



# General Assembly

Official Records

## Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

**380<sup>th</sup>** meeting

Tuesday, 29 November 2016, 10 a.m.  
New York

*Chair:* Mr. Seck . . . . . (Senegal)

*The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.*

*In the absence of the Chair, Mr. Djani (Indonesia),  
Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

### International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People

**The Acting Chair:** Today we are gathered here for a special meeting to observe the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, in accordance with the provisions of resolution 32/40 B, of 2 December 1977.

It is my honour and pleasure to welcome His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson, President of the General Assembly; His Excellency Mr. Fodé Seck, President of the Security Council; His Excellency Mr. Jan Eliasson, Deputy Secretary-General and representative of the Secretary-General; His Excellency Mr. Riyad Mansour, Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations and representative of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas at this meeting; His Excellency Mr. Amrith Rohan Perera, Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka and Chair of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and other Arabs of the Occupied Territories; and His Excellency Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs.

I wish also to welcome representatives of Member States, colleagues, intergovernmental organizations

and representatives of civil society organizations, and all those who have accepted the invitation of the Committee to participate in this special meeting. Our special thanks also go to Ms. Suhad Babaa, Executive Director of Just Vision, who has kindly accepted the invitation of our Committee to participate in this meeting and to deliver a message on behalf of civil society organizations active on the question of Palestine.

At this point, allow me to make a statement on behalf of the Committee.

Once again, we are gathered here today to observe the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. As we all know, on 29 November 1947, the General Assembly adopted resolution 181 (II), which came to be known as the partition resolution. Back then, nobody would have imagined that 69 years later we would still be reminding the world of the Palestinian people's need for freedom and an independent State of Palestine, adjacent to the State of Israel, which came into being and gained its independence a few months after that resolution was adopted.

What resolution 181 (II) called for was Palestinian self-determination, independence and sovereignty. Those rights are inalienable to any people in the world. Since 1947, most colonies have realized that right, gained independence and are now vibrant nations in control of their land and natural resources. However, nearly seven decades later, we are still here, compelled to express our unwavering solidarity with the Palestinian people and our support for those rights, and to call for their

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (<http://documents.un.org>).

16-40525 (E)



Accessible document

Please recycle



long-overdue fulfilment as we are faced with the reality that resolution 181 (II) was not fully implemented and that the Palestinian people have not only been denied their rights but have endured the cruelty and misery of nearly half a century of foreign occupation.

The Israeli occupation, which is being imposed in grave violation of international humanitarian law, specifically the Fourth Geneva Convention, has had a negative impact on all aspects of Palestinian life and denied Palestinians the equality they are entitled to — first and foremost, equality of treatment and respect for their basic right to life, safety, movement and freedom, but also their economic, social and cultural rights under international human rights law. The Israeli occupying forces continue to carry out summary executions, night raids, arbitrary arrests and prolonged detentions without trial, with more than 7,000 Palestinians, including children, now imprisoned or detained. A parallel legal system makes Palestinians inferior in law and in practice. Israel also continues to exploit the natural resources of the occupied Palestinian territory, further denying its inhabitants their right to development, in defiance of international human rights and humanitarian law.

In the occupied West Bank, including in East Jerusalem, Palestinian land continues to be confiscated. Palestinian homes and other structures are being demolished daily and at unprecedented rates, and construction of illegal settlements continues at a faster pace than ever before. There are 750,000 Israelis who have been illegally transferred to the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and have settled there. The two-State solution based on the 1967 borders has not just been steadily eroded, it is in extreme peril.

Provocations and incitement continue, especially with regard to holy sites in occupied East Jerusalem, as well as in Hebron, risking further dangerous destabilization. Moreover, attempts continue to limit Palestinian Muslims and Christians' freedom to worship, violating that basic human right.

Freedom of movement continues to be severely obstructed by a network of roadblocks and checkpoints dividing Palestinian cities, towns and villages. This fragmentation has been severely compounded by the construction of the wall, whose route was declared contrary to international law by the International Court

of Justice in its 2004 advisory opinion (see A/ES-10/273).

The Gaza Strip has endured three deadly and destructive conflicts in the past six years, in addition to an illegal blockade, which continues to be imposed by Israel in collective punishment of the entire Palestinian civilian population there. With unemployment at more than 65 per cent for young people, the de-development of the Gaza Strip makes economic progress and stability a distant dream and further diminishes hope among an already-marginalized population in despair.

A 14-year-old Palestinian girl asked a senior United Nations official visiting Gaza why human rights did not apply to Palestinians. We, the international community, must ask the same question and examine whether our actions are enabling double standards. Why have we advocated for respect for human rights and the rule of law in all other conflict situations while allowing this occupation to continue with impunity for almost 50 years? There can be no justification or excuse for this continued inaction. The responsibilities and legal obligations of the international community are clear. Immediate, serious, urgent steps must be taken to redress this injustice.

More than 60 per cent of the population of Palestine is under 25 years old — born after the signing of the Oslo Accords. We, the international community, told them that choosing non-violence and dialogue would bring about the end of the conflict. The international community guaranteed that a two-State solution was near and that the Palestinian people would be able to determine their future and lives in freedom, security and dignity in their own State. We promised that development and prosperity were around the corner. Recently, we declared that attaining the Sustainable Development Goals was possible and a goal for every people in the world.

