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### HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

Sixth session

#### SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 10th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,  
on Thursday, 20 September 2007, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. COSTEA (Romania)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN PALESTINE AND OTHER OCCUPIED ARAB TERRITORIES (agenda item 7) (A/HRC/4/116; A/HRC/5/20; A/HRC/6/NGO/25, 28, 31 and 37)

1. The PRESIDENT, reporting to the Human Rights Council pursuant to Council resolution OM/1/2, said that he had received a letter dated 31 August 2007 from Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the head of the high-level fact-finding mission established under Council resolution S-3/1, informing him that prior commitments had made it impossible for him to carry out the mission to Beit Hanoun before the Council's sixth session. The members of the fact-finding mission believed that it was important for the Council to remain seized of the issue and encouraged it to consider the various recommendations made in their report to the Council at its fifth session (A/HRC/5/20).
2. Ms. KANG (United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights), reporting to the Council on the steps taken by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) since the Council's fifth session to help implement Council resolutions S-1/1 and S-3/1, drew attention to the report of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 (A/HRC/4/116), in which he outlined the reasons why it had not been possible to implement Council resolution S-1/1. She also referred to the Special Rapporteur's statement to the Council at its fourth session on 22 March 2007.
3. With regard to resolution S-3/1, she said that, immediately following the adoption of Council resolution OM/1/2, the High Commissioner had reactivated the secretariat supporting the high-level fact-finding mission and had taken steps to ensure that the mission would have all the financial and logistical support it required to fulfil its mandate, including travel to Beit Hanoun. However, full implementation of resolution S-3/1 had not been possible.
4. Mr. LEVANON (Observer for Israel) said that the inclusion of item 7 in the Council's agenda was a flagrant violation of the fundamental principles of equal treatment, impartiality and non-selectivity in the Council's work, as mandated by General Assembly resolution 60/251. The disheartening truth was that the Council was not an improvement over the discredited Commission on Human Rights. When the Council adhered to the principles set out in its own constitutive documents, Israel would welcome any constructive criticism and dialogue.
5. Mr. ABU-KOASH (Observer for Palestine) said that, while the new institutional structure of the Council had been intended as an improvement over the Commission on Human Rights, the Council's unbalanced approach to the issue of human rights could give rise to power struggles and political manipulation. Council resolutions S-1/1 and S-3/1 had not been implemented because resolutions on Palestine received mere lip service and were subsequently consigned to oblivion. Israel had not approved either of the missions and its ongoing exemption from adherence to international law raised the question of whether the interests of dominant centres of power superseded international legality.

6. While Israel, the occupying Power, presented itself as the victim, it persisted in its extreme violations of the rights of the Palestinian people, including the destruction of infrastructure and the kidnapping of civilians and officials, including parliamentarians. In addition, its recent proclamation of the Gaza Strip as enemy territory contravened the Oslo accords and the mutual recognition agreement. Gaza was an integral part of Palestinian territory, and Israel was carrying out all sorts of hostilities against the Palestinian people.

7. Mr. KHABBAZ HAMOUI (Observer for the Syrian Arab Republic) said that the many resolutions on the occupied Arab territories that had been adopted by the United Nations, including the Human Rights Council, had been ignored by the occupying Power. Meanwhile, the list of Arab inmates in Israeli prisons was growing longer. Many prisoners were from the occupied Syrian Golan and had been jailed for refusing to accept an Israeli identity card; at least one had died as a result of inhumane treatment. Syrians were only some of an increasing number of Arab prisoners held without trial, exposed to humiliation and torture and used as human shields to protect Israeli soldiers.

8. The occupying Power was attempting to obliterate Arab identity as part of its systemic policy of Judaization: it changed the names of villages and even whole regions and destroyed their cultural heritage, and its administrative decisions limited religious activity by preventing believers from visiting holy places at significant times of year. If the Council wished to maintain its credibility, it should not allow its resolutions on the occupied Arab territories to become a dead letter.

9. Mr. KHAN (Pakistan), speaking on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), welcomed the Secretary-General's statement in which he expressed concern at the Israeli Government's decision to declare the Gaza Strip a "hostile entity", and its announced intention to interrupt essential services to the civilian population. OIC strongly supported the Secretary-General's call for Israel to reconsider that decision.

