

The Role of the Organisation of Islamic Conference in Solving the Palestine Dispute: An Appraisal

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Abstract :

One of the long standing international disputes in the world is the dispute between Palestine and Israel. The search for an amicable settlement must come to grip with the root cause of the Palestine dispute. The Palestinians have a genuine complaint that their homeland for over a thousand years was taken away during the establishment of the state of Israel. The Jews argued that they tried in Palestine in the late 19th century to recover their inherited homeland. They faced the violent opposition from the Palestinian Arabs. They were then forced to defend themselves. But, the real fact was that the Zionist movement, from the beginning, looked forward to a practically complete dispossession of the original Arab inhabitants so that Israel could be a wholly Jewish state. The Arab community, being aware of the Zionists' plan, seriously opposed the Jewish immigration and land buying in Palestine. Therefore, Zionism was based on a faulty, expansionist and colonialist worldview. On the other hand, the Arabs' opposition to Zionism was based on reasonable fear of the dispossession of their people from their homeland. This is the origin of the dispute between Palestine and Israel. One of the objectives of OIC Charter is to support the people of Palestine, and help them to regain their rights and liberate their land. In these circumstances this paper focuses the background to the Palestine dispute and the role played by the OIC in solving the dispute. It also provides some recommendations for an amicable settlement of the dispute.

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1. Introduction

The Organization of the Islamic Conference popularly known as OIC is an inter-governmental organization which has a Permanent Delegation to the United Nations. It is a group of 57 mostly Islamic nations in the Middle East, North, West and Southern Africa, Central Asia, Europe, Southeast Asia, the Indian subcontinent and South America. The OIC was set up in Rabat, Morocco, on 25 September 1969 in reaction to an arson fire attack on the Al-Aqsa Mosque in the morning of August 21, 1969. The OIC Charter adopted certain objectives as principles for its effective role. One of the objectives of OIC charter is to coordinate efforts to safeguard the holy places of Islam and support the struggle of the people of Palestine, and help them to regain their rights and liberate their land. Also one of its principles is the settlement of any conflict by peaceful means such as negotiation, mediation, reconciliation or arbitration.¹

The OIC, therefore, as an International Governmental Organisation based on Islamic ideology is playing a significant role in the pacific settlement of international disputes especially in solving the Palestine dispute in the contemporary world.

2. Background to Palestine Dispute

The name of Palestine is derived from the Philistines who lived in the southern coastal part of the country in the 12th century B.C.² The Palestine dispute has its origin in the Zionist Congress of 1897 and especially in the Balfour declaration of 1917 when the Great Britain, as a League of Nations' Mandated Power for Palestine,

¹ Article II, the Charter of the Islamic Conference adopted by the Third Conference of Islamic Foreign Ministers held in Jeddah in 1972.

² Henry Cattam, *Palestine, The Arabs & Israel: The search for Justice*, London: Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd, (1969), p. 3.

sought to encourage the creation of a Jewish National Home in the territory by opening it for Zionist immigration, while the Arabs had been aspiring for a united homeland including Palestine.³

Zionist Plan and First World War :

During the First World War, Britain made three different promises regarding Palestine. Arab leaders were assured that the land would become independent; in the Balfour declaration,⁴ Britain indicated its support for a Jewish national home in Palestine; and secretly Britain arranged with its allies to divide up Ottoman territory, with Palestine becoming part of the British Empire.⁵

As Britain had made contradictory promises to the Jews and Arabs in the earlier years, it indeed became difficult to reconcile these two. While the Arabs were not willing to accept any further Jewish immigration into Palestine, the Zionists were determined to bring more and more Jews into the country.⁶

Arab nationalists opposed the Balfour declaration, the mandate and the Jewish National Home and revolted against Jews in Jerusalem, Hebron, Jaffa and Haifa.

Britain made several efforts to resolve the Palestine Problem through various procedures i.e. King-Crane Commission, Hay-Craft Commission, Constitution of 1922, White Paper 1922, Peel

³ Nurul Momen, *Bangladesh in the United Nations: A Study in Diplomacy*, University Press Limited, Dhaka, (1987) p. 141.

⁴ The Balfour Declaration, November 2, 1917. The text is available at the Palestine Royal Commission Report (July 1937), Cmd. 5479, p. 22. See, also, International Conciliation (1949), p. 744. ED, quoted in Muhammad Khalil, *The Arab States and the Arab League: A Documentary Record*, Vol. II International Affairs, Beirut: Khayats, (1962), p. 484.

⁵ Stephen R Shalom, *Background to the Israel-Palestine Crisis*, Z Magazine, May 2002, available at <http://www.zmag.org/shalom-meqa.htm>

⁶ P.C. Thomas, *International Relations (1914-1945)*, New Delhi: Har-Anand Publications (1993), pp. 153-154.

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Commission Report, Woodhead Commission, 1938, the White paper, 1939⁷ etc. But Britain failed to solve the dispute and in the end Britain took the matter to the United Nations.⁸

Partition of Palestine by the United Nations :

The Palestine question was first brought before the United Nations by Great Britain on 02 April 1947⁹ and after lengthy debates, the UN General Assembly adopted the plan for the partition of Palestine, with economic union, and an international area for Jerusalem.¹⁰ The Zionists welcomed it because of its recognition of a Jewish state and because 55 per cent of Palestine was allotted to the Jewish state. But, it was not acceptable to the Arabs, who wanted a unitary sovereign state with an Arab majority and Jewish minority. So, the Palestinians rejected the partition.¹¹

Formation of the State of Israel and the Arab-Israeli War of 1948 :

On 14 May 1948, the last British High Commissioner left Palestine. On the same day, after the termination of British Mandate over Palestine the Jewish Agency proclaimed the establishment of independent State of Israel at Tel-Aviv. President Truman of U.S.A. immediately accorded *de facto* recognition to Israel.¹² But the Arab States of Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and

⁷ Ibid, p. 154-158.

⁸ Harun ur Rashid, [*International Relations and Bangladesh, Dhaka: The University Press Limited, \(2004\)*](#) p. 103.

⁹ Norman D. Palmer & Howard C. Perkins, *International Relations: The World Community in Transition*, Delhi: CBS Publishers & Distributors, 3rd Edition, (1985) p. 333.

¹⁰ The UNGA Resolution No. 181 (II) A; adopted on 29 November 1947 by 33 votes to 13, with 10 abstentions. The Text of the Resolution is found in Yearbook of the United Nations (1947-48), pp. 247-256.

¹¹ The New Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol. 25, Fifteenth Edition, Chicago (1993), p. 421.

¹² Harun ur Rashid, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

Iraq declared war against the state of Israel¹³ and Israel fought off with US-made weapons and won the war.¹⁴

As a result of the War of 1948, the Arabs and Palestinians lost their initial advantage. When the fighting ended in 1949, Israel gained control over 77 per cent of Palestine including western Jerusalem as against the 55 per cent originally assigned by the UN General Assembly's resolution to the proposed Jewish state.¹⁵ On the other hand some 8,00,000 Palestinian Arabs felt compelled or were terrorised to leave their hearths and homes¹⁶ and became refugees in neighboring Arab countries.¹⁷

Proclamation of the Independence of Palestine by the Palestinian National Council :

On The Palestinian National Council on 01 October 1948 proclaimed the full independence of the whole of Palestine as well as the establishment of a free and democratic sovereign State with its capital in Al-Quds, Jerusalem.¹⁸

Formation of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO):

The Palestine Liberation Organization was formed in 1964 in order to liberate all Palestine. But, it was controlled by the Arab states until Yasser Arafat became its leader in 1969.¹⁹

¹³ Urmila Sharma & S. K. Sharma, *International Relations: Theory and History (Since World War II)*, New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors (2000), Volume II, p. 243.

¹⁴ Nurul Momen, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

¹⁵ M. S. Agwani, "Issues and Prospects", *World Focus*, (New Delhi) vol. 1, no. 8, August 1980, p. 3.

¹⁶ Nurul Momen, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

¹⁷ Harun ur Rashid, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

¹⁸ Muhammad Khalil, *The Arab States and the Arab League: A Documentary Record*, Vol. II International Affairs, Beirut: Khayats, (1962), p. 579.