The international community and this Organization have an unpaid debt. We owe Palestinian youth the freedom they deserve. We owe Israeli youth a future without the moral and political burden of this inhumane occupation. We owe Palestinians and Israelis a future together, coexisting side by side in peace and security. We owe the Middle East region a more peaceful, stable and prosperous future.

Even on this day of solidarity, we, the international community in this United Nations that we so cherish, must go beyond solidarity. We must give meaning to the

principles of United Nations resolutions and collectively and resolutely implement them with the aim of ending this conflict and making peace a reality. We must act forthwith to end the Israeli occupation of Palestine and fulfil the promise of resolution 181 (II).

The Committee urges the Security Council to uphold its responsibilities for peace and security and ensure that the Palestinian people can finally enjoy freedom, independence and protection in a sovereign, independent and viable State. For its part, our Committee intends to implement an intensive programme of activities in 2017 as an international year to end the Israeli occupation, with a view to reaching a just and lasting solution to this conflict.

Let us all move forward on the basis of the long-standing terms of reference and parameters, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid principles and the Arab Peace Initiative, to resolve this prolonged and tragic conflict, establishing a State of Palestine based on the 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital, living in peace and security adjacent to a State of Israel, with arrangements for the holy sites in Jerusalem to be accessible to people of all religions and with a just solution for the Palestine refugees in accordance with resolution 194 (III).

On 15 November 1988, Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish and Palestinian professor Edward Said wrote a statement that was adopted by the Palestinian National Council and later proclaimed by the late Yasser Arafat, then Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization, as the Palestinian Declaration of Independence. Let me quote from the Declaration:

“The State of Palestine, in declaring that it is a peace-loving State committed to the principles of peaceful coexistence, shall strive, together with all other States and peoples, for the achievement of a lasting peace based on justice and respect for rights, under which the human potential for constructive activity may flourish”.

Let us make the Palestinian Declaration of Independence a reality in 2017, the year we will strive to end the Israeli occupation and so create a new, peaceful reality for Palestine, Israel and the entire Middle East.

I now have the honour to give the floor to the President of the General Assembly, Mr. Peter Thomson.

**Mr. Thomson** (President of the General Assembly): I thank the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable

Rights of the Palestinian People for organizing this special meeting on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. I commend the Committee for its work over the past four decades, and in particular the past year, to raise awareness of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory and the challenges facing the Palestinian people.

As we meet today, we do so one year on from the raising of the flag of the State of Palestine at United Nations Headquarters, one year on from the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and one year out from marking 50 years since the occupation of Palestinian territory. In many ways, it is an opportune time to reflect on global progress in realizing the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

Since 1967, the United Nations has repeatedly affirmed the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention to the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and the illegality of the Israeli settlements there. And yet to this day settlements continue to be expanded, Palestinian homes continue to be demolished, people continue to be subjected to arbitrary arrest and detention and Palestinian families continue to be evicted and displaced from East Jerusalem. It is a situation that the United Nations is gravely concerned about, and one that must be rectified urgently and in strict compliance with international law.

Building lasting and sustainable peace in the Middle East is fundamental to our efforts to realize the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and ensure that they are able to enjoy lives of dignity, opportunity, prosperity and equality. However, the pursuit of peace has been hampered by continuing terror attacks on civilians and brutal acts of violence by both sides. The ongoing blockade of the Gaza Strip has had devastating humanitarian consequences, leaving many Palestinians dependent on international aid. Those actions do not contribute to the realization of peace. Rather, they serve to increase tension, undermine hard-won trust and contradict the aim of achieving a two-State solution, with the establishment of a State of Palestine living side by side with the State of Israel in peace and security.

I urge Israeli and Palestinian leaders to de-escalate tensions, refrain from violence and provocations and avoid incitement and polarizing rhetoric that pushes peace further out of reach. I also call on all relevant parties to reinvigorate their efforts to support the Middle East peace process in order to achieve a two-

State solution within recognized borders based on the pre-1967 lines.

When the world's leaders came together last year to adopt the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, they aimed to transform our world, including by building peaceful and inclusive societies, eliminating extreme poverty, empowering women and girls, addressing inequalities and protecting the health of our shared planet. It was a universal master plan that recognized the fundamental linkages between the realization of peace, human rights and sustainable development. It was also based on the principle of leaving no one behind — a global commitment that requires all of us to ensure that development gains reach the most vulnerable, including those living under foreign occupation. As part of global efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda, we must therefore see the Sustainable Development Goals as an important tool for realizing the inalienable rights of the Palestinian People and ensuring that the transformative potential of the Sustainable Development Goals reaches them.

It has been more than four decades since this Committee was established in response to the lack of progress in realizing the inalienable rights of Palestinian People, including the right to self-determination without external interference, the right to national independence and sovereignty and the right to return to homes from which they had been displaced. Yet many of those rights remain unfulfilled today. Let us therefore take the opportunity of today's observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People to reflect on the tragic loss of life, liberty, livelihood, property, culture and rights that has occurred; to be reminded of the urgent need for a peaceful, comprehensive, just and lasting solution to be found; and to call on the international community to redouble its efforts to support credible endeavours to peacefully end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

**The Acting Chair:** I thank the President of the General Assembly for his inspiring remarks. The Committee is thankful for his stewardship of the Assembly in dealing with the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory and in the Middle East as a whole.

