, in his view, Arabs were not recognised so there was no education. He pointed out that the material of Mahmoud Darwish, an Arab poet, was not taught in schools. Typically, Palestinians have no representation in many cases and many Arab-Israeli's were not able to attend university. He noted that Israel didn't boycott Apartheid; as such South Africa shouldn't have military trade with Israel in any capacity. He concluded by noting that the South African experience was an inspiration to Palestinians.

#### **3.15.7.Questions and comments by the members of the Committee delegation**

The Committee delegation discussed the perception within Israel about the role that South Africa was playing in the region. It then enquired as to what meaningful input South Africa could make to assist in making the two-state solution viable. The Committee delegation then suggested that collaboration be strengthened between Non-Governmental Organisations in South Africa, Israel and Palestine to ensure that progressive elements on all sides were given an appropriate voice. The Committee delegation was curious about what exactly was the desired outcome of the organisations that were present and what steps were they were taking to achieve the outcome. To conclude, the Committee delegation enquired as to what significant international changes would assist in improving the situation for Palestinians.

### **3.15.8. Response**

The complexities were great and organisations like those present were a minority facing many challenges. The Coalition Against Racism included many groups (Ethiopians, Russians and Palestinians among others). Various social groups were not treated equally in terms of laws. Many organisations were focused on collective rights. The organisations wanted all communities to enjoy civil agreements that accord rights to all groups. The historical narrative and state symbols have presented challenges. Palestinians have preferred national service to be used in the context of equality. Palestinians did not want an escalation of racism. Palestinians wanted to establish a range of connections. Palestinians living in Israel didn't want self-determination, they viewed themselves as Israelis but wanted to be treated equally and given human rights. Palestinians living in Israel cared about their Palestinian brethren but fundamentally there was a view that they were Israeli citizens who were being excluded. They were inspired by the values of South Africa and wanted a shared future with open borders.

### **3.16. Meeting with the Deputy National Security Advisor of the Israeli Prime Minister's Office – Mr Yaakov Amidror**

#### **3.16.1. Introductory Address by the Chairperson**

The Chairperson began the engagement by welcoming Mr Amidror and thanking him for meeting with the Committee delegation. He then explained the purpose of the mission and gave the background on the timeline of the Committee's engagement on the issue. He also made it clear just how important that particular meeting was because it would give the members of the Committee an insight into the security concerns of Israel which was a fundamental component of the issues between Israel and Palestine. The Chairperson then introduced the members of the delegation.

#### **3.16.2. Presentation by Dr Eran Lerman – Deputy Chief of the Israeli National Security Council**

In his presentation, he noted that as a country Israel valued bilateral relations with South Africa. He noted a personal connection he has with South Africa and told the Committee delegation that he visited on three occasions. He informed the delegation that he has a background both in the military intelligence and foreign affairs. For clarity, he told the Committee delegation that on the Palestinian issue, they unequivocally want to return to the negotiating table. He said Palestinians left the negotiating table during the freeze on settlement construction. He further said when Israel brings security concerns into discussions the Palestinians leave the process. He told the Committee delegation that despite rumours to the contrary Israel wanted to return to the negotiating table without preconditions.

He reminded that the negotiating team has been in communication with the other side. In his view, the United Nations bid for statehood by Palestine was a futile attempt and was unproductive. He told the members of the Committee delegation that Israel was committed to economic growth for the Palestinian Authority and wanted the Authority to provide for their people. He saw the economy of the Palestinian Authority as dependent on foreign

largess and at the time there was a big public sector with little by way of a private sector. He felt that the Palestinians were seeking an alternative to a negotiated settlement while Israel sought to reach a compromise based on a two-state solution. In his view, there was no real alternative to a two-state solution and repeated the call for both sides to sit down and resolve their differences.

