



26 September 2011
Ref. No.: 299/2011

**Human Rights Council 18th Session
Item 7**

**A New State of Affairs:
Reaffirming Palestinian Rights to International Justice and Accountability**

Madam President, Distinguished Members of the Council,

I speak today on behalf of nine human rights organisations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, some of which have been campaigning to protect human rights for decades. We welcome this historical moment as an important opportunity for the promotion of international justice and human rights.

The Palestinian Liberation Organisation's (PLO) application for UN membership has rejuvenated our struggle for self-determination and the pursuit of accountability. The upgrade of Palestine in the international legal system by virtue of wider support for statehood will facilitate direct access to international mechanisms, such as the International Criminal Court, as well as the standing to demand that international law form the basis of peace negotiations.

The move by the PLO comes at a crucial time. It has revived hopes for Palestinians who, for 63 years, have lacked the legal means to challenge ongoing colonisation and systematic discrimination for the furtherance of Israel's settlement project. The continued closure of the Gaza Strip and the escalation in settler violence across the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, in recent weeks underscore the need for accountability and an end to impunity. However, the international community's failure to implement the recommendations of the "UN Fact-Finding Mission Report on the Gaza Conflict" has reinforced the perception that Palestinians are unprotected by international law.

At this time of great change across the region, the international community has acted decisively to protect human rights in Egypt, Libya, and South Sudan. While this has created new momentum for the international legal order, reports that some States are pressuring the Palestinian leadership to block recourse to the International Criminal Court are damaging, paradoxical, and ultimately undermine international rule of law.

It is the responsibility of this Council to promote the universality of rights for all people and to ensure that mechanisms of international justice are not used for political ends. We therefore call on member States to support Palestinian initiatives at the UN as a means to effectively affirm the right of self-determination and access to international justice.

Thank you.

The nine organisations include: Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association, Al-Dameer Association for Human Rights, Al-Haq, Al-Mezan Center for Human Rights, Defence for Children International -Palestine Section, Ensan Center for Human Rights and Democracy, Jerusalem Center for Legal Aid and Human Rights, Ramallah Center for Human Rights Studies, and Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling.