



**STATEMENT BY MR. V.K.NAMBIAR, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE ON  
THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST, INCLUDING THE PALESTINIAN  
QUESTION AT THE SECURITY COUNCIL ON SEPTEMBER 15, 2003**

Mr. President,

Please allow me to felicitate you on your assumption of the Presidency of the Security Council for the month of September. I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Syria for its capable steering of the Council in August and the issues confronting it in a very difficult month.

Mr. President,

This open meeting of the Security Council has been convened at relatively short notice to deal with an increased spiral of violence in the Middle East and the decision of the Israeli authorities to initiate action that could lead to the possible expulsion of President Arafat.

India has consistently regarded President Arafat as the elected leader of the Palestinian people and symbol of their cause. His expulsion and removal from the scene would be indefensible in international law. It represents an affront to the Palestinian people as well as the international community at large and must attract the severest condemnation world-wide. Apart from serving no constructive purpose, it would negate all efforts towards reconciliation. More important, it is likely to lead to an increased wave of anger and resultant violence in the region. Such a move is bound to exacerbate the situation and could prove politically counterproductive. It would definitely have a negative impact on the Middle East peace process.

Israel remains oblivious of the limitations of its uni-dimensional policy based on a military approach that relies on the might of the IDF, without recourse to a concomitant political approach. Its policy of military blockades, curfews and restrictions perpetuate continued dislocation of normal life, economic deprivation, and loss of freedom and further demoralization of the Palestinian people. This has led, inevitably, to continuing acts of violence and retribution against Israeli forces and civilians.

The humanitarian situation in the Occupied Territories that has already reached crisis proportion has placed the Palestinian economy in depression with mounting unemployment, deepening levels of poverty, huge income losses and stagnating levels

of international assistance. Closures and blockades need to be lifted, unhindered access allowed to humanitarian supplies and the finances released to the Palestinian Authority for alleviating the grave situation and averting further crisis.

India has always maintained that the only answer to the ongoing violence would be for both sides to resolutely move forward on the path of dialogue and reconciliation. There must be no wavering in the face of the gravest provocations posed by extremist elements on both sides who seem to share a common goal namely that of denying peace to their peoples. We urge both sides to refuse to be provoked into responding to by abandoning the path to peace.

Mr. President,

The few months of relative calm after the launch of the Roadmap put forward by the Quartet offered hope to the peoples of the region and the world over of the prospect of peace. The dream of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side within secure and recognised borders, appeared within reach.

Unfortunately, the brutal reach of terror and the retribution has negated each budding move towards peace. Targetted assassinations, acts of unwarranted violence, indiscriminate killings and cycle of reprisals must be condemned in the strongest possible terms. They cannot contribute to a sense of security for any of the parties. The Occupied Territories continue to face the threat of economic collapse and social destitution. For the sake of the people of the region, it is critical that the two sides, with the assistance of all other parties concerned, move resolutely forward in their search for a peaceful solution to the conflict.

Israel has an obligation to exercise self-restraint and patience. It has resorted increasingly to extreme measures such as extra-judicial killings and armed incursions in Palestinian areas. We are not unaware of the provocations Israel itself has been subjected to. But its decision to persevere with the construction of a wall that cuts across a wide swath of Palestinian land, annexes agricultural areas, destroys dwellings and separates families, is both unjust and illegal. Such actions can only increase the sense of despair and frustration among Palestinians and aggravate a situation already vitiated by the imposition of hardships and suffering imposed by a regime of blockades and roadblocks.

India has consistently supported the Palestinian cause. Apart from this having roots in our traditional ties with the Arab World, India's commitment to peace and stability in the region is a cardinal element of its foreign policy. As part of a broader traditional engagement with Palestine, thousands of Palestinian students have studied in India. There are extensive people-to-people contacts between us and India has assisted the Palestinian National Authority in upgrading human resources and nation-building capacities. This will continue to expand.

Mr. President,

India joins the international community in urging Israel to exercise restraint in respect of any plan it may have that could adversely affect the safety of life and personal freedom of President Arafat or remove him forcibly from his present position.

At the same time, India strongly condemns all acts of terrorism and violence, and reiterates its position that there can be no justification whatsoever for attacks against unarmed civilians, women and children. Only a complete cessation of violence can provide the conducive environment for a continuation of dialogue.

We reiterate the need for both sides to fulfill their obligations under the Quartet Roadmap and strongly emphasise that every effort be made to ensure its implementation so that the vision of two States living side by side within secure and recognised borders can be realised and a just and durable peace is established in the region based on UN Security Council resolutions 242, 338 and 1397.

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