¹⁹ Stephen R Shalom, *Background to the Israel-Palestine Crisis*, Z Magazine, May 2002, available at <http://www.zmag.org/shalom-meqa.htm>

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The Six Day War of 1967 and the Israeli Occupation of the West Bank and Gaza :

In June 1967, the discord between the Arabs and the Israelis led to a great conflict.²⁰ As a result of war of 1967, Israel occupied large portions of the territories of three Arab States: the West Bank of Jordan, the Sinai Desert, the Straits of Tiran and the Golan Heights of Syria. Israel also occupied the Gaza Strip, which is Palestinian territory.²¹

The Camp David Accords, 1978 :

The Camp David Accords were signed by Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin on 17 September 1978, following twelve days of secret negotiations at Camp David. The two agreements were signed at the White House, and were witnessed by United States President Jimmy Carter.²² Two sets of agreements resulted :

- i. One established arrangements for determining the future of the West bank and the Gaza Strip.
- ii. The other comprised principles whereby an Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty would be formulated ratifying the conclusion of hostilities and the establishment of normal relations between the two countries.²³

The Israel-Egypt Peace Treaty, 1979 :

The Israel-Egypt Peace Treaty was signed in Washington, DC, United States, on 26 March 1979, following the Camp David

²⁰ Charles D. Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, New York: St. Martin's Press, Third Edition, (1996) pp. 196-199.

²¹ Henry Cattan, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

²² [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Camp_David_Accords_\(1978\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Camp_David_Accords_(1978))

²³ Charles D. Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 257.

Accords (1978). The main features of the treaty were the mutual recognition of each country by the other, the cessation of the state of war that had existed since the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, and the withdrawal by Israel of its armed forces and civilians from the Sinai Peninsula which Israel had captured during the 1967 Six-Day War. The agreement also provided for the free passage of Israeli ships through the Suez Canal and recognition of the Strait of Tiran and the Gulf of Aqaba as international waterways.²⁴

The Camp David agreement established peace along the Egyptian-Israeli border, but it worsened the situation for Palestinians. With its southern border neutralized, Israel had a freer hand to invade Lebanon in 1982 (where the PLO was based) and to tighten its grip on the Occupied Territories.²⁵

Declaration of Independent State of Palestine :

The first *Intifadah*²⁶ encouraged the PLO to declare an independent state of Palestine and to recognise the existence of Israel in November-December 1988. So, in 1988 PLO declared ‘the independent State of Palestine’ with its capital in Jerusalem.²⁷ In response, the United States opened a dialogue with the PLO through its embassy in Tunis²⁸ Arafat’s efforts to gain international recognition of his peace proposal found success in December 1988 when Washington agreed he had met their conditions of renouncing terrorism and accepting UN Security Council Resolution 242.²⁹

²⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Israel-Egypt_Peace_Treaty

²⁵ Stephen R Shalom, *op. cit.*, May 2002.

²⁶ *Intifadah* literally means a ‘shaking off’ of a condition. In December 1987, Palestinians in Gaza launched an uprising against Israeli repression, humiliations, and the establishment of Israeli settlements. This uprising is called the *Intifadah*.

²⁷ Harun ur Rashid, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

²⁸ Charles D. Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 282.

²⁹ *Ibid*, p. 303.

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The Madrid Conference, 1991 :

The Madrid Conference was hosted by the government of Spain and co-sponsored by the USA and the USSR. It convened on 30 October 1991 and lasted for three days. It was an early attempt by the international community to start a peace process through negotiations involving Israel and the Arab countries including Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and the Palestinians.³⁰

The Oslo Peace Process :

In 1993 and 1995, Israel and the PLO signed the Oslo Declaration of Principles and the Oslo Interim Agreement which created the Palestinian National Authority (PNA).³¹

Camp David Summit 2000 and US Mediation: The Middle East Peace Summit at Camp David of July 2000 took place between United States President Bill Clinton, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, and Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat. It was an ultimately unsuccessful attempt to negotiate a 'final status settlement' to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.³²

The Saudi Peace Proposal and the Palestinian State Resolution :

Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah made a proposal to end the long Arab war against Israel in return for Israeli withdrawal from Palestinian territories, withdrawal in the Golan and appropriate arrangements regarding Jerusalem and the refugees. This proposal, modified to be more specific about refugee issues, was adopted by a meeting of the Arab League, and eventually became incorporated in the quartet roadmap plan. On 12 March 2002 the UN Security

³⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madrid_Conference_of_1991

³¹ H. O. Agarwal, *International Law & Human Rights*, Allahabad: Central Law Publications, Thirteenth Edition, (2006) p. 572.

³² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Camp_David_2000_Summit

Council passed Resolution 1397, calling on the sides to stop the violence once again, mentioning the peace plan of Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah, and for the first time since 1947 calling for creation of a Palestinian state alongside Israel.³³

The Iraq Invasion by US Led Forces, the Roadmap and Palestinian Reform :

On 20 March 2003, US, British and Australian forces invaded Iraq. US President Bush declared the war over on 01 May. The war produced an upheaval in the Middle East and especially affected the Palestinians. Arabs were astounded by the swiftness of Iraq's collapse. Arab governments including the Palestinians hurried to make conciliatory gestures. Mahmoud Abbas was elected Palestinian PM on 29 April. The US released an updated road map on 30 April immediately after the election of Mahmud Abbas.

At a festive summit held on 04 June in Aqaba, Israeli PM Sharon and Palestinian PM Mahmoud Abbas (Abu-Mazen) pledged to fulfill the conditions of the road map and shook hands in the presence of US President George Bush. Abu Mazen called for an end to violence.

Geneva Accord :

Israeli opposition political leaders and Palestinian leaders announced an agreement in principle on conditions for a final settlement. The agreement, which has come to be known as the Geneva Accord, proposed concessions by both sides. Israel would give up sovereignty in Arab portions of Jerusalem, while the Palestinians would explicitly renounce the right of Palestinian refugees to return to Israel.³⁴

³³ Stephen R Shalom, *op. cit.*, May 2002.

³⁴ <http://www.mideastweb.org/briefhistory.htm>

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Government of Ahmed Qurei in Palestine :

On 12 November 2003, after a long period of negotiations, Palestinian PM Ahmed Qurei formed a permanent government and moves began to institute a cease fire and renew negotiations with the Israelis. However, very little came of these moves. On 19 November the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1515, endorsing the quartet road map for peace and calling upon the sides to fulfill their obligations to the road map plan. Prospective meetings between Ahmed Qurei and Israeli PM Ariel Sharon were announced, rumored, vaunted and then evaporated. For a time, Qurei announced that he would not meet with Sharon until Israel stopped building its security barrier. However, when Sharon announced his unilateral disengagement plan and it appeared to be in earnest, Qurei became concerned that the withdrawal without any negotiations would be a victory for the Hamas and Islamic Jihad, political rivals of the PLO who run the PNA, and who are grooming themselves to inherit leadership of the Palestinians. Qurei then announced that he would be ready to meet with Sharon, and that a meeting would definitely take place by the end of February 2000. However, negotiations to set the agenda of this meeting were postponed for various reasons, including suicide bombings and Israeli assassinations.³⁵

Death of Yasser Arafat and Abbas Succeeds Arafat :

Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat died 11 November 2004 leaving an uncertain future. After his death, preparations for Palestinian elections began in an orderly way, with Mahmoud Abbas the leading candidate. During his campaign, Abbas promised repeatedly to continue to fight for a Palestinian state with its capital in Jerusalem, and for right of return of Palestinian refugees.

³⁵ Ibid.

On 09 January 2005, Mahmoud Abbas was elected President of the Palestine National Authority. US President George Bush invited Abbas to Washington, after several years during which Palestinian leaders had not been welcome in the White House, and Israeli PM Ariel Sharon announced that he would call Abbas and plan a meeting.³⁶

Unity Government in Israel :

Owing to disaffection of the Israeli right with the disengagement plan of PM Ariel Sharon, the National Religious Party left the government, and dissenting members of Sharon's Likud party tried to block formation of a unity government with the Labor party. The center Shinui party was forced out of the government, and instead a coalition was formed with the Israel Labor party and the small United Torah Judaism party. This government was approved by a narrow margin (58 to 56) with several Likud members abstaining.

