

Committee: Human Rights Council

Delegation: The Arab Republic of Egypt

Topic: Human Rights Situation in Palestine and Other Occupied Arab Territories



The Representation of The Arab Republic of Egypt (henceforth: Egypt) would firstly like to emphasize that the Palestinian cause is one of top priorities of Egypt's foreign policy.<sup>1</sup> Egypt's aim is to help the Palestinian people to exercise their legitimate right to self-determination in the light of the Arab peace initiative, by establishing their independent state on the borders of June 4th, 1967 with its capital as East Jerusalem. On the other hand, Israel and Egypt have increased their cooperation against Islamist militants and instability in the Sinai Peninsula and Gaza Strip since the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel from 1978.<sup>2</sup>

Notwithstanding those developments, Egypt is very concerned about the human right situation predominantly in Palestine and also in Other Occupied Arab territories.

Egypt has ratified numerous UN Human Rights Conventions<sup>3</sup> and thus has made binding international commitments to adhere to the standards laid down in these universal human rights documents.<sup>4</sup> In accordance with ratified conventions, Egypt strictly condemns human rights violations in the area of Palestine and other Occupied territories.

The Human right situation in Gaza is unbearable. Approximately 70 per cent of the nearly two million inhabitants of Gaza are refugees.<sup>5</sup> The blockade on land, air and sea imposed by Israel following the Hamas takeover of the Gaza Strip in 2007 continues to have a devastating effect as access to markets, school, work and people's movement to and from the Gaza Strip remain severely restricted.

Egypt monitors Israeli human rights violations with grave concern. The number of casualties caused by Israel in response to various Palestinian protests at the Gaza border in Israel is extremely disproportionate.<sup>6</sup> Israel unduly signifies the protests of civilians as a terrorist act. In accordance with the principle ultima ratio, killing should be the last stage of their response. Consequently, the killing of civilians and the children is completely unacceptable and unreasonable.

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<sup>1</sup> Arab Republic of Egypt, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Peace process, URL: <https://www.mfa.gov.eg/English/ForeignPolicy/PeaceProcess/Pages/default.aspx> (Accessed 17.10.2018).

<sup>2</sup> Egypt: Background and U.S. Relations. URL: <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL33003.pdf> (Accessed 13.10.2018).

<sup>3</sup> International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Right, Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, Convention on the Rights of Child etc.

<sup>4</sup> Claiming Human Rights - in Egypt. URL: <http://www.claiminghumanrights.org/egypt.html> (Accessed 10.10.2018).

<sup>5</sup> Jewish Virtual Library, a project of aice, UN Relief & Works Agency (UNRWA): Palestinian Refugees in the Gaza Strip, URL: <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/palestinian-refugees-in-the-gaza-strip> (Accessed 19.10.2018).

<sup>6</sup> The Guardian, UN human rights chief rebukes Israel as Egypt opens Gaza crossing, URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/may/18/egypt-opens-gaza-border-crossing-month-ramadan-palestinians> (Accessed 19.10.2018).

On 18th May 2018, the Human Rights Council held a special session on ‘the deteriorating human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. Egypt voted to set up a commission of inquiry and in favour of a resolution condemning “the disproportionate and indiscriminate use of force by the Israeli occupying forces against Palestinian civilians”.<sup>7</sup> On this session Egypt stated: »The suffering by the Palestinian people requires a firm stance by the international community to stop these violations and ensure accountability for the perpetrators of these violations.«<sup>8</sup> This justifies the holding of a Special Session and the establishment of an international Commission of Inquiry.

Egypt acknowledges it’s the gravity of closure of its own border with Gaza. However, Egypt has valid reasons for this closure. Firstly, Egypt has an interest in weakening militant Islamist group Hamas, an offshoot of Egypt’s outlawed opposition group the Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>9</sup> Secondly, allowing goods through Rafah would take the pressure off Israel to end the blockade, which is not right, because Gaza is under Israeli occupation, and therefore under international law, it is Israel’s duty to provide Gazans with their basic needs. Thirdly, we are concerned that the events of the Hamas “Return March” in Gaza may spill over into Egyptian territory.<sup>10</sup> Despite all this, the Rafah crossing (between Egypt and Gaza) is open to allow special shipments of medical supplies into Gaza and to allow some Palestinians to leave, most for medical treatment and on some occasions it is opened for few days in a row. Egypt even offered to open the crossing on a regular basis in exchange for Hamas calming the territory in 2018.<sup>11</sup>

In light of all the presented arguments, Egypt stands for the inclusion of following content into the resolution: Firstly, the HRC should clearly condemn the outlined conduct of Israeli authorities. Secondly, the HRC should encourage the need for serious and fruitful negotiations on the basis of international resolutions, the Arab peace initiative, stopping the Israeli settlement activities and the continuous attacks on all religious sanctities. Thirdly, the HRC should remind Israel of its obligation to meet basic needs of people in Gaza (from running water to normal access to school, work etc.) as Gaza is under Israeli occupation. Lastly, the HRC should remind the General Assembly that violations of human rights are the result of Gaza's occupation. The HRC should therefore stand for establishing an independent Palestinian state. Such a solution would surely end Palestinian suffering and furthermore enable Palestinian refugees all over the world to return to their ancestral land of Palestine.

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<sup>7</sup> United Nations Human right Council, Human Rights Council concludes special session on the deteriorating human rights situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, URL: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/NewsDetail.aspx?NewsID=23107&LangID=E> (Accessed 21.10.2018).

<sup>8</sup>Universal Right Group Geneva, Report on the 28th Special Session of the Human Rights Council on the deteriorating human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, URL: <https://www.universal-rights.org/blog/report-on-the-28th-special-session-of-the-human-rights-council-on-the-deteriorating-human-rights-situation-in-the-occupied-palestinian-territory-including-east-jerusalem/> (Accessed 21.10.2018).

<sup>9</sup> The Christian Science Monitor, Israel, Gaza tensions: Why Egypt help maintain the blockade, URL: <https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2010/0402/Israel-Gaza-tensions-Why-Egypt-helps-maintain-the-blockade> (Accessed 20.10.2018).

<sup>10</sup> Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, Why Egypt Is Concerned about Gaza, URL: <http://jcpa.org/why-egypt-is-concerned-about-gaza/> (Accessed 19.10.2018).

<sup>11</sup> Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, Why Egypt is concerned about Gaza, URL: <http://jcpa.org/why-egypt-is-concerned-about-gaza/> (Accessed 20.10.2018).