10. OIC remained concerned at the deteriorating humanitarian and human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories. In the Syrian Golan, the continued occupation had stifled economic activity and had led to the impoverishment of its population. OIC called for the immediate release of Arab detainees in Israeli prisons.

11. OHCHR should take the lead in ensuring the implementation of Council resolutions. OIC called for implementation of the recommendations of the high-level fact-finding mission and of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967.

12. Mr. FERNÁNDEZ PALACIOS (Cuba), speaking on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, said that in recent days the Israeli air force, along with land troops with armoured vehicles, had made repeated raids on the Gaza Strip under the pretext of counter-terrorist operations, and had killed a considerable number of civilians. The Movement of Non-Aligned Countries condemned those operations, which should be brought to an immediate halt.

13. Israel's actions went beyond the use of force against the Palestinian people. The excavations in the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound were blatant violations of the religious and cultural rights of the Palestinian people and of Muslims in general.

14. He condemned Israel's violation of Syrian airspace on 6 September 2007 as an unjustifiable violation of international law.

15. The Movement of Non-Aligned Countries regretted the loss of innocent Palestinian and Israeli lives and called on the parties to resume peace negotiations as a matter of urgency, on the basis of international law and relevant United Nations resolutions.

16. Mr. SHOUKRY (Egypt), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, said that the situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories had been further exacerbated by the Israeli Government's declaration of Gaza as enemy territory in order to inflict collective punishment on its inhabitants. He urged the Council to meet its obligations and take concrete steps to compel Israel to comply with Council resolutions S-1/1 and S-3/1. It was the responsibility of the President of the Council and the High Commissioner to take the necessary measures for the speedy implementation of those resolutions.

17. Mr. XAVIER ESTEVES (Observer for Portugal), speaking on behalf of the European Union and the candidate countries, Croatia and The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; the stabilization and association process countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia; and, in addition, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Moldova and Ukraine, said that Israel and the Palestinian Authority both bore responsibility for preventing, investigating and remedying human rights violations. While the European Union was deeply concerned at the human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, it believed that, in accordance with the agreed principle of non-selectivity, that issue should not have been singled out in the Council's agenda.

18. The European Union condemned the continued firing of rockets at Israeli territory and urged the Palestinian leadership to do everything in its power to put an end to such acts. While the European Union recognized Israel's legitimate right to self-defence, it called on Israel to exercise utmost restraint, investigate allegations of human rights violations and punish those responsible, and cooperate with United Nations human rights mechanisms.

19. The European Union commended the release of Palestinian prisoners and detainees, and reiterated its call for the immediate and unconditional release of the abducted Israeli soldier and the Palestinian legislators detained in Israel. The extrajudicial execution of Palestinians suspected of cooperating with Israel must stop, and the Israeli Government should also end extrajudicial killings.

20. The European Union would not recognize any changes to the pre-1967 borders other than those agreed by the parties, and it called on Israel to desist from actions that might threaten the viability of a two-State solution. As the occupying Power, Israel had the duty to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid to the Palestinian population, and it should also take all necessary measures to normalize economic and social life. The European Union was particularly concerned at the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza. All parties must work towards the opening of the crossing points in and out of Gaza for humanitarian and commercial flows.

21. All Palestinian parties must renounce violence and halt their attacks on Israel. The Palestinian Authority must make every effort to fight terrorism with all the legitimate means at its disposal. The European Union was opposed to any division of the Palestinian territories and remained firmly committed to the objective of a two-State solution and to helping to build the institutions and the economy of the future Palestinian State.

22. Mr. AL-SHIBIB (Observer for Iraq), speaking on behalf of the League of Arab States, said that Council resolution S-1/1 had been adopted after Israel had invaded Gaza, destroyed Palestinian infrastructure and kidnapped parliamentarians. So far, Israel had not complied with that resolution and had obstructed the work of the fact-finding mission. Although Council resolution S-3/1 which called for the dispatch of a fact-finding mission to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the mission had not taken place owing to Israel's obstructionism. Israel was not respecting international humanitarian law or human rights, and it should be forced to implement the resolutions and uphold the law. The extremism of the Israel occupying forces only provoked extremist reactions. Instead of building a separation wall and obstructing freedom of worship, Israel should take the decision that would allow it to live in peace; namely to end its occupation of the Palestinian Territory.

