

**Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the State of Palestine
on the Conference of the Geneva Conventions High Contracting Parties
17 December 2014**

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the State of Palestine welcomes the convening of the Conference of the Geneva Conventions High Contracting Parties this Wednesday 17 December 2014 in Geneva, Switzerland. The participation of the wide majority of states is a reaffirmation of the importance of upholding international humanitarian law and the centrality of the Question of Palestine in this regard. Further, Palestine considers the high attendance of the conference a sign of legal, moral, and political commitment to the obligations all states have under international humanitarian law to respect and ensure respect for the law at all times and in all situations, without exception.

This Conference, which is the third to be held in the last 15 years, takes place after the massacres against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip this summer, and while illegal Israeli actions and policies continue to undermine the status of international humanitarian law and the principles of the UN Charter. It also comes as Palestine still grieves the killing of Minister Ziad Abu Ein during his participation in a peaceful demonstration in an act that embodies the impunity with which Israel violates the provisions of international humanitarian law, including the rights of all persons to life.

Israeli impunity undermines the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. These violations undermine the entire system of international law and human rights, and must therefore be diligently and swiftly addressed by ensuring accountability. The application of accountability for crimes and violations is essential to upholding the spirit and the letter of international law, including international humanitarian law. It is also central to the realization of the Palestinian people's rights, including the right to self-determination. In this regard, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs reiterates its call on all States that have not yet done so to recognize the State of Palestine on the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital as an act that contributes to the respect of international law and peace.

The strong statements delivered by regional groups at the Conference today reflect the international consensus that respect for international law must be ensured universally and that the prolonged military occupation of Palestine must end as it is the source of the pervasive violations of international humanitarian law in occupied Palestine. Palestine also welcomes the emphatic and repeated calls by regional groups for the need to achieve accountability for crimes committed by the Israeli occupation regime against the Palestinian people.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs also welcomes the affirmation of the Conference Declaration that the Wall built by Israel and its associated regime, including settlements, is illegal. This is an affirmation of the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice, which also impressed the universal obligation of all states to uphold international humanitarian law and ensure an end to violations therein. In this regard, the State of Palestine reiterates its call on all states to

adopt concrete measures that would confront and put an end to these illegal Israeli practices and policies.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs regrets the sinister attempts to politicize this conference in an attempt to derail its proceedings and undermine its significance. These attempts have clearly failed.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs also deeply regrets that a small number of other States did not attend the Conference, which is dedicated to upholding international law. In this context, Israel's decision to boycott the Conference and the hostility it has exhibited towards its organization and outcome must be viewed as a reflection of its contempt for international law and international institutions.

The State of Palestine has mobilized for the convening of this Conference for over three years. Today, the State of Palestine attended the conference in its capacity as a State party of the Conventions; one which is committed to pursuing all available legal and diplomatic avenues to ensure the promotion and protection of international law, notably through ensuring accountability. This conference is not the end. It is the beginning of increased international mobilization and responsibility. Palestine will continue to work with all States to adopt mechanisms and measures that would translate the commitment reflected in this conference into actions.

Finally, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs reiterates its appreciation for the efforts exerted by the Government of Switzerland, in its capacity as Depository, to convene the Conference. Palestine also expresses thanks to all States that participated in the Conference. The State of Palestine hopes that this Conference will contribute to upholding international humanitarian law and protecting its standing by ensuring accountability for all states that violate the law and transgress upon the universal values of life, dignity, and self-determination.

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