

April 15, 2004

HE Secretary General Kofi Anan
United Nations
New York

Dear Excellency:

I am writing to you today regarding the oral statements of President George W. Bush at his news conference with Israeli Prime Minister Sharon yesterday and the letter of assurances exchanged between the two leaders.

The Bush Administration has sided with Israel on matters that go to the heart of a permanent status agreement between the PLO and Israel. The US and Israeli positions contravene international law, as well as past agreements between the parties to which the international community bore witness. Their positions constitute a total rejection of the right of return of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes lost prior to 1948; acceptance of illegal Israeli settlements on Occupied Palestinian Territory on land wrongfully confiscated from their rightful owners; implicit acceptance of the territorial annexation of occupied East Jerusalem; and the acceptance of acquisition of territory through the use of force.

According to international law a third party cannot unilaterally erase or give up the rights of a party to a conflict. We believe, however, that this is exactly what the US is attempting to do in its statements on April 14. The Palestinian people reject the US position and will firmly oppose it. The Palestinian people are the ones that must decide the future implementation of their rights in agreement with the Israeli side. We believe that the other members of the Quartet must also take a stand against the US and Israeli attempt to permanently sideline international principles and the rights of the Palestinians.

[For the UN/EU: The ____ has historically served an important role in upholding international law.] [Russia: I thank you for your country's commitment to peace process and Palestinian rights.] I ask you now at this critical juncture to reaffirm international law and the principles for a peaceful end to the conflict with respect to the following:

- Israeli settlements in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, are illegal and constitute an obstacle to peace.
- Israel should end the occupation that began in 1967 and withdraw its civilians and military troops to the 1949 armistice line in the West Bank and Gaza as called for in applicable United Nations Security Resolutions 242 and 338.
- United Nations General Assembly Resolution 194, according to which the Palestinian refugees have the right to return to their homes and to receive compensation for lost or damaged property. Israel has a moral responsibility

in solving the refugee problem. The parties should agree upon a resolution for the Palestinian refugees consistent with Resolution 194.

- All final status issues, including settlements, borders and the refugees, are issues to be decided between the parties during permanent status negotiations. Until that time the parties should refrain from prejudicing the final agreement by the creation of facts on the ground.

We welcomed the prospect of an Israeli evacuation from Gaza and we hopeful that it could be an historic opportunity to start the process of ending the occupation. The letter of assurances, however, provides the opposite. It gives Israel the right to control “the airspace, territorial waters and land passages” of the Gaza Strip and West Bank. It also allows Israel to continue creating illegal facts on the ground and to steal Palestinian land while assuring that their illegal acquisition of land will be taken into account when deciding the final borders. These parameters can never make the Gaza evacuation a historic opportunity.

The Palestinian leadership remains committed to a negotiated solution with Israel. We are prepared to immediately commence fast track negotiations on permanent status starting where we left off in Taba, 2001. We ask that in reaffirming your positions as mentioned above you support our effort to resume immediately permanent status negotiations. This is the way we can assure that the Gaza evacuation leads to a viable, sovereign and independent Palestinian state living side by side Israel in peace and security.

Sincerely,

Ahmad Qurie'a
Prime Minister
Palestinian National Authority