23. Mr. GODET (Switzerland) said that, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, checkpoints, the permit system and other restrictions on freedom of movement infringed Palestinians' rights to health, education, work and family life. The continuing expansion of Israeli settlements had a negative impact on the economic, social and cultural life of the local inhabitants. The building of the separation wall would cut East Jerusalem off from its natural surroundings. The number of restrictions on humanitarian organizations' access to the West Bank were increasing.

24. The situation in Gaza had deteriorated significantly following clashes among Palestinians. The blocking of trade would only contribute to the impoverishment of an already vulnerable population and increase its dependence on humanitarian aid. Steps must be taken to restore the normal access of goods and people as quickly as possible in order to avert the complete collapse of Gaza's economy. Violence perpetrated by Hamas militants in Gaza and by the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank continued to undermine human rights.

25. Switzerland condemned the shelling of civilian targets in Israel by Palestinian armed groups. Although the Israeli forces had shown restraint during the latest clashes with Palestinians, the Government of Israel had apparently opted to fight back using electricity cuts and other restrictions that affected the entire population of Gaza. The civilian population must not become the target of collective punishment. All parties to the conflict must respect the rules of international humanitarian law.

26. Ms. MTSHALI (South Africa) said that it was regrettable that the Israeli authorities had not implemented Council resolutions S-1/1 and S-3/1. The dire consequences of the continued Israeli occupation of Palestine were outlined in the report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 (A/HRC/4/17). Her delegation reiterated the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. The implementation of that right would necessarily entail jump-starting the peace process by reviving the road map, which guaranteed the establishment of a sovereign Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side with a secure Israeli State.

27. Mr. SHOUKRY (Egypt) said that, in its very first year, the Council had adopted a resolution to send a fact-finding mission to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, following Israel's invasion and systematic destruction of Palestinian infrastructure. A year later, it had adopted another resolution in which it decided to dispatch a fact-finding mission to travel to Beit Hanoun. Neither mission had taken place, and he wondered what had become of the Council's resolve to end Israel's violations of human rights, including extrajudicial killings. Israel's recent declaration that Gaza was enemy territory was aimed at imposing collective punishment on the Palestinian people and forcing them to submit to Israeli occupation.

28. Mr. MOKTAR (Malaysia) said that for decades the people of Palestine had been subjected to collective punishment, oppression and gross and systematic human rights violations by the occupying Power. The persistent restrictions of movement and limitation of access by the Palestinians to their holy places, particularly in occupied East Jerusalem, were clear violations of their rights and freedoms. The ongoing military operations in the West Bank and the recent hostile declaration against the Gaza Strip would only exacerbate the hardship and suffering of Palestinian civilians, particularly women, children and the elderly. The Council must contribute to efforts to find a just and lasting settlement to the question of Palestine, and should ensure the implementation of its own decisions, particularly those taken at its special sessions on Palestine.

29. Mr. GRINIUS (Canada) said that the inclusion in the institution-building package of a separate agenda item that singled out one situation for highly politicized, partial and subjective treatment did not respect the principles of universality, impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity on which the Council was founded. Issues relating to the Middle East could and should be addressed under the agenda item on human rights situations that required the Council's attention. Canada would continue its efforts to build a credible, effective and responsive Human Rights Council that dealt with human rights situations around the world, including the Middle East, in a non-selective, impartial and objective manner.

30. Mr. RAHMAN (Bangladesh) said that the Council should address gross and systematic violations of human rights without selectivity, and its decisions should be enforceable and effective. It must take an unequivocal stand on Israel's flagrant violations of international law and fundamental human rights. The Council's failure to implement its resolutions on the Occupied Palestinian Territory would undermine its credibility. The situation had gone from bad to worse as a result of Israeli blockades, confiscation of land and demolition of houses. The separation wall had deprived the Palestinian people of the use of their property and access to employment. Incessant military action and destruction of the civil amenities necessary for human survival had aggravated a desperate situation. The declaration of Gaza as enemy territory would entail collective punishment of the Palestinian people. Israel's illegal actions must be condemned and it must halt its violations of international law. Lasting solutions could not be achieved by force; the parties to the conflict must resume negotiations.