Dr Lerman called Hamas a renegade element committed to the destruction of Israel. He said Hamas enacted a coup in 2007 and seized political control of the Palestinian government; and he did not see a peaceful future with them. He noted that Israel was negotiating with Palestinians to use gas reserves from the sea and he hoped that those discussions are successful. He noted that 100 000 Palestinians work in settlements, and argued that when you remove settlements then Palestinians will be adversely affected because many of the settlements were efficient industrial zones.

In his view, the economies of Israel and Palestine were inextricably linked. Security was an issue Israel held in the highest importance. He said Israeli public opinion has shifted to the left on a peace-agreement but has seen a sharp shift to the right on security issues. He further said security experiences of the past have shifted their thinking because they have suffered many losses. He highlighted that when Israel left Lebanon, it had Hezbollah as a proxy of Iran move in and threatened the security of Israel. In Gaza there was Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad. As a result Israel has felt the impact of rockets raining down on its citizens.

He pointed out that Yasser Arafat took an ambiguous position to terrorism and the current leadership has taken a position against it. He viewed Palestinian resources not equipped to deal with terrorism and the Israeli Defence Force was currently playing that role. Israelis and Palestinians have to sit together and talk about security, he emphasised. He explained that when Israel talked about a long-term military presence near Jordan it was with the fear that terrorists would use the West Bank, something Israel would not allow. In his assessment, Israel could not rely on international promises because when Israel left Lebanon, United Nations' Resolution 1701 was relied on to secure southern Lebanon. Hezbollah then built up its arms and Israel still has that as a threat. He said Hezbollah has rockets in civilian areas and Israel would not allow its citizens to be at risk.

He told the Committee delegation that if Palestinians were serious about security then both nations could achieve a lot. Dr Lerman told the Committee delegation that the border issues began when Israel united Jerusalem and the West Bank which to Jews has biblical significance. He reported that Israel recognised that it would have to draw a line. He added that to assume that redrawing the line in a way which puts 650 000 Israeli's at risk being feasible was ridiculous. He argued that when talking of redrawing a line it would have to be realised that sacrifices would have to be made on both sides.

He felt that efforts would have to bring the mainstream of the settler community into the process and that could only be achieved through negotiation. An implementable political solution was required, which at the heart of the matter would be a permanent status which looked backwards, dealt with security and represented a practical territorial compromise. It could be achieved only through negotiation. Compromise, he said, was not possible without mutual recognition of legitimacy. Israel was a Jewish state but not one of exclusivity.

He highlighted that Israel wanted to preserve the Jewish character of the state. In his view, Zionism was about Jewish self-determination. Israel was a guarantee that another Holocaust would never happen again to the Jewish people. Jews as a people valued their

land deeply. He noted that even the calendar used by Israel was linked to the weather of the land. He joked that former United States President Harry S. Truman crossed out the term "Jewish state" because he didn't know that it was Israel. He said, even Stalin recognised the Jewish right to self-determination. No external authority could impose a solution.

On regional issues, Dr Lerman noted the following:

Based to his assessment, the Arab Spring was not an accurate encapsulation of the changes that were underway, to the National Security Council it was the "Arab Earthquake". Structures have collapsed and the epicentres were no longer in other parts of the world. The world has seen dictators like Qaddafi defeated despite ruling over his people for almost 40 years. Syria was seen as the last remaining vestige of the old system. Al-Qaeda elements were considered not having power to conquer states. Liberal forces were growing but were still weak in many countries in the region. Conservative forces were having the biggest impact.

He felt that President Abbas was reluctant to come to the negotiating table because he was concerned by the way America abandoned Mubarak. The Muslim Brotherhood was said to be growing and the world was seeing religious extremists with a political agenda attempting to make moves. He argued that Samuel Huntington's assessment of the region was wrong, the situation was far more complex than he imagined. Hamas has fascist elements and their documents blamed Jews for all the conflicts of the world. President Morsi wanted to maintain the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas. The Muslim Brotherhood has been under suspicion, so the November 2012 conflict between Hamas and Israel made the National Security Council very uncomfortable.

