

Human Rights Council – 25th session (3-28 March 2014)

**Statement by Ireland under agenda item 7 –
Human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories**

24 March 2014

Ireland thanks the High Commissioner for the presentation of her sixth periodic report on the human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and commends in particular the work of the OHCHR field presence there, on which the report is primarily based. The report, unfortunately, makes it plain that the overall situation has not improved, and thus remains a matter of proper concern to the Human Rights Council. Ireland stresses that all human rights violations, by any party, should be open to scrutiny in this debate and in the Human Rights Council more generally.

Ireland reiterates the right of all peoples in the region, including Israelis, Palestinians and others, to live in peace and security and enjoy full respect for their rights and freedoms.

Ireland remains deeply concerned about the continued construction by Israel of settlements in Palestinian territory, and the related policies of dispossession, eviction and construction of the separation wall on occupied land. All these are illegal under international law, and are damaging to efforts to reach peace.

Ireland is concerned at the situation of Palestinian prisoners, including the continued use by Israel of administrative detention in particular in cases of prolonged detention without trial. Ireland notes that there have been some improvements in treatment of children in detention, and urges Israel to ensure that both arrests and detention of children in the occupied territory are carried out in full accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Issues of concern also exist in relation to conditions of detention in facilities administered by the Palestinian authorities. Ireland also notes with regret the continuing recourse to the death penalty by the de facto authorities in the Gaza Strip.

The continuing blockade of Gaza by Israel, which has caused the collapse of economic life and the impoverishment of the great majority of the population leading to their dependence on humanitarian assistance for basic necessities, remains unjustified and unacceptable. Ireland calls for the immediate and sustained opening of the crossings for humanitarian aid, commercial goods and persons, to and from Gaza.

Recent events have also reminded us that the continued firing of rockets by militant groups in Gaza, aimed at civilian targets in Israel, remains a serious and unacceptable threat to life. Ireland strongly condemns these indiscriminate attacks.

Ireland calls on all parties to ensure that human rights defenders and civil society organisations are able to carry out their work without restrictions or hindrance. The right of all persons to engage in peaceful demonstrations must be respected.

Ireland fervently believes that the issues dividing the parties can only be resolved through agreement, and we thus commend all those involved in the current negotiating process. It is essential that both sides work to build confidence in the possibility of a peaceful resolution of the conflict, and thus actively avoid actions and policies which work against this.