31. Mr. GUILHOU (France) said that the designation of a separate agenda item for the current discussion undermined the principle of non-selectivity. France's Minister for Foreign Affairs had recently visited the occupied territories and had declared that the inhabitants of Gaza could not be left in their hell. They must be shown that there was an alternative to suffering and violence. Israel's decision to consider Gaza as a "hostile entity" would not improve the population's living conditions. France strongly condemned the shelling of Israeli territory from Gaza as well as any other act that jeopardized the political negotiation process. Palestinian armed groups must

respect international humanitarian law and stop targeting civilian populations, whether Israeli or Palestinian. France would continue its efforts to ensure lasting peace in the region and to promote the establishment of a sovereign Palestinian State living next to Israel in peace and security.

32. Mr. LOSHCININ (Russian Federation) said that his delegation was in favour of the resumption of Israeli-Palestinian talks and of a fair settlement that provided for the end of the Israeli occupation and the creation of a sovereign, democratic Palestinian State existing alongside Israel in peace and security.

33. He expressed concern at the escalation of armed confrontation in the region. The shelling of Israeli cities and military targets by Palestinian extremists had followed Israeli strikes against the Gaza Strip and raids on the West Bank, which had claimed many victims, including civilians. The main task was to stop actions that could provoke a flare-up of violence at a time when the sides needed to take steps towards each other. The task of isolating terrorists could not be solved by setting up blockades, as a result of which the civilian population suffered, or declarations of a part of the Occupied Palestinian Territory as “enemy territory”.

34. It was necessary to overcome the critical social and economic situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and prevent chaos and clashes between various Palestinian groups. He stressed the need to resume dialogue and called on donors to provide comprehensive assistance to all Palestinians.

35. Israel’s refusal to accept the fact-finding missions established by Council resolutions S-1/1 and S-1/3 was regrettable. Such actions set an unwelcome precedent that could have a negative impact on the Council’s work. It was unacceptable to make harsh demands on some States to receive a mission, while indulging others’ refusal to cooperate. Selectivity was not only contrary to the spirit of open and constructive dialogue, but also to the very idea of cooperation in the field of human rights. He hoped that, at its current session, the Council would take resolutions and decisions conducive to a comprehensive settlement of the Middle East conflict in accordance with the generally accepted principles of international law.

36. Mr. ATTAR (Saudi Arabia) said that the Council’s decision to place the human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories on its agenda was a clear indication of the need to address that question. The occupation violated international humanitarian law and international human rights law, since it deprived individuals and societies of a decent standard of living. His delegation was concerned at the deterioration of the human rights situation of the Palestinian people, particularly in the light of Israel’s decision to halt the flow of goods and services to the Gaza Strip. While the Council had adopted decisions on follow-up and implementation of its resolutions S-1/1 and S-3/1, those resolutions had not been implemented. The Council must take further action to ensure that the Palestinian people were able to exercise their legitimate human rights.

37. Mr. LY (Senegal) said that the Council should spare no effort in ensuring that its resolutions on the human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory were implemented. It should do everything possible to ensure the continuation of the Israeli-Palestinian dialogue in order to restore peace and stability in the Middle East. Senegal was currently serving as chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the

Palestinian People and was a member of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories. In those capacities, Senegal would continue to work tirelessly for a lasting peace, which was a prerequisite for the long-awaited establishment of a free Palestinian State with secure and viable borders.

38. Mr. FUJISAKI (Japan) said that the Council should encourage dialogue between the Israeli and Palestinian leaders. Economic conditions had to be improved in order to promote and protect human rights. In order for the Palestinian economy to be viable, it was necessary to transport goods and services to and from other States, including the Gulf States. Japan was therefore promoting and supporting the “Corridor for Peace and Prosperity” initiative. His delegation regretted that Archbishop Tutu had not yet visited the region.