I now have the honour to give the floor to the President of the Security Council, Mr. Fodé Seck.

**Mr. Seck** (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank the Committee for the invitation to the Security Council to participate in this ceremony to

commemorate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. It gives us an opportunity to reaffirm our active solidarity with the Palestinian people as we come to — as of June 2017 — 50 years of occupation of the Palestinian territory.

It is an honour for Senegal to speak, through me, on behalf of the Security Council in order to take stock of the efforts the Council has undertaken in 2016 to promote a just and lasting resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Month after month, the Secretary-General and his Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative to the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority have regularly warned the Security Council about the growing obstacles to peace in the Middle East.

Sadly, this year, the International Day of Solidarity once again coincides with extremely worrying developments on the ground. Must we be reminded that at least 238 Palestinians and 30 Israelis, many of them children, have lost their lives since the violence began again in October 2015? I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate our rejection and condemnation of violence and terrorism, regardless of their perpetrators or their motives. Added to that we see the continued and accelerated construction of settlement colonies and the growing humanitarian needs in the Gaza Strip, all of it in a context marked by the absence of any clear political direction.

Besides the quarterly open debates, the first of which, in January (see S/PV.7610), was held at ministerial level, on 12 July 2016 the Security Council devoted an open meeting (see S/PV.7736) to a discussion of the report of the Quartet on the situation on the ground, published on 1 July 2016 in accordance with the Quartet's Munich statement of 12 February. While the Quartet's report was not an exhaustive analysis of the political, legal, humanitarian and security aspects of the conflict, it was nonetheless able to identify serious threats to peace and make significant recommendations for a two-State solution that are worthy of consideration. We urge the parties to fulfil their commitments to that solution by ending colonization, with a view to reaching a definitive solution to their disputes that responds both to Israel's security needs and to the Palestinians legitimate aspiration to be a sovereign State.

In the meantime, I would like to echo the Quartet's appeal to the Government of Israel to implement existing agreements aimed at transferring control to



the Palestinian Authority, particularly in Area C, in order to resolve the outstanding issues of housing, access to water, power supplies, communications, agriculture and natural resources. I would also like to reiterate the Quartet's appeal to both sides to work to reduce tensions by showing restraint in word and deed. They should also take the necessary steps to prevent violence and protect civilians and their property. I take this opportunity to reiterate our hope that, despite the reports, the local elections will be held throughout Palestinian territory and can reopen a pathway to reconciliation between the political stakeholders and to the formation of a Government of national unity that respects the principles of the Quartet and is in line with the Cairo agreement and based on the Palestine Liberation Organization's platform.

The difficult humanitarian situation in Gaza, where, in a population of about 2 million people, 70 per cent are in need of aid, has also been a focus of the Security Council's attention. Despite the efforts that have been made, particularly by the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism, three fourths of the housing in Gaza still needs repair, partly because only 1 per cent of the commitments made at the Cairo donor conference have been disbursed. In that regard, at the request of a number of Council members, from now on the humanitarian situation in the occupied territory will be considered at the Council's monthly briefings on the Middle East, including Palestine. The Palestinian community is in a difficult situation, mainly as a result of the occupation but also because of the decrease in humanitarian assistance from international partners. We appreciate the efforts of humanitarian actors in helping Palestinian refugees, particularly the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. I would like to take this opportunity to urge Member States to continue to support the Agency, and in that regard I welcome Canada's return as a contributor with an initial donation of \$25 million.

At the initiative of five Security Council members — Angola, Egypt, Malaysia, Senegal and Venezuela — the Council held two Arria Formula meetings, on 6 May and 14 October, devoted respectively to the issues of international protection for the Palestinian people and illegal settlements as an obstacle to peace and a two-State solution. Besides the continuing efforts of the Quartet, the Security Council has also taken note of the French peace initiative for the Middle East aimed at breathing new life into the

peace process, through, among other things, a stimulus package based on previous platforms such as the Madrid principles, the Oslo Accords, the Quartet road map and the Arab Peace Initiative. Diplomatic efforts have also been launched by Egypt and the Russian Federation, and all of those initiatives would benefit from further coordination.

Lastly, as a guarantor of international peace and security, the Security Council has a duty to continue and intensify its efforts to arrive at a definitive solution to these disputes, which are likely to fuel terrorism and violent extremism, a global threat that extends well beyond the region of the Middle East.

**The Acting Chair:** I would like to thank the President of the Security Council, who is also the Chair of our Committee, for his important statement, which once again affirms that the Council remains fully committed to a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East, based on a vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security.

I now give the floor to the Deputy Secretary-General.

**The Deputy Secretary-General:** I would like to thank you, Sir, for guiding us through this important meeting.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not just one of the many conflicts in the region and the world. It is in many ways a long-standing gaping wound that has fed tension and conflict throughout the Middle East and beyond. For nearly a century, divisions, violence and strains on trust have arisen from the conflicting goals, identities and aspirations involved.