Sharm El Sheikh Conference, 2005 :

Following his election, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas called on Palestinian factions to end the violence and negotiated a truce agreement. Palestinian police were deployed throughout Gaza with explicit orders to prevent terror attacks. The sides agreed to meet at a summit conference hosted by Egypt in Sharm El Sheikh on 08 February 2005. At the conference, attended by Jordan's King Abdullah and Egyptian President Mubarak as well as the Israeli and Palestinian leaders, both sides announced an end to the violence. Israel would be releasing over 900 Palestinian prisoners and gradually withdrawing from Palestinian cities according to newspaper reports. Egypt and Jordan announced that they were returning their ambassadors to Israel. The *Intifadah* was deemed to be officially over. However, following the pattern of

³⁶ Ibid.

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previous conferences of this type, the peace was soon shattered by a suicide bombing in Tel Aviv on 25 February apparently perpetrated by an Islamic Jihad group controlled from Damascus. Israel announced it was freezing the planned handover of Palestinian towns to PNA security. Mahmud Abbas condemned the bombing and the PNA made some arrests.

Disengagement Decision :

Shortly after the Sharm El Sheikh conference, the Israeli Knesset, followed by the Israeli cabinet on 20 February approved the disengagement plan, which calls for unilateral evacuation of 21 settlements in Gaza and 4 in the West Bank by the summer of 2005. The disengagement was to be coordinated with the Palestinian Authority. Mahmoud Abbas, Palestinian Prime Minister, promised to help ensure quiet during the evacuation.³⁷

London Conference, 2005 :

On 01 March 2005, a conference hosted by Great Britain was held in London. The purpose of the conference was to organize financial support for the Palestinian government and to assist in organization of Palestinian security. Israel did not attend the conference, and bilateral issues were not touched upon directly. However, Palestinian President Abbas said that ending the occupation and achieving peace was a priority goal for the Palestinians.

Cairo Conference and *Tahidiyeh* :

In mid March 2005, Palestinian militant groups met in Cairo and agreed to a *tahidiyeh* (lull in the fighting) - less than a full truce or *hudna*. The Hamas and Islamic Jihad groups began moving to rejoin the PLO and the Hamas announced its intention to participate in the May elections of the Palestine Legislative

³⁷ <http://www.mideastweb.org/briefhistory.htm>

Council. Israel withdrew from Jericho, and a week later, from Tulqarm.

Arab Summit and Peace Proposal :

An Arab Summit held in Algiers in 2005 ignored most of the pressing issues in the Arab world, and turned down a fresh peace initiative by King Abdullah of Jordan. Instead, it reiterated its support for the version of the Saudi Peace Plan passed in 2002 in Beirut that had been rejected by Israel. Israel indicated that the proposals are now outdated due to changes in the reality of the Middle East.³⁸

3. Role of OIC regarding the Palestine Dispute

After the establishment of OIC, the Organisation has made various attempts for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the occupied territories and restoration of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. The Organisation has adopted various resolutions on the Palestine issue recognising the rights of Palestinian people, supporting the establishment of sovereign and independent Palestine State on the Palestinian land with its capital in Al-Quds (Jerusalem). The efforts of the OIC regarding the Palestine issue are discussed below:

Agenda for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from all occupied territories :

The First Rabat Summit Conference held in Morocco in 1969 adopted an agenda for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from all occupied territories and restoration of the rights of Palestinian people.³⁹ The agenda was in fact an *ex-post-facto* summary of

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹Noor Ahmad Baba, *Organisation of Islamic Conference: Theory and Practice of Pan-Islamic Cooperation*, Dhaka: The University Press Limited, (1994) p. 68.

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discussions which had already taken place as the final resolutions.⁴⁰

Demand of restoration of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people :

The Second Conference of Islamic Foreign Ministers held in Karachi in 1970 once more asked for the immediate withdrawal of the Israeli forces from all occupied territories and demanded restoration of the 'legitimate rights of the Palestinian people'. It denounced 'Zionism as a racial, aggressive and expansionist movement conflicting with all the noble ideals and constituting a paramount threat to world peace.'⁴¹

Establishment of Palestinian Fund to aid Palestinian resistance :

The Third Conference of Islamic Foreign Ministers held in Jeddah in 1972 decided to give material assistance to the Palestine Liberation Organisation and to set up a special fund named 'Palestinian Fund' to aid Palestinian resistance.⁴²

Recognition of PLO as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people :

The Fourth Conference of Islamic Foreign Ministers held in Libya in 1973 resolved to support the Palestinian people in their just struggle to liberate their land and to determine their future, and to consider the Palestine Liberation Organisation as the only legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, extend political, material and moral support to the Palestinian people and stop all attempts aimed at destroying Palestine resistance, call upon the

⁴⁰ International Herald Tribunal (Paris), September 25, 1969.

⁴¹ "Final Declaration (Middle East) in Organisation of Islamic Conference, *Declarations and Resolutions of Heads of State and Ministers of Foreign Affairs Conference, 1969-1981*, (Jeddah), pp. 14-15.

⁴² Noor Ahmad Baba, *op. cit.* p. 80.

member-states to open offices for the Palestine Liberation Organisation, and to implement the Third Islamic Conference's recommendation regarding the establishment of a Jihad Fund for Palestine. The Conference also demanded that the permanent members of the Security Council adopt measures necessary to persuade Israel to make a complete, unconditional and immediate withdrawal.⁴³

Support to the Arabs in their struggle for recovering all the occupied land :

The Second Islamic Summit Conference held at Lahore in 1974 adopted unanimous resolution resolving that the recovery of full national rights by the Palestinians was the "essential and fundamental condition" for the solution of the Palestine problem and for ensuring a durable peace based on justice in the West Asian region.⁴⁴ The Second Islamic Summit Conference decided to extend full and effective support to the Arabs in their struggle for recovering all the occupied land by all available means. The Conference also asked for an immediate withdrawal of Israel from Jerusalem and resolved that :

‘No agreement, protocol or understanding which postulates the continuance of Israeli occupation of the Holy City of Jerusalem or its transfer to any non-Arab sovereignty or makes it the subject of bargaining or concessions will be acceptable to Islamic countries. Israeli withdrawal from Jerusalem is a paramount and unchangeable pre-requisite for lasting peace in the Middle East.’⁴⁵

⁴³ Resolution No. 1/4 in Organisation of Islamic Conference, *Declarations and Resolutions of Heads of State and Ministers of Foreign Affairs Conference, 1969-1981*, (Jeddah), pp. 43-44.

⁴⁴ Noor Ahmad Baba, *op. cit.* p. 101.

⁴⁵ See "Lahore Declaration" in Organisation of Islamic Conference, *Declarations and Resolutions of Heads of State and Ministers of Foreign Affairs Conference, 1969-1981*, (Jeddah), pp. 65-69.

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The Conference also called upon all member-states to support the Palestinian people in all possible ways and agreed to “take action in all fields” and to “adopt every adequate measure to force Israeli withdrawal from all the occupied territories”. Member states endorsed the PLO’s position as the “sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian nation in its just struggle”.⁴⁶

Measures undertaken by the Islamic solidarity fund :

The Fifth Conference of Islamic Foreign Ministers held at Kuala Lumpur in 1974 adopted a resolution on Jerusalem touching a new dimension concerning means of resisting Judaisation of the city. In this connection it asked the Islamic solidarity fund to give priority to this problem by undertaking the following measures :

- a. Supporting the resistance of the Arab inhabitants of Jerusalem and maintaining the Arab Islamic character of the Holy City, restoration of Al-Aqsa and El-Ibrahimi Mosque and the two Holy shrines surrounding them as well as the mosques and ancient and Islamic buildings which have been affected by Israeli excavation around Al-Aqsa Mosque;
- b. Purchase of land and houses which are put on sale as exclusive Muslim property in order to prevent the transfer of their ownership; and
- c. Reconstruction of Arab areas and the setting up of development and housing projects for the Arab inhabitants of Jerusalem on Muslim Waqfs land and considering these projects as Muslim Waqf.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ See Resolution No. 1/2/IS, “The Middle East and Palestine Cause” in *Declarations and Resolutions of Heads of State and Ministers of Foreign Affairs Conference, 1969-1981*, (Jeddah), p. 69.