39. Mr. LI Baodong (China) said that China welcomed the recent summit meeting between the Palestinian and Israeli leaders. Ongoing violence in the region was aggravating racial hatred, religious intolerance and poverty. War and chaos were likely to lead to extremism and terrorism. Israel and Palestine should resolve their conflict through political negotiations, giving priority to the well-being of their populations. The Council could play a positive role by seeking to dispel the rancour between the two sides.

40. Mr. AL-DOHAIBI (Observer for Yemen) said that he was deeply concerned at the deteriorating human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Despite the international community’s efforts, the region appeared to be inaccessible to international organizations. The Council should take practical steps to prevent further human rights violations in the region. He called on OHCHR and other relevant bodies to discharge their responsibilities in that regard. The Council should extend the mandates on the human rights situation in the occupied Arab territories until the Israeli occupation ended and reparation had been made for its consequences.

41. Mr. AL ZAABI (Observer for the United Arab Emirates) said that the Council’s failure to resolve the human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory was undermining its credibility. The Council should make an objective evaluation of the situation in the region, placing people at the core of the initiative and avoiding politicization.

42. Mr. MOAIYERI (Observer for the Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory was worsening in a general climate of impunity. Israel’s daily military incursions into the Gaza Strip and its use of excessive force against Palestinian civilians in every part of the Occupied Territory constituted massive and systematic violations of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of the Palestinian people, including the right to life and the right to self-determination. Israel’s excavations beneath and around the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound were blatant violations of the religious and cultural rights of the Palestinian people and Muslims in general. The international community and the Council in particular should take all necessary measures to put an end to the Israeli regime’s occupation of Palestine and other occupied Arab territories, as well as its violations of the human rights of innocent civilians.



43. Mr. AL-BADER (Observer for Kuwait) said that immediate protection should be provided to the civilian population in the Occupied Palestinian Territory in accordance with international humanitarian law. The Council should take all the necessary measures to halt the serious violations of the human rights of the Palestinian people. The Council and the international community should compel Israel to comply with its legal and moral responsibilities under international human rights law.

44. Mr. JAZAÏRY (Observer for Algeria) said that the Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights should make some recommendations on how the Council could implement its resolutions on the human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

45. Mr. ALFARARGI (Observer for League of Arab States) said that the Israeli authorities were attempting to attribute the current conflict to the lack of Palestinian institutions. It was, however, Israel that had destroyed those institutions and had abducted elected representatives of the Palestinian people. The Council should clearly state its position on the implementation of its resolutions on the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

46. Mr. SALAZAR PINEDA (Observer for the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that his country supported the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and deplored Israel's systematic violations of their human rights and of international humanitarian law. Dialogue and cooperation were the only means of ensuring lasting peace, well-being and stability in the region. The Council and the United Nations as a whole should make a clear commitment to building peace, and should denounce human rights violations in all parts of the world in a balanced, objective manner without double standards. The Council should maintain its agenda item on the human rights situation in Palestine and other Arab territories until Israel ended its illegal occupation.

47. Mr. KLECHESKI (Observer for the United States of America) said that his Government remained committed to a negotiated two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Since bilateral dialogue between the parties was central to achieving progress towards that end, he strongly supported the ongoing talks between the Israeli and Palestinian leaders and welcomed their recent decision to form teams to address core issues. The international community should encourage those efforts and provide financial support to the Palestinian Authority. It was necessary to encourage the forces of moderation in a region where extremism had done so much harm. He urged Arab States to stop negating the existence of Israel and to take steps to halt the incitement of hatred in their official media.

48. The Human Rights Council should demonstrate that it could do more than just criticize Israel. If it truly wished to promote and protect human rights in order to end the suffering on both sides, it should pursue a balanced and forward-looking approach.