As the Secretary-General and I near the end of our tenure, at the end of next month, we believe it is worth reflecting openly and honestly on the achievements of the past decade, but also on its missed opportunities. The institution- and capacity-building programme of the State of Palestine, supported by the international community and not least by this key Committee, has undoubtedly been a notable advance. We must protect what has been accomplished and continue to support efforts to meet the needs of all Palestinians in a future State. The admission of Palestine to the United Nations in 2012 as a non-member observer State was a historic milestone. Today, 137 States recognize the State of Palestine. Its flag flies at United Nations Headquarters here in New York and in regional offices across the

globe. Those are unquestionably important symbols. But I am sure that the Committee agrees that they will have true significance only if we see progress in ending the Israeli occupation and resulting in two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security.

Sadly, in many ways the past 10 years can be described as a lost decade for Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking. If the stalemate continues or deepens, a two-State solution may well slip out of reach. A decade after Gaza's takeover by Hamas — whose violent actions against Israel we condemn — its people remain separated from the West Bank. Despite numerous initiatives and the formation of a Palestinian Government of national consensus, the divide continues to run deep. After three violent conflicts and crippling restrictions imposed by Israel, 2 million Palestinians in Gaza are struggling with crumbling infrastructure and a paralysed economy. Tens of thousands are still displaced while awaiting the reconstruction of homes destroyed. Gaza remains a humanitarian catastrophe. The economic and environmental toll continues to ravage lives and undermine peace and stability. In 2012, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East warned that Gaza could become unlivable by 2020. Its unemployment rate is one of the highest in the world, and is particularly severe among young people. Reconstruction has been dangerously slow, and donor pledges have not fully materialized. As I mentioned, infrastructure is crippled and even water is not available to all.

Meanwhile, the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, has become more entrenched. The continuing policy of settlement construction, as well as the designation of land exclusively for Israeli use, seriously erodes the viability of a two-State solution. To that we should add the fact that this year the number of demolitions by Israeli forces of Palestinian houses and other structures has doubled compared to 2015.

Israeli and Palestinian leaders still voice support for a two-State solution. However, if urgent steps are not taken to revive a political perspective, they risk entrenching a one-State reality of perpetual occupation and conflict, which is clearly incompatible with the national aspirations of both peoples. The past 10 years have witnessed two unsuccessful attempts to negotiate a peaceful settlement, three armed conflicts, thousands of deaths — the vast majority of them among Palestinian civilians — rampant incitement, terror attacks, thousands of rockets fired at Israel from Gaza,

and expanding Israeli settlements. All of that has led to growing anger and frustration among Palestinians and profound disillusionment among Israelis. It has strengthened radicals and weakened moderates on both sides. The calls for non-violence and peace risk being overwhelmed by increasingly extremist messages.

At the same time, we must also admit that there is a dangerous vacuum within the international community. So many other crises on the doorsteps and desks of our leaders cry out for attention and action in today's world. Yet we cannot afford to shy away from the Israeli-Palestinian arena. Gaza remains a time bomb. Jerusalem could turn into a powder keg. The internal divisions in the West Bank add a new dimension to the paralysing lack of Palestinian unity, which could ultimately undermine democracy and the rule of law. World leaders have stated time and again that the situation is unsustainable. With the Israeli occupation approaching its fiftieth year, the international community must make it clear that it remains committed to achieving dignity and self-determination for millions of Palestinians.

To our Israeli friends, I say that we recognize their legitimate security concerns. But holding another people occupied for half a century undermines the values and strength of Israel's democratic society, which Israelis have a right to be proud of. To our Palestinian friends, I say that we recognize their legitimate grievances and the grave injustices they have faced. But nothing justifies terror, violence and incitement, and unity among Palestinians must be restored. To both, I say that their historic and religious bonds with their shared land are undeniable and must be the basis of any future agreement.

The outlines of a peace agreement are well known. The steps required to end the stalemate and get the political process back on track are not new or revolutionary. They have also been spelled out in the recent report of the Middle East Quartet. The United Nations, as well as our partners in the Quartet, remains committed to working with key stakeholders, including countries in the region, to implement the report's recommendations, rebuild trust between the parties and create conditions conducive to meaningful negotiations. We also welcome the recent initiatives by the French and Russian Governments. We invite Israel and Palestine to work together with us to revive the stalled peace process.

It is with a sense of profound sadness that the Secretary-General will leave office without seeing an end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He has visited the region 11 times, including in time of war, to see the situation at first hand, help negotiate ceasefires and push the peace process forward. He will cover the issue and his persistent efforts to make peace in a special report to the Security Council later this month. We are certain that Mr. António Guterres, the Secretary-General-designate, will build on those efforts. We wish him success in helping to achieve a lasting solution to this tragic conflict.

On this International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, let us all reaffirm our commitment to upholding the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to a just peace and the establishment of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in security and mutual recognition and respect.