⁴⁷ Resolution No. 14/5-P, “Jerusalem” in *Declarations and Resolutions of Heads of State and Ministers of Foreign Affairs Conference, 1969-1981*, (Jeddah, n.d.), pp. 95-96.

Demand of expulsion of Israel from the UN and break off relations with Israel :

The Sixth Conference of Islamic Foreign Ministers held in Jeddah in 1975 passed a resolution asking Israel to withdraw from Arab lands and recognise the rights of the Palestinians, censured the states that had extended military, economic and human support to Israel and called on the member-states to seek Israeli expulsion from the United Nations.⁴⁸ The Conference appealed to all Muslim states to break off political, economic and cultural relations with Israel for its continuing defiance of UN resolutions.⁴⁹ The Conference also insisted on the recovery of the Arab sector of Jerusalem from Israel, saying “the Jerusalem question will never be subject to any compromise or concession”. It decided to extend financial aid to reinstate Arab and Islamic presence in the Holy City.⁵⁰ In this regard, the Conference agreed to the formation of a Permanent Committee to follow up the question of Jerusalem and work for implementation of the resolutions which had been adopted or would be taken up by the Islamic Conference.⁵¹

Condemnation of Zionism as a racist and colonialist :

The Seventh Conference of Islamic Foreign Ministers held in Istanbul in 1976 adopted a resolution reaffirming its support for the restoration of full national rights of Palestinian people. It called upon Israel to comply with the principles of the UN Charter and reaffirmed its 1975 decision to seek expulsion of Israel from the

⁴⁸ Resolution No. 2/6-P in *Declarations and Resolutions of Heads of State and Ministers of Foreign Affairs Conference, 1969-1981*, (Jeddah, n.d.), pp. 123-125.

⁴⁹ Resolution No. 2/6, “The Palestine Cause” in *Declarations and Resolutions of Heads of State and Ministers of Foreign Affairs Conference, 1969-1981*, (Jeddah, n.d.), pp. 123-125.

⁵⁰ Resolution No. 2/6-P, “The Palestine Cause” *op. cit.*, pp. 123-128.

⁵¹ Resolution No. 1/6-P, “Jerusalem” *op. cit.*, pp. 121-122.

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United Nations and other international organisations. It condemned Zionism as a racist and colonialist doctrine which threatened world peace and security, and decided to establish a Jerusalem Fund with the aim of countering the policy of Judaisation.⁵²

Expression of resentment on Zionist movement :

The Eighth Conference of Islamic Foreign Ministers held in Libya in 1977 passed several resolutions and expressed regret at the fact that the Zionist movement was “maintaining its policy of occupation, expansion, annexation, destruction of buildings and expropriation of assets” as well as its policy of “massive expulsion of Arabs living in the occupied territories”, appealed to all states to provide “all forms of help to the Palestinians and Arab people in their legitimate struggle”. Recalled “the close ties which link the Muslims of the holy city of Jerusalem with the duty of Islamic states to liberate it and restore it to Arab control”.⁵³

Condemnation of Israeli aggression, occupation, repression and destruction :

The Ninth Conference of Islamic Foreign Ministers held in Senegal in 1978 reaffirmed its commitment to support the Arab cause and pledged political and military aid to the countries in the confrontation with Israel. The Ninth Conference strongly condemned Israeli aggression and occupation of South Lebanon as well as its policy of cultural repression, colonial settlements, political oppression and physical destruction in occupied Arab territories. On the issue of Palestine, Jerusalem, Zionism and apartheid, the resolutions adopted in the Conference reiterated more or less the position the Conference had taken in its previous sessions.⁵⁴

⁵² Resolution No. 1/7-P, 9/7-p; 13/7-P, *op. cit.*, p. 196.

⁵³ Noor Ahmad Baba, *op. cit.* p. 114.

⁵⁴ Resolution No. 2/9-P, on the “Middle East” in *Declarations and Resolutions of Heads of State and Ministers of Foreign Affairs Conference, 1969-1981*,

Condemnation of Camp David Peace Accord and suspension of Egypt from the OIC :

The Tenth Conference of Islamic Foreign Ministers was held in Morocco in the context of the US-sponsored Egypt-Israel agreement reached at Camp David in 1979.⁵⁵ The majority of states denounced the Camp David agreement in the Conference as it failed to provide a reasonable framework for a comprehensive settlement of the West Asian problem in all its dimensions.⁵⁶ The Conference, while condemning the Camp David Peace Accord for its inadequacy to resolve the Palestine problem in all its dimensions, voted for the suspension of Egypt from the OIC for making a separate peace deal with Israel.⁵⁷ The Conference reiterated its support for the Palestinian people's right to establish an independent sovereign state in their own land.⁵⁸

Support to the establishment of an independent national Palestine State and demand of removal of Israeli settlements:

The Eleventh Conference of Islamic Foreign Ministers held in Islamabad in 1980 reaffirmed that the Palestinian question was the core of the West Asian problem and the crux of the Arab-Israeli struggle and reiterated that no peace could be achieved except on the basis of total and unconditional withdrawal by Israel from all Palestinian and Arab occupied territories and recovery by the Palestinian people of their inalienable national rights including right to return to their land, to self-determination and to establish

(Jeddah, n.d.), pp. 330-332 and Resolution No. 3/9-P, "The Palestine Cause" *op. cit.*, pp. 333-335.

⁵⁵ Noor Ahmad Baba, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

⁵⁶ For the analysis of the text of the agreement, see Sami Hadavi, *Bitter Harvest Palestine: Between 1914-1979*, 2nd Edition, New York, (1979) pp. 280-288.

⁵⁷ Resolution No. 18/10-P in *Declarations and Resolutions of Heads of State and Ministers of Foreign Affairs Conference, 1969-1981*, (Jeddah, n. d.), pp. 449-450.

⁵⁸ Resolution No. 1/10-P and 3/10-p, 8/10-P, *op. cit.*, pp. 65-69.

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an independent national state of their own in Palestine. The resolution demanded that Al-Quds (Jerusalem) should be restored to Arab and Islamic sovereignty. It also reaffirmed that the PLO was the legitimate and sole representative of the Palestinian people and that it alone had the right to represent them. It declared all Israeli measures, construction, modifications or alterations in the political, cultural, religious, physical, geographical, demographical or other conditions in the Palestinian and other occupied lands as illegal, null and void. It demanded immediate removal of all Israeli settlements in Palestine and Arab occupied territories and called on Israel to abstain from establishing any new settlements.⁵⁹

Demand for removal of diplomatic missions from Jerusalem and recognition of the rights of the Palestinian people to return to their homeland :

Extraordinary Conference of Islamic Foreign Ministers held in Amman in Morocco in 1980 committed all Islamic States to sever relations with any state that would recognise Israel's latest move on the status of Jerusalem, or would transfer its capital to that place. Those states that already had diplomatic missions in Jerusalem were urged to remove them from there.⁶⁰ The Conference emphasised the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people to return to their homeland, their right to self-determination without any outside interference, their right to establish an independent State and their right to pursue their legitimate struggle to liberate their homeland and regain their rights in accordance with UN resolutions under the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, the sole legitimate

⁵⁹ Resolution Nos. 1/11-P to No. 15/11-P, *op. cit.*, pp. 561-587.