He saw the Iranian regime as different from other Islamists. He considered it Sharia but totalitarian in nature. The idea of Iran having nuclear capabilities was frightening to the State of Israel. Iran was viewed as making use of agents and proxies. They were seen as having carried out attacks against Israel at different levels. He stressed that Iran should be prevented from having nuclear capabilities at all costs. He pointed out that if Iran was successful, the result would be other countries like Saudi Arabia and Turkey seeking nuclear weapons. North Korea was not as much of a threat because it has been isolated and has no proxies that it could use strategically. Israel's predominant threat was Iran and its proxies. The Syrian situation was seen as driving a wedge between Islamist groups. Israel was not oblivious to the situation in Syria. Israel's long-term political concern was reaching an agreement with the Palestinians.

In conclusion, Dr Lerman apologised for not being able to take questions given that he needed to attend a meeting with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. He did however offer to take questions from the Committee delegation by e-mail.

Chairperson then thanked Dr Lerman for his time and engaging the members of the Committee delegation in a manner which addressed key issues and articulated the policies of Israel with regard to maintaining its security.



### **3.17. Meeting with B'tselem and Breaking the Silence**

#### **3.17.1. Welcome by Chairperson Hon. HT Magama**

The Chairperson welcomed the representatives of B'tselem and Breaking the Silence. The purpose and mandate of the mission was explained. The Chairperson concluded by introducing the delegation.

#### **3.17.2. Presentation by Ms Jessica Montell – B'tselem**

Ms Montell began her presentation by telling the Committee delegation that B'tselem was a human rights organisation. It was not involved in the peace process and its focus was on the human rights situation in the occupied territories. B'tselem did not follow the political situation. In their view at the time, the world had seen zero momentum in resolving the peace process. B'tselem felt that human rights issues remained important regardless of the peace process. The occupation was seen as a threat to Israel's democracy because violation of human rights created anger and frustration.

#### **3.17.3. Presentation by Mr Yahuda – Breaking the Silence**

Mr Yahuda began by giving the Committee delegation background on his personal story. He said that he grew up in a rightwing family and spent his high school years in a settlement. He served in the military during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Intifada. He and a few friends began their mission with a photo exhibit. They then started interviewing over 900 veterans and published some of their accounts. They use that information to send a message. They viewed themselves as veterans who oppose the occupation.

He told the Committee delegation that during the war their mindset as soldiers was always "playing defence" but in reality they were "playing offence". He further said in Hebron their purpose was to "create the feeling of being chased". For him, what became clear was that their main objective was to repaint the green line. He told the Committee delegation that it was a twisted concept of security, "either us or them". He felt that South Africa needed to cut through the barriers. He argued that politics was a balance of power, and in his view life was too comfortable for Israelis and so they only see the benefits of the occupation.

#### **3.17.4. Questions and comments by the Members of the Portfolio Committee delegation**

Following the presentations, the Committee delegation raised questions and made comments. The delegation noted that in previous engagements they were told that the occupation needed to have greater cost or consequences for Israel to consider ending it. The Committee delegation then asked if they saw any prospect for significant change in Israel about the occupation. A question was raised about whether there were any efforts being undertaken in Israel to hold the government accountable for the issues that were raised in their presentations to the Committee delegation. A question was then asked about the potential role that South Africa can play and whether the presenters had any insight as to how the price of the occupation could be raised. The Committee delegation expressed its concern about the radical elements on both sides of the debate and whether there was anything South Africa could do to support the positive forces in this situation

### **3.17.5. Response by Ms Jessica Montell**

Ms Montell accepted that accountability was definitely an issue, and B'tselem did try to push cases. She noted that Gaza was self-sufficient in the past but 80 per cent of it at the time required charity. She felt that it wasn't enough to be right but also to be smart, which was the approach her organisation has taken. In her view, Israel understood BDS as negating the Israeli statements. She felt the Israeli mindset of persecution has been in existence and was being manipulated by rightwing forces. She argued that B'tselem supported a democratic Israel, and also B'tselem agreed that there needs to be an engagement with progressive forces across the board.