**The Acting Chair:** I thank the Deputy Secretary-General for his important remarks and for his call to both the Israeli and Palestinian peoples to find a solution. I would like to express the Committee's appreciation for the 10 years of work he has put into this as well, and to ask the Deputy Secretary-General to convey to the Secretary-General our encouragement of his personal efforts to promote a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine.

I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations.

**Mr. Mansour** (Palestine): Before I deliver my statement on behalf of President Abbas, I would like to do two things. First, we the Palestinian people would of course like to express our gratitude to those who stand with us and, on this solemn day, express their solidarity with us. In return, I would like to say that we do not forget our friends.

On this occasion, on behalf of the Palestinian people and their leadership, I would also like to offer our condolences to the people and the Government of Cuba on their loss of a great friend of the Palestinian people, Comandante Fidel Castro. I would like, through you, Sir, to ask those present at this meeting to stand for a minute of silence to show respect for Mr. Castro's passing.

**The Acting Chair:** I now invite the members of the Committee to stand and observe a minute of silence.

*The members of the Committee observed a minute of silence.*

**The Acting Chair:** I once again give the floor to the Permanent Observer of Palestine.

**Mr. Mansour** (Palestine): The second thing I have to say, if I may, is addressed to President Abbas and all of my brothers and sisters who are convening the seventh national conference of Fatah in Ramallah, as we are meeting today to commemorate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. I would like to salute them from this Chamber and wish them great success with the conference in Ramallah over the next few days.

It is an honour to read out a statement from His Excellency Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine and Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization, on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

*(spoke in Arabic)*

"It gives me great pleasure to convey to the Committee the greetings of the Palestinian people, who appreciate its efforts and support on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, so as to enable them to exercise their right to self-determination and end the Israeli occupation of the land of the State of Palestine, so that our people can live in freedom and dignity in their own country, like all other peoples across the globe. Is that too much to ask?"

"This year, 2017, will mark the centennial of the Balfour Declaration of 1917 and the fiftieth anniversary of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the seventieth anniversary of Al-Nakba, the catastrophe that befell the Palestinian people in 1948.

"In 1988, the Palestinian National Council declared that it would abide by the international rule of law and United Nations resolutions. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, made a historical compromise and sacrifice by agreeing to establish the State of Palestine on the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

“We reiterate our commitment to the agreements concluded with Israel since 1993, but that commitment must be honoured by Israel. In addition, Israel must recognize the State of Palestine, work towards solving all final status issues, cease its settlement activities and put an end to its attacks and aggression against our cities, villages and refugee camps, as well as its policies of collective punishment, arrest and detention of thousands of Palestinian prisoners in its jails.

“Israel is pursuing its occupation of East Jerusalem and its actions to alter the identity and character of the city. It is persisting in attempts aimed at distorting reality in order to mislead and intimidate the international community through attacks on the United Nations and its organs, including the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, which is dedicated to protecting and preserving the cultural heritage in Jerusalem and the rest of the world. Israel is trying to create confusion between matters of religion and those of cultural and human heritage, so as to advance its occupation and colonial expansion, as well as its attacks on Christian and Muslim holy sites in occupied East Jerusalem. The essence of the conflict is purely political, not religious.

“We reaffirm our respect for the Jewish religion. There is no animosity between us and the Jewish faith and its followers. Our animosity is towards the Israeli occupation of our land. We seek a just and lasting solution to the conflict, based on the vision of two States within the 1967 borders — Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security and enjoying good-neighbourly relations. We want a Jerusalem open for worship to the followers of the three monotheistic religions, based on the historic status quo.

“We stress that the illegal Israeli practices and policies of settlement construction and expansion on the land of the State of Palestine are entrenching a one-State reality of an apartheid nature, instead of consolidating the pillars of just and lasting peace, based on United Nations resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative. The Initiative stipulates the need to first end the Israeli occupation, because any regional cooperation that ignores the Palestinian cause and the need to end the Israeli occupation of our land will be doomed. Furthermore, bringing about a solution to the conflict will help remove the

pretexts used by extremists and terrorist groups, thus contributing to spreading peace and security in the region for the sake of all its peoples.

“For our part, we continue to extend our hand in peace and to call on the international community to uphold its responsibilities, which include adopting a Security Council resolution to end settlement activities — the main obstacle and the greatest threat to the achievement of peace. We also call on it to provide international protection to our people. We call for the early convening of an international peace conference and the setting up of an international mechanism and a time frame for ending the Israeli occupation. We also call on States that have not yet done so to recognize the State of Palestine as an expression of their support for the Palestinian people’s right to self-determination and as an investment in a two-State solution and in peace. We hope that our efforts to achieve full membership of the State of Palestine in the United Nations will also receive support.

“Allow me to take this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude to all the countries that have recognized the State of Palestine and to all those who support the just Palestinian cause through their votes in the United Nations and other international forums on many important resolutions concerning the question of Palestine. We also highly value their support for efforts to achieve just peace in our region and the world.

“Today we reaffirm our gratitude to civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations, all brothers and friends and all freedom- and peace-loving peoples across the world that have stood by the side of the Palestinian people. We appreciate their solidarity and support of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and their legitimate national aspirations, including freedom, independence and a just and lasting peace.