⁶⁰ Resolution "The Palestine Cause" in *Declarations and Resolutions of Heads of State and Ministers of Foreign Affairs Conference, 1969-1981*, (Jeddah, n. d.), pp. 695-700.

representative of the Palestinian people.⁶¹ It also emphasised that just peace in the Middle East could not be established without the total and unconditional withdrawal of the Israeli enemy from all the occupied Palestinian and Arab territories, primarily Jerusalem, the capital of Palestine.⁶² It considered the Camp David Accord and the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty a conspiracy against the future of Jerusalem and the occupied territories and called for the rejection of these accords.⁶³

Extraordinary Conference of Islamic Foreign Ministers held at Fez in Morocco in 1980 examined Palestinian issues particularly in the context of the Israeli Knesset's decision to annex Jerusalem and declare it as its 'unified eternal capital'. The Conference considered it as a hostile act against all Islamic countries and testimony of Israel's refusal to abide by the United Nations Resolutions (particularly Security Council Resolution No. 478) which among other things, stipulated that Israel's legislative and administrative measures, as well as all other actions aimed to alter the identity and status of Al-Quds (Jerusalem) were null and void.⁶⁴ To enforce effectively the measures proposed by the OIC, the Conference decided to establish an Islamic office for Boycott of Israel, which was to function in coordination with a similar office affiliated with the League of Arab States.⁶⁵

Rejection of the Camp David Accord and creation of an Islamic office for the boycott of Israel :

The Third Islamic Summit Conference of Kings and Heads of State and Governments held at Taif in Saudi Arabia in 1981 reiterated

⁶¹ Noor Ahmad Baba, *op. cit.* p. 127-128.

⁶² *Declarations and Resolutions of Heads of State and Ministers of Foreign Affairs Conference, 1969-1981*, (Jeddah, n. d.), pp. 692-693.

⁶³ *Ibid*, p. 705.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p. 713.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, p. 715.

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that Palestine and Jerusalem continued to be the issue of prime concern for the OIC, and resolved to use all means and resources to combat Israeli aggression and liberate the Palestine and the holy city of Jerusalem.⁶⁶

The Summit Conference rejected all initiatives, attempts and pressures for acceptance of a position which was not consistent with the rights of Palestinians to return to their homeland, exercise self-determination, and establish an independent state under the leadership of the PLO or which might directly or implicitly imply the acceptance of the *fait accompli* in Palestine and Jerusalem. With this general enunciation, the Third Summit also explicitly confirmed the condemnation and rejection of the Camp David Accord by Egypt and Israel. The Summit Conference decided to create an Islamic office for the boycott of Israel which was to operate in cooperation with a similar office of the Arab League.⁶⁷

Intensification of efforts for the expulsion of Israel from the UN :

The Twelfth Conference of Islamic Foreign Ministers held at Baghdad in Iraq in 1981 resolved to intensify efforts for the expulsion of Israel from the United Nations and adoption of a new resolution by the world body that “empathetically provides for the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to return to their homeland, self-determination without any

⁶⁶ See “The Final Communiqué” in *Declarations and Resolutions of Heads of State and Ministers of Foreign Affairs Conference, 1969-1981*, (Jeddah, n. d.), p.727.

⁶⁷ Resolution No. 1/3-P (IS), “The Final Communiqué” *op. cit.*, p. 743.

foreign interference and establishment of their own independent national state on their own national soil.”⁶⁸

Condemnation of US support to Israel’s aggression and demand for the adoption of a new resolution by UN :

The Thirteenth Conference of Islamic Foreign Ministers held in Niamey, Niger in 1982 passed several resolutions which called for a total withdrawal of Israel from Arab lands, including Palestine. The United States was condemned for its unqualified support to Israel’s aggression. It deplored the US administration for offering its assistance to Israel, particularly at the diplomatic level, whereby it did not allow any resolution to be passed in the Security Council which did not suit the aggressive designs of Israel. The Conference made it clear that the United Nations Resolution No. 242 did not form a suitable basis for a settlement of the West Asian problem. Therefore it called upon Muslims in the Islamic states to strive collectively to get a new resolution adopted which would seek Israel’s withdrawal from all Arab and Palestinian lands and recognise the Palestinians’ rights to self determination and establishment of a state under the leadership of the PLO. It complemented the Palestinian and Lebanese people for their steadfastness against the Israeli invading forces.⁶⁹

Rejection of any partial solution of the Palestine problem as well as the Reagan Plan :

The Fourteenth Conference of Islamic Foreign Ministers held in Dhaka, Bangladesh in 1983 endorsed all its previous resolutions and reiterated the resolution adopted by the Third Islamic Summit

⁶⁸ Resolution No. 1/12-P, in *Resolution on Political and Information Affairs adopted by Twelfth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers*, (Jeddah: General Secretariat, OIC, n. d.), pp. 1-7.

⁶⁹ See “The Final Communiqué” of the 13th Islamic *Foreign Ministers Conference held at Niamey on 22-26 August, 1982* General Secretariat: OIC.

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rejecting any partial solution of the problem and asking for a complete and unconditional Israeli withdrawal from all occupied Palestinian and Arab territories and restoration of the Palestinians' rights to self determination and a sovereign homeland. It also reiterated the PLO's status of being the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and stated that the Security Council Resolution No. 242 of 1967 did not constitute a sound basis for the solution of the West Asian problem. The resolution also condemned Israel for its repressive policy in the occupied areas.⁷⁰ The Conference also rejected the Reagan Plan as a framework for a settlement of the West Asian dispute as it failed to recognise the national rights of the Palestinian people and did not accept the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people.⁷¹

Endorsement of the eight point Arab Peace Plan :

The Fourth Islamic Summit Conference held at Casablanca in Morocco in 1984 reiterated its demands for a total Israeli withdrawal from all lands occupied by it in 1967. It stressed that resolution of Palestinian national rights was basic to any solution of the problem. The Summit endorsed the eight point Arab Peace Plan approved by the 12th Arab Summit Conference held in Fez, Morocco. It called for use all means to win further international support for its implementation.⁷² The Summit renewed its commitment to upholding the Arab and Islamic character of Al-Quds and pledged to work for its return to Arab sovereignty. It expressed grave concern over the continued Israeli occupation of a large part of Lebanon and demanded its immediate withdrawal

⁷⁰ Resolution No. 1/14-P, in Report and *Resolution on Political and Information Affairs adopted by Fourteenth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers held in Dhaka*, (Jeddah: General Secretariat, OIC, n. d.), pp. 8-12.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Resolution No. 1/4-P(IS), in General Secretariat, *Declarations and Resolutions*, Fourth Islamic Summit Conference (Jeddah, OIC) pp. 41-50.

from there. The Conference once again condemned the strategic alliance between the United States and Israel and considered it a source of increasing tension in the region and a threat to world peace and security.⁷³

Condemnation of the extension of Zionist legislation to the occupied territories :

The Fifteenth Conference of Islamic Foreign Ministers held in Sana, Yemen, in 1984 condemned the extension of Zionist legislation to the occupied West Bank and the Gaza Strip. It called upon the Islamic states to exert themselves to undo the Israeli decision to annex Jerusalem. The Conference asserted that Israeli legislation for annexing Golan Heights was illegal. It once again denounced the US for its hostile policy towards the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and its strategic alliance with Israel. It demanded that the European group adopt a more positive stance on this issue. The member-states were called upon to reconsider their relations with the US and other states in the light of their policies towards the Palestinian people.⁷⁴

Demand for the creation of a sovereign Palestine State with its capital in Al-Quds :

The Sixteenth Conference of Islamic Foreign Ministers held at Fez in Morocco, in 1986 reiterated its position through resolutions on different aspects of the issue reflecting the opt-repeated and known position of the OIC. These, among other things, included the demand for Israeli withdrawal from all occupied Arab lands and

⁷³ Resolution No. 2/4-P(IS), and Resolution No. 6/4-P(IS), in *ibid*.

⁷⁴ See “The Final Communiqué” of the Fifteenth Conference of Islamic Foreign Ministers held in Sana, (Jeddah: General Secretariat, OIC, n. d.), pp. 15-18.