### **3.17.6. Reponse by Mr Yahuda**

Mr Yahuda began by telling the Committee delegation that he was a Zionist and he wanted secure borders but he also wanted to live peacefully beside a Palestinian state. He said that he agreed with the intention of the BDS movement but he felt that its approach could compromise the goal. He elaborated that internal work needed to be done, external work was also needed. He added that most in Israel support a 2-states solution, a 1-state solution was out of the question. He felt that the Middle East was the region Israel finds itself and it must learn to live in it. He saw the United States as not necessarily an honest broker, the European Union could play a bigger role. South Africa should love Israel and hate the occupation

## **3.18. Meeting with the Non Governmental Organisation Peace Forum**

### **3.18.1. Welcome by Chairperson Hon. HT Magama**

The Chairperson described the history of the Committee's engagement on the issue. The mandate of the mission was explained. Previous engagements during the mission were articulated. The delegation was also introduced.

### **3.18.2. Address by Ambassador Ilan Baruch (former Israeli Ambassador to South Africa)**

Ambassador Ilan Baruch expressed gratitude for the opportunity to address the Committee delegation. He saw South Africa's history as unique and having created a unique outlook on the Palestinian issue. In particular he said, people with struggle credentials in South Africa saw the issue in a certain way. He referred to the time he was at the Polokwane conference, and he remembered the emotional chant of "viva Palestine". He felt that in Thabo Mbeki's time Israel was confident that the two-state solution was given priority by the South African government. Currently he felt that the commitment to the two-state solution was waning. He told the Committee delegation that it saddened Israel because it valued the potential role that South Africa could play given that it has a unique role in Africa, the Non-Aligned Movement and the United Nations.

### **3.18.3. Address by Dr Gershon Baskin**

Dr Baskin told the Committee delegation he was involved in the background talks which led to the Gilad Shalit prisoner exchange. He noted that previous negotiations came close to an agreement, particularly when Olmert and Abbas had talks. Key issues remained territorial in nature but essentially what was sought is two states for two peoples. He told the Committee

delegation that Israel did not want a homogenous state, but added that an identity conflict like in Bosnia could emerge if two-states solution is taken off the table. He argued that both Israeli's and Palestinians support the two-states solution and secret backchannels were key to a solution being reached. He felt that a two-pronged strategy was needed. In his view, key to the solution was PM Benjamin Netanyahu but Dr Baskin felt that he only made decision under pressure so something should be done to create the pressure. He felt that President Abbas' weakness came from failure to deliver a solution so Israel should assist the process.

The Israeli campaign needed to be public and show strong support for an agreement.

The floor was then opened for questions and comments

#### **3.18.4. Questions and comments by the Members of the Committee delegation**

The Committee delegation began by clarifying South Africa's position and noting that since 1994, South Africa has supported a two-state solution with Palestine and Israel living side by side peacefully. However, South Africa has been concerned about the expansion of settlement activity because it rendered the creation of a viable Palestinian state impossible. The Committee delegation then enquired about which land was the most disputed and also whether the speakers saw a settlement being on the horizon anytime soon. The Committee delegation then asked about whether mutual recognition would be a major step forward, particularly when considering the refusal of organisations like Hamas to recognise the state of Israel. There was curiosity as to whether there was a widespread view in Israel that the E1 Settlement construction plan should be implemented. The Committee delegation also felt the need to assure the presenters that South Africa did recognise the security concerns of Israel. Comments then shifted to the domestic politics of Israel. The Committee delegation was curious why the message of politicians like Tzipi Livni did not resonate with voters in Israel. Additionally, what the general view was about the settlement construction in the West Bank. There was also concern about how people were being brought into the negotiation process so that it did not merely take place at a political level. Clarity was sought on the rights of Arabs living in Israel and also enquired as to whether Israel would be willing to accept Jordan as custodian of Jerusalem. The presenters were asked to articulate what they felt should be the primary security concerns of Israel. The Committee delegation also wanted to know what the presenters felt would be the deciding factor in facilitating a peace agreement. To conclude this round of questions, the Committee delegation sought clarity on what vision of a two-state solution the presenters wished to articulate on.