“Achieving a historic reconciliation between Palestinians and Israelis requires that Israel acknowledge its responsibility for Al-Nakba, which befell the Palestinian people, and whose impact and consequences are still felt today, and it also requires putting an end to the Israeli occupation, which will open the door for peace and will contribute to stability at the regional and international levels.



“Peace requires ending the historical injustice that has been inflicted on our people from the time of the Balfour Declaration to the present day. The United Kingdom should acknowledge the sin it committed when it issued the Balfour Declaration and should recognize the State of Palestine. The Security Council must uphold its obligations and ensure that Israel complies with United Nations resolutions. Israel has a long record of non-compliance and violations in that regard, starting with General Assembly resolution 181 (II), which is founded on the concept of a two-State solution. Instead, Israel acquired Jerusalem, and the territory that the resolution intended for the State of Palestine, by force.

“We are working hard to create a free and democratic State, and to uphold the principles of transparency and accountability and the rule of law; to protect and strengthen women’s rights, equality and non-discrimination on ethnic or religious grounds; and to spread a culture of peace, tolerance and dialogue. We have demonstrated, particularly in recent years, the State of Palestine’s commitment to international law and to taking a more active role in the international instruments to which it is party. In exercising our right to resist occupation, we have chosen peaceful and legal means to achieve our inalienable rights. We are determined to preserve the unity of our people and our land, and we are working actively to lift the inhumane and unjust Israeli blockade of our people in the Gaza Strip while persisting with our reconstruction efforts. We are also pursuing the establishment of a Government of national unity that will function based on the programme of the PLO and on the holding of presidential and parliamentary elections.

“The question of Palestine has been a standing item and a priority on the United Nations agenda since the Organization’s inception. Its resolutions and recommendations on the issue form a solid foundation that cannot be ignored if we are to achieve a just and lasting peace. We would like to affirm its continued responsibility regarding the question of Palestine until a comprehensive solution is found, in accordance with international law, the relevant United Nations resolutions and the principles of justice. In that regard, we greatly appreciate the efforts of the Secretary-General,

the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and its Chair, and the members of the Bureau and all the Committee’s members and observers, as well as those of the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat and the entire United Nations system. We particularly value the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, which requires the support of Member States to enable it to continue to fulfil the important mandate entrusted to it, and of the many other agencies that provide support to the Palestinian people and work to help them realize their rights.

“The State of Palestine will continue to act out of its deep sense of responsibility in the service of the Palestinian people and to uphold its legal responsibilities and international obligations. We have always striven to achieve peace in good faith. In that regard, we will continue to work to accede to international agencies and conventions in order to safeguard and promote the rights of the Palestinian people and to enhance the pillars and universality of international law. And we will continue to defend our people by all legal and peaceful means available.

“In conclusion, I would like to thank the Committee for its noble solidarity and its efforts to make 2017 not just a year marking the fiftieth anniversary of the occupation of the land of the State of Palestine, including East Jerusalem, but an international year to end the Israeli occupation and to intensify our concerted, collective efforts to ensure that the Palestinian people can achieve freedom and independence and that peace can prevail in our whole region.”

**The Acting Chair:** I would like to ask Ambassador Mansour to convey our sincere thanks and greetings to President Abbas for his important message. I would also like to assure President Abbas and, through him, the Palestinian people, of the Committee’s firm commitment to continuing its efforts, as mandated by the General Assembly, with a view to promoting a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine.

On behalf of the Committee, I would like to once again thank the President of the General Assembly, the Deputy Secretary-General and the President of the

Security Council for their presence and contribution to today's meeting.

I now give the floor to Mr. Amrith Rohan Perera, Chair of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories.

**Mr. Perera** (Sri Lanka), Chair of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories: I am honoured to take the floor today to commemorate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mr. Fodé Seck, Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, for his kind invitation to address today's special meeting in my capacity as Chair of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories.

The International Day of Solidarity reminds us of the urgent need to find a just and peaceful solution to the question of Palestine and, most importantly, to address the plight of the Palestinian people — in particular its women and children — and to provide for their humanitarian needs.

Earlier this year in Oman, civil-society representatives, victims and witnesses of Israeli practices affecting the human rights of the Palestinian people, as well as Palestinian and United Nations officials, briefed the Special Committee on the situation of human rights within the occupied Palestinian territories and occupied Syrian Golan. These briefings and testimonies once again brought to the attention of the Committee the daily violence and humiliation suffered by Palestinian men, women and children, whose every aspect of life continues to be controlled by the unlawful occupation. Settlement expansion has had a direct impact on the escalation of violence in the occupied territories and has largely contributed to the increase in the number of civilian casualties, who include infants. The latest statistics from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs indicate that as of mid-October, 83 Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and eight in Gaza were killed by Israeli security forces in 2016. During the same period, 2,978 Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and 184 in Gaza were injured.

According to information presented to the Special Committee, many of those incidents involved attacks reported to have been perpetrated by young Palestinians or to have occurred during security raids of the homes of Palestinians suspected of involvement in them. However, a significant number were also reported to have taken place in the context of clashes between Palestinians and the occupying security forces. The numbers speak for themselves and illustrate the scale of the violence confronted on a daily basis by Palestinian men, women and children.