49. Ms. AL-MADI (BADIL Resource Centre for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights), speaking also on behalf of the International League for the Rights and Liberation of Peoples and Mouvement contre le racisme et pour l'amitié entre les peuples (MRAP), said that, as a result of the closure of the Gaza Strip in June 2007 1.5 million Palestinians were currently almost entirely dependent on international humanitarian assistance. Meanwhile, Palestinians continued to be forced out of their homes and off their lands. In 2006, approximately 115,000 people had been internally displaced in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and an even greater number were

vulnerable to forced displacement. He invited the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 to assess the scope and nature of forced displacement in those territories and submit his findings and recommendations to the Council. Politics should not be allowed to jeopardize the fundamental rights of Palestinians, particularly Palestinians who had been internally displaced. The Council should encourage the representative of the Secretary-General on Internally Displaced Persons, the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance to visit Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

50. Mr. MACHON (International Commission of Jurists) said that the siege imposed on the Gaza Strip following the events of June 2007 had had a devastating impact on the humanitarian situation and the human rights of the civilian population. The subsequent closing of crossings points had further aggravated an already precarious and volatile situation. He expressed concern at Israel's declaration of Gaza as a "hostile entity" and its intention to place further restrictions on movement and access to goods, fuel and electricity. He called on Israel and the international community to take urgent measures to normalize the transit of goods and people in and out of Gaza.

51. Reports of indiscriminate and disproportionate use of force by the Israeli Defence Forces in Gaza and the West Bank, as well as the continued use of rockets by Palestinian armed groups against the civilian population in Israel remained a grave concern. In July 2007, fighting between Hamas and Fatah in Gaza had resulted in many civilian deaths, serious human rights violations and the disruption of the legal system. Hamas had suspended the Attorney-General in Gaza and had announced that the Gaza courts would be replaced by a legal committee, and that uncooperative judges would be removed. His organization continued to receive accounts of the use of torture and arbitrary detention by the Palestinian authorities in the West Bank. The construction of the separation wall was continuing in spite of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice. Any settlement of the conflict must be based on full respect for and protection of international human rights and humanitarian law.

52. Mr. LITTMAN (World Union for Progressive Judaism) asked whether the time had not come for the Council to recognize that the most serious Palestinian problem was the occupation of the Gaza Strip by Hamas, a recognized terrorist group supported by the Islamic Republic of Iran, whose President had called for Israel to be "wiped off the map".

53. Mr. ROSHDY (Egypt), speaking on a point of order, said that speakers should not raise issues that did not pertain to the agenda item under consideration.

54. The PRESIDENT asked the representative of the World Union for Progressive Judaism to limit his remarks to the agenda item.

55. Following a procedural discussion in which Mr. ROSHDY (Egypt), Mr. LEVANON (Observer for Israel), Ms. AL RIFAIY (Syrian Arab Republic) and Mr. NOWOSAD (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights) took part, the President requested the secretariat to provide all representatives with written instructions on the procedure for raising points of order.

56. Mr. LITTMAN (World Union for Progressive Judaism) said that the Council should condemn the occupation of Gaza by Hamas and also the current Palestinian civil strife, rocket attacks on Israel from Gaza and the defamation of Islam by jihadists who carried out suicide attacks in the name of Allah.
57. Mr. NUVER (UN Watch) said that the current Secretary-General of the United Nations had criticized the Council's decision to single out only one specific regional item, given the range of human rights violations throughout the world, and that the High Commissioner for Human Rights had said that the agenda item in question was "selective". He urged member States to respect the opinion of the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner and remove the item from the Council's agenda.
58. Ms. DE RIVERO (Human Rights Watch) said that, between September 2005 and May 2007, 59 Palestinians had been killed and 270 wounded in Israeli artillery strikes. While Israel had justified its attacks as a response to Palestinian rocket attacks, on some occasions Israel had fired artillery and carried out attacks without taking feasible precautions to avoid civilian casualties.
59. The Council had failed to look comprehensively at the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and had avoided any mention of the role and responsibilities of the Palestinian armed groups and authorities. By failing to consider the responsibilities of all parties, the Council was undermining its credibility and undercutting its effectiveness. The Council should therefore address not only Israeli violations but also rocket attacks on Israel by Palestinian armed groups. She urged Israel to cooperate with the Council's fact-finding mission, and to conduct a comprehensive, independent investigation into attacks that might have been indiscriminate or caused disproportionate loss. The Council should urge leaders of Palestinian political factions to repudiate rocket attacks that were either directed at civilian populations or did not distinguish between civilians and military targets. The Council should call on both Hamas and the Palestinian Authority to investigate and prosecute those responsible for such attacks.
60. Mr. PUPPINCK (European Centre for Law and Justice) said that the Christian minority living in the Occupied Palestinian Territory not only shared the fate of the Palestinian people, but was also being subjected to intolerable pressure. Access to holy places and Bethlehem had become almost impossible for Palestinian Christians. Christian schools, which were open to Muslim pupils, had recently been partially destroyed by Islamist militias. There had been reports of the forced conversion of Christians and death threats against Muslims who converted to Christianity. The fate of the Christian community was neglected by local political authorities and the international community. The exodus of Christians was a loss for the Palestinian population and the stability of the region. The United Nations should undertake a special study of the situation of Christians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and the international community should express its support for the presence of Christians in the region.
61. Ms. DORRI (Organization for Defending Victims of Violence) said that conditions for the people of Gaza were deteriorating because international aid was not reaching them. The international community did not recognize the Hamas-led government, and many States had frozen their aid to what they considered to be a terrorist organization.