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the creation of a sovereign Palestinian national state on Palestinian land with its capital in Al-Quds.⁷⁵

Rejection of all unilateral agreements and condemnation of US policy regarding Palestine issue :

The Fifth Islamic Summit Conference held in Kuwait in 1987 passed a comprehensive resolution on the Arab-Israeli conflict.⁷⁶ The Resolution decided to reject all unilateral agreements and initiatives, and considered the UN Security Council Resolution No. 242 of 1967 insufficient to resolve the dispute.⁷⁷ The Resolution also condemned the persistent US policy of extending unlimited support to Israel in political, military, economic and other areas. The Summit called on the Islamic states to forge contacts with the EEC, with the aim of encouraging it to take a more positive stance on the Palestinian issue.⁷⁸ The Resolution described the Zionist legislation on the Golan Heights, Jerusalem and other occupied territories as null and void. The Conference once again urged the member-states to refrain from establishing any relations with Israel and extend all possible support to the Palestinian people.⁷⁹

Support to the *Intifadah* (uprising) started by the Palestinian Arab people :

The Seventeenth Conference of Islamic Foreign Ministers held at Amman, Jordan, in 1988 adopted 17 resolutions on different aspects of the Arab-Israel conflict and other related issues. The

⁷⁵ See "OIC Foreign Ministers Conference in Brief" in Journal, Muslim World League (Jeddah), February-March, 1990, p. 49.

⁷⁶ See "The Final Communiqué of the Summit" in summary of World Broadcasts, 30 January 1987 (ME/84 79/E/14 p. 115.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

Conference unanimously supported the *Intifadah* (uprising) started by the Palestinian Arab people in the occupied Arab territories.⁸⁰

Recognition of the Palestinian State and appreciation to the European Community for its positive attitude towards the Palestinian issue :

The Eighteenth Conference of Islamic Foreign Ministers held at Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in 1989 passed a resolution dealing with the core concern of the Palestinian problem hailed the Palestinian people's heroic steadfastness in confronting the Zionist enemy. It called upon the member-states to give all kinds of urgent and effective, official and popular, support to the *Intifadah* (uprising) in the Israeli-occupied territories until the complete withdrawal of Israeli forces from all occupied Arab territories. It announced its recognition of the Palestinian State (proclaimed in November 1988) which it described as the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.⁸¹

The Conference also called on the United States to promote dialogue with the PLO through an international conference in which all the concerned parties, including PLO and the five permanent members of the Security Council, should take part.⁸² It expressed its appreciation of the European Community for its positive attitude towards the Palestinian issue. It called upon it to recognise the Palestinian state. In addition, the member-states were asked to provide support for the Jerusalem Committee so that it could confront the colonisation settlements in Palestine and other occupied Arab areas more effectively.⁸³

⁸⁰ Summary of World Broadcasts, ME/01 10 A/1; 26 March 1988.

⁸¹ Keesing Record for World Events, March 1989, p. 36537.

⁸² Summary of World Broadcasts, 18 March 1989.

⁸³ Ibid.

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Expression of concern over the plan to repatriate Soviet, Falasha and other Jews to Israel :

The Twentieth Conference of Islamic Foreign Ministers held in Istanbul, Turkey, in 1991 agreed to endorse the US proposed West Asian Peace Conference to be held under the auspices of the United Nations but urged that the Palestine Liberation Organisation be invited to it on “an equal footing with all other parties”.⁸⁴ The Conference reiterated its support for the Palestinian struggle, particularly the continuation of the *intifadah* against the repressive policies of Israeli occupation forces.⁸⁵ The Conference expressed concern over the continuation of the plan to repatriate Soviet, Falasha and other Jews to Israel. It condemned the continued Israeli occupation of South Lebanon and called for its immediate and unconditional withdrawal from there.⁸⁶

Extension of support to the ongoing peace process :

The Sixth Islamic Summit Conference held in Dakar, Senegal in 1991 explicitly supported the Palestinians’ rights to return to their homeland, the right to self-determination; including the right to the establishment of an independent Palestine State in their own land with Jerusalem as its capital. The liberation of Jerusalem was described as the “greatest Islamic cause of the present generation”. The Conference also extended its support to the ongoing peace process, which it thought was aimed at establishing a just and comprehensive peace in West Asia on the basis of the UN Security Council resolutions (Nos. 242 and 338) and the formula “land for peace”.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Keesing Record for World Events, August 1991, p. 38411.

⁸⁵ Final Communiqué of the 20th Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, (Istanbul, Republic of Turkey) 4-8 August 1991, p. 17.

⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 20.

⁸⁷ Asian Recorder, 12-18 February, 1992.

Expression of concern over Israel's escalation of acts of terrorism :

The Twenty First Conference of Islamic Foreign Ministers held in Karachi, Pakistan, in 1993 passed a resolution reiterating OIC's longstanding position calling for an early Israeli withdrawal from all occupied territories. It reaffirmed that Al-Quds (Jerusalem) was an integral part of Palestine territory. It expressed concern over "Israel's escalation of acts of terrorism and considered these 'brutal acts' a major obstacle to progress of the peace process."⁸⁸

Condemnation of Israel's repressive and terrorist activities and support for the Middle East Peace Process :

The Twenty Fifth Conference of Islamic Foreign Ministers held in Doha, Qatar, in 1998 passed a resolution condemning Israel's continuing repressive and terrorist measures and practices, its continued policy of colonization, expansion of existing settlements and confiscation of land in occupied Palestinian and Arab territories. The Conference called on member-states to further strengthen their solidarity with the Palestinian people, and continue to support their just and legitimate struggle for ending Israeli occupation and achieving all their goals of freedom and independence.⁸⁹ The Conference reaffirmed its support for the Middle East Peace Process and the implementation of all the agreements signed in this context among the parties concerned and the commitments made in accordance with the underpinnings of the Madrid Peace Conference and in accordance with the UN Charter.⁹⁰ The Conference called for abiding by the provisions of the Islamic Boycott against Israel.⁹¹

⁸⁸ Noor Ahmad Baba, *op. cit.* p. 195-196.

⁸⁹ OIC Resolution No. 1/25-P.

⁹⁰ OIC Resolution No. 6/25-P.

⁹¹ OIC Resolution No. 1/25-P.

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Support to the State of Palestine to gain full membership in the UN :

The Ninth Session of the Islamic Summit Conference held in Doha, Qatar in 2000 called for an end to the Israeli occupation and the establishment of freedom, sovereignty and independence of the steadfast Palestinian people. The Conference urged all Member States to continue strengthening their solidarity with the Palestinian people, support its just and legitimate struggle and use all the resources of the Islamic Ummah to achieve all its national objectives.

The Conference reiterated the necessity to put an end to all Israeli settlement activities, measures and practices contrary to the resolutions of international legality, and in violation of the agreements signed by the Palestinian and Israeli parties; and requested the UN Security Council to ban these measures and remove Israeli settlements, pursuant to Security Council Resolution 465, and revive the International Committee on Supervision and Monitoring to prevent colonization in the city of Al-Quds and other occupied Arab territories, in accordance with UN Resolution 446.⁹²

The Conference called on all states in the world to recognize the State of Palestine with Al-Quds as its capital upon its proclamation in the Palestinian territories and provide the Palestinian people with all forms of assistance so they can exercise their sovereignty on their soil, within the borders of June 1967 and in accordance with the resolutions of international legality. The Conference

⁹² Final Communiqué of the Ninth Session of the Islamic Summit Conference, Session of Peace and Development “Al Aqsa Intifadah”, held in Doha, capital of the State of Qatar, on 12-13 November 2000.

also urged all states to extend their support to the State of Palestine to enable it to gain full membership in the United Nations.⁹³

The Conference called on the international community, particularly the Security Council, to compel Israel to implement the resolutions of international legality, prevent it from introducing any geographic or demographic alterations in the city of Al-Quds, and compel it to lift the siege on Al-Quds, guarantee the freedom of worship therein, respect religious rites of all revealed religions, desist from demolishing homes and withdrawing identity cards from Palestinian citizens, and evacuating Arab nationals from the city of Al-Quds.⁹⁴

Demand for deployment of UN peacekeeping forces in the occupied territories :

The Thirty First Conference of Islamic Foreign Ministers held in Istanbul, Turkey in 2004 stressed the need for an end to Israel's occupation of Palestinian and Arab territories occupied since 1967 and called for the withdrawal of Israeli occupation forces from all occupied Palestinian territories, including Al-Quds to the 4 June 1967 borders. It also stressed the need to establish an independent Palestinian State with Al-Quds as its capital in accordance with international resolutions on Palestine, Al Quds and the Middle East, particularly Security Council Resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 252 (1968), 267 (1969), 465 (1980), 476 (1980), 478 (1980), 1073 (1996), 1397 (2002), 1515 (2003) and General Assembly Resolution 194 on the Return of Palestinian Refugees, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Roadmap as published.⁹⁵

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Final Communiqué of the Thirty-First Session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (Session of Progress and Global Harmony) held in Istanbul, Turkey from 14 to 16 June 2004.