#### **3.18.5. Response by Dr Baskin**

Agreeing to territorial swaps would minimise the effect of settlements. The problem was the delineation of the borders. When that is resolved settlement activity wouldn't be a problem. He agreed with the Palestinian Liberation Organisation position, that Abbas negotiates on behalf of Palestinians then when an agreement is reached a referendum and an election can be held. He noted that agreeing what land should be annexed was the central issue.

#### **3.18.6. Response by Ambassador Ilan Baruch**

The ratio of exchange was also seen as an important issue. He thought Prime Minister Netanyahu was ideologically influenced and wasn't only reacting to pressure as his colleague suggested. He saw a need to apply pressure strategically, but Netanyahu was intended on "Israelising" Area C and East Jerusalem. He felt South Africa needed to send a clear and consistent message of support to two-states. For example, as a symbolic gesture, South Africa should suggest that Israel be welcomed to the Non-Aligned Movement upon finalisation of an agreement with Palestine. He argued that the people were involved at

various levels but Israelis have been through very negative experiences. Pessimism has changed dynamics and anti-normalisation of relations a growing consensus among Palestinians. In his view, there was 'soft struggle' advocacy within Israel, but the left in Israel didn't articulate the message well and has gotten weaker as a result.

### **3.18.7. Response by Dr Baskin**

Dr Baskin told the Committee delegation that he has advised President Abbas to hire a consulting firm based in Tel Aviv which has worked with rightwing political campaigns, in an effort to get their message across to the Israeli general public effectively. Dr Baskin has envisioned open borders for the future. He felt E1 was a serious issue and should not be built, instead E1 should be a place for 190 embassies. Settlements endangered peace but delineation of borders remained a key issue. In his view, Israel has genuine security concerns. Israel didn't trust the United Nations, so a multilateral force involving countries that they trust would be preferred. Agreements were there, they just need to be implemented. The Geneva Initiative is something that should be looked at again. There was a caucus in the Knesset attempting to deal with the two-state solution. Arab Israelis were not being treated equally, they were drafted into the army but discriminated against even though it was not their fault. He felt Israel should have a partnership with inclusive policies. Israel needed to redefine the state. Israel should be "A State for the Jewish people and all its citizens". The Parent Circle was considered also a key policy worth looking at.

Following this response, the Chairperson thanked Ambassador Ilan Baruch and Dr Gershon Baskin for agreeing to meet with the Committee delegation. The meeting was then closed and the members of the Committee then proceeded to the next meeting.

## **3.19. Roundtable discussion at the Israeli Foreign Ministry**

The meeting began with the panellists being introduced by the Director General of the Israeli Foreign Ministry.

### **3.19.1. Ambassador Rafael Barack**

In his opening address, Ambassador Barack told the Committee delegation that Israel valued its relationship with South Africa. He noted there were some challenges but Israel wanted to have an ongoing dialogue and was committed to maintaining bilateral relations.

### **3.19.2. Ambassador Pinhas Avivi**

Ambassador Avivi noted that in 2005, Israel decided to dismantle settlements and transferred control to Palestinians. Israel wanted to use it as an opportunity to see if they could live in peace. He told the Committee delegation that his son warned him that it was a mistake and that the Palestinians would ask for more. At the time, Israel felt they would vote for two-states but the reality was different. Ultimately, both parties have to share the land and the resources. Abbas was not speaking for Gaza given that Gaza does not recognise him but an agreement could still be reached. He concluded by stating that it would not be easy but an agreement would be possible under the rights conditions.