The Special Committee viewed the video footage of the March killing in Hebron of a Palestinian man, Abd Al-Fatah Al-Sharif. Sadly, it was not an isolated incident, but it was the most highly publicized, following the uploading of the video on YouTube. The Palestinian Commission of Detainees and Ex-Detainees has reported at least 17 separate cases of alleged extrajudicial executions, including of children, carried out by the occupying forces since October 2015. The Special Committee appeals to the parties concerned to act proportionally and with restraint, in accordance with the Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials.

We must remain deeply concerned about reports that dozens of families of Palestinians killed have been denied the right to a proper and dignified closure on the basis of so-called security concerns. While many of the bodies have now reportedly been released, conditions have been imposed in this area such as a ban on autopsies and limitations on funeral rites.

According to testimonies before the Special Committee, Israeli practices have also included State-sanctioned land seizures, the retroactive legalization of outposts, the demolition of Palestinian homes and livelihood structures, the denial of Palestinian building permits, restrictions on Palestinians' movements and access to livelihoods, and a lack of accountability for settler violence.

Year after year, for the best part of the half-century since the establishment of the Special Committee, the information received by the Committee has affirmed the trends and patterns of human rights violations associated with the occupation and its inextricable link to settlement enterprise. Since October 2015, Israeli authorities have also reportedly demolished or sealed at least 37 homes in order to punish relatives of Palestinians who have attacked Israelis or been suspected of such

attacks, leaving dozens of innocent Palestinian families and their children homeless and displaced. Such demolitions and other punitive practices constitute a form of collective punishment that is a clear breach of international law and must be stopped.

An emerging issue of particular concern brought to the attention of the Special Committee has been the threatening and intimidation of human rights defenders and non-governmental organizations, particularly local Palestinian and Israeli organizations, working to promote human rights in the occupied territories. The situation of Palestinian detainees, including women and children, continues to be a serious concern for the international community. The most recently reported statistics, as of August, suggest that there are an estimated 7,000 Palestinian detainees in Israeli custody, including 340 children under 18 years old, 56 female detainees and six members of the Palestinian Legislative Council. An estimated 700 Palestinians are reported to have been held under administrative detention without charge or trial for an indefinite period of time. These administrative detainees must either be released without delay, or promptly charged or prosecuted with all the judicial guarantees required by international human rights law and standards.

The report of the Special Committee (A/71/352) also covers the situation in Gaza, where Israel's land closure and naval blockade has now entered its tenth year. Two years after the most devastating escalation of hostilities, an estimated 85,000 Palestinians remained displaced. Reports indicate that there has been chronic de-development over the past nine years, with per capita income up to 30 per cent lower than in 2005. According to the report of the Special Committee, unemployment in Gaza stands at 38.4 per cent, with youth and women's unemployment at a staggering 60 per cent and 84 per cent respectively. The economic situation has not been helped by Palestine's state of energy dependence and Israel's exploitation of its natural resources, including oil and gas, an issue that is also covered in the report of the Special Committee.

While we here today pledge our solidarity to the people of Palestine, I wish to acknowledge with deep appreciation the work done by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and for the tireless efforts undertaken by the Agency to provide care and deliver vital human development services and emergency assistance to some 5.2 million Palestine refugees in all fields of operations

in the Gaza Strip, West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic since 1950. In the face of such misery, the support of UNRWA has been invaluable in maintaining schools and educational infrastructure in the occupied territories, which are of crucial importance in ensuring that Palestinian children and youth not only turn away from violence but can also have hope for the future, even in such dire circumstances.

As Chair of the Special Committee, I repeat the call for a just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine and an end to the suffering of the Palestinian people. Both parties to the conflict must create an environment conducive to peace. There is an urgent need for mutual confidence-building measures in support of the efforts to resume dialogue and substantive negotiations. Israel must protect the Palestinian civilian population in the occupied territories and refrain from actions that are contrary to the established rules of international law and practice.

We reiterate our support to the implementation of General Assembly resolutions regarding the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to statehood, and the attainment of a two-State solution based on the 1967 borders. We are encouraged by the fact that despite decades of disappointment, the people of Palestine have resolutely sustained their spirit and strength of purpose with a view to gaining their legitimate rights and have prevailed over the considerable challenges facing them. We hope that they will work together to preserve national unity, which is imperative for the creation of a fully sovereign, independent Palestine.

Every day the resilience and endurance of the people of Palestine inspire us. Surely they must also energize and motivate us to act now. This is not a fight they can fight alone. It is one we must fight together as a global community.

**The Acting Chair:** I thank Mr. Perera for his important statement. The Committee is very appreciative of the continuing contribution of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories to our meeting and of Sri Lanka's participation in the Committee's activities as an active observer.

I now have the pleasure to give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Henry Suárez Moreno, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the United Nations, who will read a

message from His Excellency Mr. Nicolás Maduro Moros, President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

**Mr. Suárez Moreno** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to take the floor at this important meeting on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (NAM), as we commemorate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

I wish to express my profound thanks to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for the crucial work that it has undertaken over the years to promote the just cause and the rights of the Palestinian people. NAM also wishes to extend its thanks to the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat and to the Commissioner-General and the staff of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), for their invaluable efforts to help alleviate the suffering and respond to the pleas of Palestinian refugees. I would also like to thank all of the United Nations bodies that have special programmes that provide assistance and support to the Palestinian people, in keeping with the ongoing responsibility of the United Nations with regard to the question of Palestine until that issue is resolved in all its aspects and in line with international law.

