



GENEVA CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS ADVANCEMENT AND GLOBAL DIALOGUE

مركز جنيف لحقوق الإنسان والحوار العالمي

CENTRE DE GENÈVE POUR LA PROMOTION DES DROITS DE L'HOMME ET LE DIALOGUE GLOBAL

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ذو مركز استشاري خاص لدى المجلس
الاقتصادي والاجتماعي للأمم المتحدة

Rue de Vermont 37-39
CP 186, 1211 Geneva 20
Switzerland
Tel: +41 (0) 22 748 27 80
Email: info@gchragd.org
Web: www.gchragd.org

*Intervention by Ambassador Idriss Jazairy, Executive Director of
the Geneva Centre for Human Rights Advancement and Global
Dialogue*

Al Azhar World Conference to Support Al Quds

1st Session: Promoting awareness about the situation of Al Quds

**“ The impact of the current status in Jerusalem on the human rights of
Palestinians residents of East Jerusalem”**

18th of January 2018

Excellencies,

Distinguished Guests,

I wish to pay tribute to His Eminence Dr. Ahmed el-Tayeb, Grand Imam of Al-Azhar not only for his kind hospitality but also for having blessed us and the world community with such an outstanding opening speech.

I am pleased to be here, on this historical occasion, in my capacity as Executive Director of the Geneva Centre for Human Rights Advancement and Global Dialogue, a think tank dedicated to the promotion and protection of human rights. I would like to add our voice to Al Azhar's voice in support of Al Quds and to reiterate our solidarity towards the courageous Palestinian people. We also support the appeal of the 'Arab Thoughts Forum' addressed by HRH Prince El Hassan Bin Talal of Jordan to the American administration in this regard.

Israel's de facto annexation of East Jerusalem and the U.S. decision to recognize the Holy City as a whole as the capital of Israel ignores the special status of Al Quds, itself a cornerstone of the two-State solution.

Including the issue of the status of Jerusalem in the agenda of this event and discussing it from a legal, political or cultural standpoint is the right thing to do. There is another aspect of this problem that is no less important than these aspects, which is the human rights situation of the Palestinian *Makdisis* of Jerusalem.

I would like to raise three fundamental rights: (1) the right to self-determination; (2) the right to freedom of movement, which is an essential prerequisite for the enjoyment of other fundamental rights; and (3) the principle of non-discrimination. The violation of these rights of the *Makdisis* needs to be denounced.

Firstly, the official recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, although not shared by the international community, has negative consequences on the Palestinians' enjoyment of their right to self-determination. Self-determination, which is the right of peoples to run their affairs by themselves, is one of the core human rights principles proclaimed by Art. 1 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, not to mention the UN Charter. The current situation of depriving the Palestinian people, notably the *Makdisis*, of the freedom to decide their own destiny blatantly violates this inalienable right.

Secondly, the recent episodes have the potential of encouraging Israel to escalate the already grave violations of human rights. It may lead, *inter alia*, to the further expansion of settlements and the systematic demolitions of homes in East Jerusalem, neglecting Art. 1 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as well as to further restrictions on the Palestinians' freedom of movement across the city. The latest report by the Special

Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories since 1967, Michael Lynk, shows that “demolitions and evictions of Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem continue at a high rate, with 116 total demolitions recorded” from the beginning of 2017 to mid-September 2017, “displacing 202 people”. As highlighted by Michael Link, “according to recent reports by the World Bank and the United Nations, the expanding Israeli settlement enterprise and the supporting apparatus of occupation has deepened the already separate and distinctly inferior civil and economic conditions imposed upon Palestinians in the West Bank”, including East Jerusalem. The current situation will result in the further isolation of East Jerusalem from its national, economic and cultural connections with the West Bank. This right to freedom of movement is enshrined in several international covenants, including Art. 12 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Palestinians’ freedom of movement is restricted through a series of measures, of an administrative, bureaucratic, and physical nature. These include checkpoints, settlements and permit requirements. The restriction on the Palestinians’ freedom of movement denies their access to some of the most basic services, and therefore the exercise of a series of fundamental human rights, such as the right to education and to health, thereby stymying the enjoyment of an adequate standard of living and intensifying the already acute inequalities between Israeli and Palestinian residents of the same city.

According to an earlier report of the UN Secretary-General on the human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories, access to education is most restricted among East Jerusalem communities beyond the separation Wall. A significant number of students must pass a checkpoint to reach their school, and road closures result in long daily commutes for students who wish to attend a university outside their immediate residential area. The limited access to education is exacerbated by the limitations imposed on access to Palestinian schools, especially in East Jerusalem, for the staff of the Ministry of Education of the State of Palestine, as well as for service providers. As a result of these obstacles, textbooks and furniture cannot be effectively delivered.

The same report shows that access to health services is also “impaired by the movement of patients, doctors and other medical staff”. “Most Palestinians from the West Bank or Gaza requiring healthcare in East Jerusalem (...) must apply for an Israeli-issued permit”.

This brings me to the third and last point I would like to raise. The official endorsement of Israel’s annexation of East Jerusalem by the U.S. will most likely be conducive to the perpetration of heightened discriminatory policies by Israel against the Palestinian population to push them to leave.

It is worth recalling that the principle of non-discrimination is a fundamental human rights principle. First and foremost, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states, under Article 2, that “everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other

opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status” . This principle is reiterated in Article 3 of both the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which impose an obligation upon all State Parties to ensure the equal right of all to the enjoyment of the rights set forth by the Covenants themselves.

The decision to move the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem is another warning of an alarming situation that cannot be blatantly ignored. The international community and in particular the Arabic and Muslim regions, have the moral duty to join forces and act in concert in order to halt the violations of Palestinians’ human rights and restore the dignity of the *Makdisis*, itself an inalienable right.

Al Quds is a textbook case of multi-faceted and crosscutting violations of human rights. However, it is also a textbook template of religious diversity, which would be the emblematic example of the beauty of diversity to be celebrated and not stamped out.

Thank you.