### **3.19.3. Additional statement by Ambassador Rafael Barack**

Ambassador Barack informed the Committee delegation that the Palestinian issue has been sidelined in the context of the Arab Spring. In his view, Qatar was supporting Hamas, UAE and Saudi Arabia were not interested in the matter, and Egypt was distracted. He saw the biggest struggle as between Hamas and Fatah. It was a competition over hegemony. Israel sought a common ground however there were internal politics in Israel that could not be ignored. There wasn't much trust. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Intifada has created concerns and Palestinian reconciliation was not going anywhere. He said the Palestinians keep creating pretext for not continuing negotiations. He saw the next few months as important: 'Will there be preconditions or will settlements continue?', he saw these as questions that would be answered in due time.

### **3.19.4. Address by Chairperson Hon. HT Magama**

The Chairperson thanked the Foreign Affairs officials for meeting with the Committee delegation. He explained the history of the Committee's engagements on this issue and why the mission came into being. The Chairperson then introduced the members of the delegation and opened the floor for questions and comments.

### **3.19.5. Questions and comments by the members of the Committee delegation**

The Committee delegation began by asking the Israeli Foreign Office officials what they felt it would take for negotiations to continue. They noted that South Africa was looking for a solution, and stated that they would appreciate their input in this regard. They enquired as to whether Israel wished for Hamas and Fatah to reconcile for the peace process to continue and also enquired as to whether trust could be built after the Gaza experience. The Committee delegation asked if the Foreign office felt that the E1 settlement construction project should move forward. The Committee delegation then sought clarity on what roadmap Israel would follow from then on with regard to achieving a peace plan. They sought clarity on why the West Bank was such disputed territory and wanted information on Israel's control of water resources and fishing rights. They wanted to know why the Knesset has not been outspoken about its support for a two-state solution. The Committee delegation then asked the presenters what their view was of the alleged "Judaisation" of Jerusalem. To conclude, the Committee sought clarity on the rights of Arabs in Israel. A final question was asked about whether it was believed United States Secretary of State, Mr John Kerry would be able to assist Israel and Palestine in coming to some kind of agreement.

### **3.19.6. Response**

It was indicated that the Palestinians needed to have one delegation and agree what they could accept by reaching an understanding among themselves. On the other hand, Israel accepted the challenges and wanted to be engaged. The meeting was a good start to improving relations. Jerusalem was about control of the Holy Sites. Possible swaps have been discussed.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Intifada created scepticism and people were tired. In his view, if South Africa wanted to be influential, it should have good relations with both countries. South Africa and other countries offer concrete projects and ideas. Giving money was not helpful because money often would go to the wrong places.

Ambassador Avivi shared a story of a friend of his who has been moved from settlements in the Sinai, to Gaza and then to Haifa. That was intended to show that Israelis were willing to move if they felt it would bring about peace so they could resolve the settlement issues.

The nomination of Tzipi Livni showed that people were committed to change. A roadmap was needed and a provisional border might be considered. Ambassador Barack emphasized that Israel's security was crucial saying, "imagine the potential impact of a rocket from Ramallah hitting our airport and shutting down the country completely". Ambassador Barack added that Israel and Palestine depended on one source of water. Israel provided water to Jordan, Palestine and Gaza. Israel also provided electricity.

E1 was seen as a reaction to a bad choice by the Palestinians. The United Nations was not going to create a state, only negotiations could do that. In his view, Arabs do have rights in Israel and there were even political parties representing their interests. Arabic is one of the official languages and they have Arab diplomats. Arabs have been exempted from military service but Druze (an ethnic group numbered at an estimated 129 800 at the end of 2011) have requested military and have thus been accorded this right.

### **3.19.7. Additional Response**

It was said that negotiations could continue if there were no preconditions. Israel saw a complete delegation on the part of Palestinians as fundamental. A roadmap was about time frames and not about key issues. In 2000 Yasser Arafat would not sign without Mubarak which signalled to Israel that Palestinians were not independent and were driven by regional dynamics. Mubarak enjoyed a tense Middle East, he saw Syria as not supporting Palestine, Qatar was not interested and supported Hamas financially as a slap in the face to the Palestinians Authority.

In his view, time was not on their side. It was said that Israel cared for Palestinians more than their Arab brothers. Israel has also given money but it didn't like that it went to the wrong places. From a psychological perspective, this issue was relatively simple for Israel, essentially "don't hurt us, don't stab us, don't send rockets", it was said. The previous election showed how the issue was viewed, people in Israel accept Oslo and the Palestinians Authority. But Israelis cared about economic and religious issues more because they are demoralised by the failed peace process.

### **3.19.8. Closing Address by Chairperson Hon. HT Magama**

The Chairperson emphasised that the Committee delegation has sought to engage as extensively as possible during this mission. He remarked that the members of the parliamentary delegation represented diverse constituents who cared about the situation being resolved. He noted that the countries needed to maintain bilateral relations as that created a mechanism for engagement, but that the Palestinian question would always loom large in the relations between the countries. He emphasised that a true and lasting solution to the conflict would in the final analysis be between Israelis and Palestinians at the negotiating table. The Chairperson thanked the Foreign Affairs officials for their time and the Committee delegation proceeded to the next engagement.

### **3.20. Meeting with Member of the Knesset Issac Herzog – Chair of the Labour Party Faction**

#### **3.20.1. Opening Statement by Chairperson Hon. HT Magama**

The Chairperson explained the mandate of the mission as well as the history of engagements and the role parliament wished to play.

#### **3.20.2. Address by MK Issac Hetzog**

In his address, MK Issac Hertzog stated that the Palestinian crisis was a clash of two national movements. It had been ongoing for years. Israel was open to compromise but there was a religious divide. There was also a political divide and the only viable option was a two-state . A one-state solution was seen as not viable at all because the current tensions were about national aspirations. The issue had a long history but 80 percent of Israelis would sign a deal under the right circumstances. The Israeli public was largely in denial, after Israel pulled out from Gaza the result was rockets in return. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Intifada, a divided Palestine and the Arab Spring have made people cynical and uncertain. Palestinians didn't believe Israel was serious because of settlements. Many felt that Israel could resolve that issue with land swaps because settlements occupied only 4 percent of land. A special arrangement for Jerusalem could be made and there should be no right of return. An interim deal could be reached between Netanyahu and Abbas. John Kerry was at the time on his way to Israel and wanted a deal. Abbas didn't want to meet with Benjamin Netanyahu, which was seen as a mistake. Israel also felt that it was not smart for the Palestinians to run to the United Nations. Settlements have thousands of Palestinians working in Industrial zones so a call for boycott would have a detrimental impact on Palestinians whose livelihoods were linked to those settlements.

#### **3.20.3. Questions and comments by the members of the Committee delegation**

The Committee delegation was curious as to why the peace process did not feature prominently in the election. They asked Hon. MK Mr Hertzog whether his party was part of the coalition and enquired as to what the general view was about Netanyahu's strategy regarding the E1 settlement construction project given that for many it is perceived as a "deal breaker". The Committee delegation asked if the perception that Israel did not want Fatah and Hamas to reconcile was an accurate assessment of the situation. The Committee delegation then asked what role South Africa could play in the situation.

#### **3.20.4. Response by MK Isaac Hertzog**

The Israeli public was confused because there had been no progress in negotiations, so the focus was on social issues. The Prime Minister agreed to a freeze on settlement construction but that was ignored by Abbas; and the Palestinians chose to go to the United Nations after failing to get an extension on the settlement freeze. He said very few people in Israel saw Netanyahu building E1. Borders of a future Palestinian state should be determined by bilateral talks. Prime Minister Fayed has shown that he was serious about talking with Israel. The problem was the aim of Hamas because it was not clear that they wanted to ever recognise Israel's right to exist. He emphasised that Israel was not

intervening in the prospect of reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah. He saw Hamas as in crisis.