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The Conference called on the UN Security Council to assume its responsibility of ensuring international peace and security by compelling Israel to put an end to its aggression and state terrorism. The Conference called on the UN Security Council to deploy UN peacekeeping forces in the occupied Palestinian territories in order to ensure international protection of the Palestinian people and their holy places.⁹⁶

The Conference called on the Quartet to intensify efforts to achieve a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East in accordance with the Roadmap and related agreements and resolutions, and on the basis of the principles of the peace process and the Arab Peace Initiative. The Conference called on Member States to implement the principles and resolutions of the Islamic Boycott against Israel and to adopt national legislations that govern it.⁹⁷

Support for the Palestinian people in strengthening their national unity :

The Thirty Second Conference of Islamic Foreign Ministers held in Sana'a, Yemen, in 2005 affirmed its full support and backing for the Palestinian people in strengthening their national unity and unifying their internal front; and expresses its support for the Palestinian national dialogue efforts and for its steadfastness in the face of the practices of Israeli occupation authorities.⁹⁸

The Conference also affirmed the necessity of reaching a just solution to the Palestinian cause in all its aspects on the basis of

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Resolution No. 1/32-Pal (On the Cause of Palestine, the City of Al-Quds Al-Sharif and the Arab-Israel conflict), the Thirty-Second Session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (Session of Integration and Development), held in Sana'a, Republic of Yemen, from 28 to 30 June, 2005.

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international law and legitimacy and the terms of reference agreed upon, embodied in the relevant UN resolutions, the principle of land for peace and the inadmissibility of acquisition of others' territory by force, the Arab peace initiative and the Roadmap, such as to enable the Palestinian people to achieve their national independence and exercise their sovereignty in their Palestinian State and its capital Al-Quds.⁹⁹

The Conference called upon the Quartet to resume serious work in order to achieve just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East in accordance with the Roadmap and the Arab peace initiative, and to affirm that any Israeli withdrawal from Gaza Strip and parts of Northern West Bank should be completed and a step toward full Israeli withdrawal to the line of 1967, under the Roadmap and a first step toward its implementation, which will be required similar steps to be taken all over the West Bank.

The Conference invited the UN Security Council to assume its responsibility in maintaining international peace and security by forcing Israel to put an end to its aggression and State terrorism. The Conference called on the UN Security Council also to reinvigorate the International supervisory and Monitoring Committee in order to prevent settlement in al-Quds and the occupied Arab territories in accordance with UNSC Resolution No. 446.¹⁰⁰

The Conference reiterated its adoption of the Arab peace initiative for settling the cause of Palestine and the Arab-Israeli conflict, which was adopted by the 14th Arab Summit held in Beirut (Lebanon) on 28 March 2002; decided to act by all means and

⁹⁹ Resolution No. 1/32-Pal, Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

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ways to promote this initiative, explain its dimensions and gain international support for its implementation.¹⁰¹

The Conference also reaffirmed its commitment to just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East based on Israel's implementation of the relevant resolutions of international legitimacy, particularly UN Security Council Resolutions 242, 338 and 425, the principle of 'land for peace', and the Madrid Conference Terms of Reference, which guarantee Israel's withdrawal from all occupied Arab and Palestinian territories, including Al-Quds and the Syrian Golan, back to the 4th of June 1967 line and from the Lebanese territory still under occupation to the internationally recognized borders as well as securing the Palestinian people's inalienable national rights, including the right to return to their homes and properties in line with United Nations General Assembly Resolution 194 and to establish their independent state on their national territory with Al-Quds as its capital.¹⁰²

Call for stop the construction of the Separation Wall and its demolition :

The Third Extraordinary Session of the Islamic Summit Conference held in Makkah in 2005 stressed the importance of the question of Palestine as the central cause of the Muslim Ummah. The ending of the Israeli occupation of the Arab and Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, the Syrian Golan and the remaining occupied Lebanese territories in compliance with Security Council Resolution 425, constitutes a vital request for the entire Muslim Ummah. This question should

¹⁰¹ Resolution No. 4/32-Pal (On the Current Situation of the Peace Process in the Middle East), Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

unify the Muslim position regarding the comprehensive settlement of the question of Palestine in accordance with the United Nations resolutions, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Roadmap.¹⁰³

The Conference called for support to strengthen the steadfastness of Al-Quds' population so that it may regain its character as a city of coexistence and tolerance and the capital of the State of Palestine. The Conference reiterated working hand in hand with the international community to cease and dismantle settlements in the occupied territories. It also called for a halt in the building of the Separation Wall and its demolition in accordance with the Opinion of the International Court of Justice.¹⁰⁴

Affirmation of the necessity of reaching just solution to the Palestinian cause :

The Thirty third Conference of Islamic Foreign Ministers held in Baku, Azerbaijan in 2006 affirmed the necessity of reaching a just solution to the Palestinian cause in all its aspects on the basis of international law and legitimacy and the terms of reference agreed upon, embodied in the relevant UN resolutions, the principle of land for peace and the inadmissibility of acquisition of others' territory by force, the Arab peace initiative and the Roadmap, such as to enable the Palestinian people to achieve their national independence and exercise their sovereignty in their Palestinian State and its capital Al-Quds.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Final Communiqué, the Third Extraordinary Session of the Islamic Summit Conference held in Makkah from 7 to 8 December 2005.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Resolution No. 1/33-Pal (On the Cause of Palestine, the City of Al-Quds Al-Sharif and the Arab-Israel conflict), the Thirty-Third Session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (Session of Harmony of Rights, Freedoms and Justice), held in Baku, Azerbaijan from 19 to 21 June 2006.

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The Conference reaffirmed the necessity of finding a just solution to the problem of Palestinian refugees in accordance with the resolutions of international legitimacy, particularly UN General Assembly Resolution 194 (1948), and reiterates its rejection of all forms of settlement, and emphasizes the United Nations' responsibility towards the Palestinian cause and the continued role of the UNRWA in this respect.¹⁰⁶

The Conference called upon the Quartet to resume serious work in order to achieve just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East in accordance with the Roadmap and the Arab peace initiative, to affirm the Palestinian territorial unity and integrity, including Al-Quds, to reject any changes in the legal status of only a part of this territory, and to exclude the option of a State with temporary borders.¹⁰⁷

4. Evaluation of the Role of OIC and Achievement thereof

By the Second Summit Conference of Islamic countries at Lahore in 1974 – which had followed the strengthening of the Arab diplomatic position *vis-a-vis* Israel after October war between the two – there was considerable optimism about the early resolution of the Palestinian problem. But the Egyptian decision to go its own way to sign a separate peace treaty with Israel, thereby practically disengaging itself from the core concerns of the West Asian problem, greatly hampered the Palestinian cause and other related issues. It not only isolated Egypt from the Arab world but also had negative repercussions for the Arab position *vis-a-vis* Israel. The Israeli decision to declare Jerusalem as its united and eternal capital in 1980, the annexation of Golan Heights, the invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and measures of similar nature, without any fear

¹⁰⁶ Resolution No. 1/33-Pal, Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

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of retaliation from the Arabs, were the offshoots of the Camp David strategy. The OIC could do nothing about these developments. It suspended Egyptian membership of the OIC and condemned it for its separate peace treaty with Israel in violation of the OIC Charter and resolutions.¹⁰⁸

The OIC could hardly do anything more than putting some diplomatic pressure – direct or indirect – on Israel or on its actual or potential allies. For example in 1980, the OIC was able to persuade the ten Latin American states and one European state to shift their embassies back from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv. It was able to get Israel expelled from UNESCO, but not from the United Nations. In cooperation with other like minded world organisations like the Non-Aligned Movement, the OIC got some resolutions passed in various world bodies, particularly in the UN General Assembly, favouring the Palestinian cause.¹⁰⁹

The OIC has repeatedly asked its member-state to boycott Israel and all firms and Zionist agencies that directly or indirectly deal with and support its economy. To enforce these decisions and coordinate the member-states' moves in this regard, a bureau for the boycott of Israel was established within the OIC.

