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Statement by Mrs. Somaia Barghouti, Senior Adviser, before the Third Committee on Agenda item 28: Advancement of women, 67th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, 16 October 2012: (Check against delivery)

On behalf of Palestine, allow me, Mr. Chairman, to congratulate you upon your election, and assure you of our full support and cooperation. We also extend our congratulations to all the distinguished members of the Bureau.

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation recognizes the progress women have achieved throughout the world in terms of the realization of their rights and empowerment. Yet, despite the gains that have been made, many women still face tremendous challenges and hardships impeding their advancement and total empowerment. Given this somber reality, we continue to believe, that the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly is absolutely necessary to remove the obstacles in order to realize the achievement of equality, advancement and empowerment for all women worldwide.

Mr. Chairman,

Sadly, the current situation of Palestinian women, as has been documented by various studies and reports by the UN and international organizations, remains critical and tragic, especially in the Gaza Strip and the many refugee camps that generations of Palestinians have been forced to live. This is mainly due to the continued Israeli military occupation that has persisted for more than 45 years and the escalation of the occupying Power's oppressive policies and measures taken against the entire Palestinian population, including women.

It is a fact that Palestinian women are bearing the brunt of this long and brutal Israeli occupation, which has completely impaired their capacity to cope with the devastation around them caused by occupation. Hence, the toll of the occupation, discrimination, destruction and the systematic human rights violations committed by Israel, the occupying Power, on a nearly daily basis has been vast and has gravely impacted the socio-economic as well as the psychological conditions of Palestinian women and their children.

Mr. Chairman,

Illegal policies by the occupying Power, such as the intensification of the construction and expansion of its illegal settlements and its apartheid Wall, the increase in home demolitions, the imposition of severe restrictions on movement of persons and goods through the use of checkpoints, the widespread destruction of Palestinian property and agricultural fields, including by illegal

extremist settlers and the gross violation of nearly every single human right that are inalienable to all human beings, have continued to have deathlike ramifications on not only Palestinian women's advancement and empowerment, but to their survival and well-being.

Of a particular concern to the entire Palestinian population is the issue of Palestinian prisoners. Since 1967, an alarming figure of more than 800,000 or over 25% of the total population, have been detained in Israeli jails and detention centers at one time or another in grave violation of the 4th Geneva Convention. Although men are the ones mostly imprisoned and detained, women must bear the social and financial cost of their fathers, husbands or brother's imprisonment or detention and suffer the consequences associated with having to take on an additional role of caring and providing for their families.

Another issue that hinders Palestinian women's fight for equality and empowerment, is the increase of violence against them in the home as result of high rates of poverty, unemployment and feelings of despair among the male population culminating from the daily hardship of living under a suffocating and oppressive military occupation that has gone on for more than 45 years old. Therefore, Palestinian women are subjected not only to the typical forms of violence that many women around the world face, but also to the political violence from the occupying forces as well as the hundreds of thousands of illegal extremist settlers that have been illegally transferred to Palestinian land in grave violation of international humanitarian law.

In spite of these daunting challenges and difficulties Palestinian women face day in and day out, they continue to move forward making tremendous efforts to overcome all these obstacles towards their advancement and empowerment, including combating all forms of violence directed at them. In this regard, In January 2011, the Palestinian Authority passed a National Strategy to Combat Violence against Women for the period 2011-2019. The program, prepared By the Ministry of Women's Affairs in cooperation with UN women, aims to create work training and empowerment programs for women, provide social support, and promote a legal framework to stem violence. It should be noted that the program, takes on a cross-sector approach, recognizing violence against women as a development issue affecting the political, social and economic systems of the Palestinian society.

Mr. Chairman,

Despite the feelings of pain and anger of Palestinian women, they remain relentless in their noble struggle to rid themselves and their families from occupation in order to achieve freedom in their own independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in order to fully realize their true empowerment and advancement.

However, in order to achieve such a goal, the international community, mainly the United Nations must redouble its efforts in assisting Palestinian women in their families to achieve just this at this very critical juncture. Mr. Chairman, enough is enough and the Palestinian people have endured 64 years of suffering since Al-Nakba and 45 years of occupation. This is the time for the international community to hold Israel accountable for all the crimes committed and to put an end to the suffering of Palestinian women and their families under occupation. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.