On the subject of South Africa's potential role, MK Issac Hertzog said that Israeli's saw South Africa as taking sides. The key for South Africa would be to act as a partner to both sides. Israel was willing to talk. South Africa also needed to strengthen bilateral trade with Israel.

### **3.20.5.Closing by Chairperson Hon. HT Magama**

The Chairperson thanked Mr Herzog for his engagement with the Committee delegation and requested that communication should continue.

## **3.21. Meeting with Member of the Knesset Ronen Hoffman –Yesh Atid Party**

### **3.21.1.Introduction**

Given that this was the final meeting that the Committee delegation would have during the study tour mission, the Chairperson began by summarising some of the key issues that have emerged in previous engagements. He also explained the purpose of the mission and the role that the Portfolio Committee on International Relations and Cooperation wished to play in the debate regarding the Israeli-Palestine issue.

### **3.21.2.Address by Member of the Knesset Hoffman**

In his address, Mr Hoffman told Committee delegation that Yesh Atid was a new party that came into politics recently but had achieved some success. The party was centrist and became successful because there was a gap in the political spectrum. Yesh Atid, was reported as a social democrat party that supported the two-state solution. Yesh Atid supported the structure and goals of the Camp David negotiations but they felt that previous governments ignored the Palestinian Authority for too long resulting in mistrust. In the coalition, Yesh Atid has insisted that Israel return to the negotiating table.

### **3.21.3.Questions and comments by the delegation**

The Committee delegation asked if the Yesh Atid had its own view on what the right approach should be to the peace process as well as what timetable should be followed. They further asked how the key role-players in the coalition would move forward on the issue of peace with Palestine. They enquired as to what the general view would be if the Palestinian Authority was not given the mandate to lead talks. On the role that could be played by external entities, the Committee delegation asked about whether Jordan was trusted as a potential participant in the peace process. The Committee delegation also asked about the potential role that South Africa could play. They were curious why MK Hon. Ronen Hoffman felt that Netanyahu weakened Fatah. To conclude, the Committee delegation asked if Hon. Hoffman felt that the border issues could be resolved, particularly if 1967 demarcations were used.

### **3.21.4.Response**

Yesh Atid felt that the Palestinian Authority could be a meaningful partner and Israel should return to the negotiating table at that time. He noted that in the coalition, there were parties



that disagreed with them in certain ways. During the election the focus as a party was on domestic issues, but the party was of the opinion that it was important to return to the negotiating table.

It was said that regional framing would be crucial there because the Palestinian Authority would need support. Political support from the region was what government would like. Netanyahu wanted to start bilateral negotiations rather than enter into discussions with Jordan. Support from the Arab League could also be useful. MK Mr Hoffman shared with the Committee delegation that his field of speciality was political psychology and his focus was on reconciliation efforts which was something that Israel had not dealt with as a country. A peace deal should be presented in the Knesset and a referendum would then be needed. He felt that the November conflict left Hamas politically stronger because they were able to have an impact. He saw future borders being along 1967 lines. He felt that that would have public support if it were managed well; he also felt that it would be important to think outside of the box.

### **3.21.5.Closing by Chairperson Hon. HT Magama**

The Chairperson closed the meeting and thanked Mr Hoffman for meeting with the Committee delegation.

After Mr Hoffman left, the Chairperson took the time to thank the South African embassy in Tel Aviv, Israel for their assistance and facilitation of the second leg of the study tour mission.

The Chairperson also thanked the members of the Committee for their active participation, commitment and dedication to the mission and a very tight schedule which did not allow for leisure and sufficient rest. He thanked Members for sacrificing their Easter Weekend; away from their families and loved ones and in some cases religious activities to do Parliamentary work and participate in this very meaningful and important mission.

Report to be considered.