However, these moves did not prove effective. In fact, states like Turkey within the OIC have all along retained normal diplomatic relations with Israel. Iran had been maintaining diplomatic liaison with Israel till 1979. The revolution in Iran changed the situation there. After Camp David Accord, Egypt has established full-

¹⁰⁸ Resolution No. 18/10-P, in *Declarations and Resolutions of Heads of State and Ministers of Foreign Affairs Conference, 1969-1981*, (Jeddah, n.d.), p. 449-450.

¹⁰⁹ Noor Ahmad Baba, *op. cit.* p. 138.

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fledged relations with Israel. However, the OIC has done useful work by providing some material assistance to the Palestinians.¹¹⁰

It may be noted that the OIC has always fallen short of its claims and promises. Its capacity to help the PLO and the Palestinians has remained constrained because of several limitations. For example, during the 1982 Israeli onslaught on the PLO in Lebanon, the OIC failed even to convene a special session to deliberate on the issue.¹¹¹ It has even been incapable of impressing on the USA that its unqualified support to Israel is going to be counter-productive for its interests.

5. Recommendations for the Pacific Settlement of the Palestine Dispute

To settle the Palestine dispute between the Arabs and Israel through peaceful procedures the following recommendations are given:

- The United Nations General Assembly should—
 - i. pass a resolution recognising the State of Palestine with Al-Quds (Jerusalem) as its capital upon its proclamation in the Palestinian territories;
 - ii. provide the Palestinian people with all forms of assistance so that they can exercise their sovereignty on their soil, within the borders of June 1967 and in accordance with the resolutions of international legality;

¹¹⁰ For details, see “Organisation of Islamic Conference”, Islamic Solidarity Fund (Jeddah, n.d.) pp. 26-28.

¹¹¹ Collin Legum, Haim Shaked and Daniel Dishon, eds., *Middle East Contemporary Survey*, Vol. V (New York) 1981-1982, p. 299.

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- iii. adopt a resolution giving the State of Palestine full membership in the United Nations.¹¹²
- The United Nations Security Council should—
 - i. pass a resolution calling on members of the Quartet (the UN, represented by the Secretary-General, U.S., EU, and Russia) to work closely with regional partners (the Arab League, Arab countries and Turkey) to implement an initiative aimed at achieving a comprehensive Arab-Israeli settlement based on the UN Security Council Resolutions 242 of 1967 and 338 of 1973, the 2002 Arab League Beirut Initiative and the 2003 Roadmap;¹¹³
 - ii. adopt a resolution compelling the State of Israel to implement the relevant UN resolutions especially the UNGA Resolution No. 194 on the return of Palestinian refugees to their homes and properties as the cornerstone of the just and comprehensive settlement;
 - iii. assume its responsibility of ensuring international peace and security by compelling Israel to put an end to its aggression and State terrorism;
 - iv. deploy the UN peacekeeping forces in the occupied Palestinian territories in order to ensure international protection of the Palestinian people and their Holy Places;
 - v. reinvigorate the International Supervisory and Monitoring Committee in order to prevent settlement in Jerusalem and the occupied Arab

¹¹² W. Thomas Mallison and Sally V. Mallison, *The Palestine Problem In International Law and World Order*, Longman Group Limited, London (1986) pp. 416-418.

¹¹³ John H. Davis, *The Evasive Peace*, John Murrar, London, (1968), p. 107.

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- territories in accordance with the UNSC Resolution No. 446;
- vi. adopt a resolution compelling the State of Israel to stop the construction of the Separation Wall and to destruct the West Bank barrier in accordance with the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice;¹¹⁴
 - vii. pass a resolution--
 - a. preventing the State of Israel from introducing any geographic or demographic alterations in the city of Al-Quds;
 - b. compelling it to lift the siege on Al-Quds;
 - c. guaranteeing the freedom of worship therein;
 - d. respecting religious rites of all revealed religions; and
 - e. desisting from demolishing homes and withdrawing identity cards from Palestinian citizens, and evacuating Arab nationals from the city of Al-Quds.¹¹⁵
 - The Muslim Ummah should—
 - i. strengthen unity among the member-states of the OIC in order to compel Israel to abide by the UN resolutions regarding Palestine issue;
 - ii. strengthen their solidarity with the Palestinian people, support its just and legitimate struggle and use all the resources of the Islamic Ummah to achieve all its national objectives including performance of its functions as a sovereign and independent State of Palestine;

¹¹⁴ Henry Cattan, *op. cit.*, pp. 192-194.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

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- iii. implement the principles and resolutions of the Islamic Boycott against Israel and adopt national legislations that govern it.¹¹⁶
- The PLO, the Palestinian Authority, Fatah, Hamas and Other Relevant Palestinian Organisations should—
 - i. make every effort to establish a government of national unity on the basis of the Palestinian National Conciliation Document and reform the Palestine Liberation Organisation as provided in March 2005 Cairo agreement;
 - ii. release Corporal Shalit in the context of a prisoner swap, reinstate the truce and stop all militias from firing rockets;
 - iii. formally empower the PLO leadership to conduct political discussions with Israel on a longer-term political settlement, announce that any agreement will be put to a national referendum and pledge to adhere to the outcome of such a referendum.¹¹⁷

6. Conclusion

From the above discussion it may be said that the Organisation of Islamic Conference did not achieve much in solving the Palestine dispute. But the background against which it was held and the meager success it had were in itself an achievement. The Islamic world was deeply divided on ideological and political lines and the OIC, when started, had no clear-cut agenda before it. There were multiple pressures exercised from divergent sides, and in such a situation even a minor on certain issues could be considered as an achievement.

¹¹⁶ Muhammad Khalil, *The Arab States and the Arab League: A Documentary Record*, Vol. II International Affairs, Beirut: Khayats, (1962).

¹¹⁷ W. Thomas Mallison and Sally V. Mallison, *op. cit.*, pp. 413-416.

The Role of the Organisation of Islamic Conference in Solving the Palestine Dispute: An Appraisal

The major crisis that OIC faced was the Egyptian peace process with Israel. The Palestinian problem, instead of getting resolved, got stuck with further complications after the signing of the Camp David Accord between Egypt and Israel in 1978-1979. This Accord placed Palestinians still more at the mercy of the Israelis. This situation created new impediments which made its solution all the more difficult. With Egypt chained by the terms of the Camp David Accord, Israel's arrogance and stubbornness increased considerably.

In these circumstances, to make the Muslim Ummah more active and dynamic in the field of pacific settlement of international disputes including the Palestine dispute some suggestions are submitted below :

- The Muslim Ummah should prepare a complete scheme and uniform plan of action for the establishment of an organisation to be named 'the Islamic United Nations' consisting of all members of the OIC.
- The proposed Islamic United Nations might be given power to take decisions against any member-state whose activities are against the common interest of Muslim Ummah.
- The organisation might be given power as like the UN Security Council to implement its decisions which would be taken by two-thirds majority without conferring veto power to any member.
- As soon as possible after completion of necessary formalities for the endorsement of its Charter, the OIC member-states should start the functioning of the International Islamic Court of Justice which was decided by the third Islamic Summit Conference to be established as the fourth organ of the OIC to act as an

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arbitrator, judge, and umpire in all disputes that might arise between Islamic countries.

- The Muslim Ummah should strengthen co-operation among member-states of the OIC to maintain peace and security in the world by all means especially through resorting the pacific methods of settlement of international disputes according to the provisions of Islamic International Law.
- The OIC should provide a framework for cooperation within the Muslim world suited to its present-day structure and conditions.
- It might make sustained efforts to eliminate anti-Islamic sentiment from the society by creating greater awareness about each and every aspect of Islamic life i.e., social, political, legal, economic, military, ideological and worship.
- It must take initiative to make the world aware of the activities done by the so-called Islamic militants as detrimental and adverse to the spirit of Islam.