62. The United Nations, in particular the Human Rights Council, and the international community must continue to apply pressure on the Israeli Government to observe all United Nations resolutions regarding the Palestinians and must demand the release of all Palestinian prisoners.

63. Ms. HUSZTI-ORBAN (Amnesty International) said that, in the first half of 2007, armed clashes between Fatah and Hamas in the Gaza Strip had claimed the lives of more than 300 Palestinians, and President Abbas's decision to suspend the operation of Palestinian Authority security forces and judicial institutions in Gaza had left the population with no formal law enforcement. Hamas had established alternative security and law enforcement mechanisms, but without appropriately trained personnel or an adequate accountability mechanism. Hamas forces had assaulted demonstrators, tortured detainees with impunity and curtailed freedom of expression and association. In the West Bank, hundreds of known or suspected Hamas supporters had been arbitrarily arrested and detained by Palestinian Authority forces without adequate judicial supervision; some had been tortured. The Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades had carried out attacks and abductions with impunity. In the Gaza Strip, the blockade imposed by Israel on crossing points had trapped the 1.5 million Palestinian inhabitants and further undermined the beleaguered economy.

64. The firing of rockets by Palestinian armed groups into Israel had continued to pose a serious risk and such attacks invariably resulted in Israel's imposition of further restrictions on the entire population of Gaza.

65. As the situation continued to deteriorate, the Council should ensure that all victims received a fair hearing and that all perpetrators were brought to justice. She urged the Council to address the abuses committed by Palestinian armed groups and security forces against Palestinians and Israeli civilians, and to consider the human rights violations committed by Israeli forces. The Israeli Government should cooperate with the Council, and both the Israeli Government and the Palestinian Authority should stop placing conditions on their readiness to discuss respect for human rights in the Council.

66. Mr. PARY (Indian Movement "Tupaj Amaru") said that the Palestinian people continued to be martyred and victimized by Israel, with the complicity of Western Powers. Having received a vast arsenal from the United States, Israel had become one of the most dangerous States in the Middle East. Israel had further jeopardized peace and security by taking military action against the Syrian Arab Republic and threatening the Islamic Republic of Iran. The genocide that Israel had committed against Palestinians who had tried to defend their lives and their ancestral lands constituted a crime against humanity. There would be no peace or justice until the Palestinian people could exercise their right to self-determination and proclaim their own independent sovereign State with East Jerusalem as its capital.

67. Mr. KHOURI (Union of Arab Jurists) said that the Palestinian people were being deprived of the right to self-determination and the right to life. Israel's human rights violations were accompanied by other heinous crimes, such as the commission of genocide in Palestinian refugee

camps and cities. Israel's use of force against civilians was not a way to ensure a just peace; the real solution instead lay in Israel's renunciation of its policy of domination. For that reason, the Council must condemn such violations and focus its efforts on ending the occupation.

68. Mr. NETTER (B'nai B'rith International) said that the Council's decision to place the question of Palestine as the only country-specific item on its agenda seriously undermined the Council's credibility. It had been hoped that the new Council would end the habit of singling out the only democratic country in the Middle East for repeated condemnation. That country had accountability systems, as well as mechanisms for investigating and redressing human rights violations. In its condemnation of Israel, the Council was neither alleviating the plight of the Palestinian people, nor supporting the difficult negotiations between the two main parties to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.