NAM firmly supports the observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, which provides a crucial opportunity to reflect on the ongoing injustice and grave situation endured by the people in the occupied Palestinian territories, including the West Bank, due in particular to the blockade of the Gaza Strip. After decades of the denial of their inalienable rights by Israel, the occupying Power; after almost half a century of foreign occupation, which has left the Palestinian people subject to flagrant and systematic violations of their human rights, in addition to indescribable suffering; and almost 70 years after the General Assembly adopted the Palestine Plan of Partition, which led to Al-Nakba in 1948 and the conflict that we continue to face today, it is clear that the Palestinian conflict is one of the most crucial and pressing crises in the Middle East. This Day of Solidarity is an opportunity to renew our shared commitment to achieving a fair and definitive solution to the question of Palestine and lasting peace in the Middle East.

Since the inception of the United Nations, the question of Palestine has been a recurring issue on its agenda. Almost seven decades have elapsed and the Palestinian people continue to be deprived of their inalienable rights, including their rights to self-determination and freedom. Nevertheless, the United Nations continues to work to ensure Palestinian independence and sovereignty. Despite decades of good-faith participation in peace efforts and commitments aimed at reaching a peaceful solution within the framework of international law, and despite the difficult commitments that have been made, the suffering of the Palestinian people has worsened on all fronts. The situation on the ground has also deteriorated dramatically, owing to Israel's continued illegal policies and practices. During the past year, those policies and practices have destabilized the situation even more, undermining all peace efforts and justice as a result.

The Security Council remains paralysed on the issue, despite its obligations under the Charter. The international community continues to witness the Israeli military occupation of Palestinian territory, in clear breach of international law and the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. During this unjust occupation, the occupying Power has continued to collectively oppress and punish the defenceless Palestinian population and commit serious violations of human rights, including war crimes. Among them are the use of military force against the civilian population, the colonization of Palestinian lands and the inhumane blockade of the Gaza Strip. NAM calls for measures to be taken in line with international law in order to redress the violations of the human rights of the Palestinian people. We also call for protection to be given to the Palestinian people while the occupation continues.

The illegal settlement activities undertaken by Israel continue to be an issue of serious concern for NAM. Israel, in flagrant breach of international law and while ignoring the views of the international community, has expanded its colonization of the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, and as a result has forcibly displaced thousands of Palestinian civilians in order to alter the demographic composition, legal and geographic nature of those territories in order to facilitate the de facto annexation of more Palestinian lands. Moreover, the construction and expansion of settlements and the wall, the confiscation of Palestinian lands, the demolition of Palestinian homes and



infrastructure, as well as the forced displacement of the Palestinian civilian population through such illegal means, harm the chances of achieving a peace based on the two-State solution. The viability of that solution is undermined on a daily basis by the occupying Power.

Moreover, the violence, terror, intimidation and harassment inflicted on Palestinians by extremist settlers, as well as the increased incitements and provocations against sacred sites, particularly in occupied East Jerusalem, have fueled tensions and religious sensitivities that may give rise to increasingly dangerous destabilization. NAM calls on the international community, particularly the Security Council, to take urgent practical measures to force the occupying Power to cease its settlement campaign and to comply with all obligations under international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention, United Nations resolutions, the Advisory Opinion and commitments under the road map to a permanent two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The Non-Aligned Movement urges that Israel's infamous and illegal blockade of the Gaza Strip be lifted and ended. The blockade, which constitutes collective punishment, has been in place for nine years and continues to seriously affect all aspects of the life of Palestinian civilians. It hinders the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip, which was devastated by Israeli occupying forces in 2014, and hampers economic recovery and development through its prevention of the normal, uninterrupted movement of persons and goods between the Gaza Strip and the outside world, including between Gaza and the West Bank.

It is unacceptable that Israel, the occupying Power, continues all such illegal and deplorable activities in both the occupied Palestinian territories and East Jerusalem, in flagrant impunity and despite the prohibition of such activities by international law. The international community should step up, coordinate its efforts and ensure accountability in order to compel Israel to put an immediate end to its illegal policies and work for peace. The solidarity of the international community with the just Palestinian cause should also be aligned with all relevant efforts to support the independence and sovereignty of the Palestinian people throughout their territory, which has been occupied by Israel since 1967 and has East Jerusalem as its capital. The international community should also support Palestine's entry as a full member of the United Nations.

In September, during the seventeenth NAM Summit on Margarita Island, Venezuela, NAM's Heads of State and Government — given the lack of significant progress in the peace process in the Middle East, which has been stalled despite decades of negotiation — highlighted the pressing need to move the Middle East peace process forward on the firm basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions as well as other recent major initiatives.

In conclusion, on this important day, the Non-Aligned Movement reaffirms its unstinting commitment to ensuring a fair and comprehensive solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, with the Palestinian issue as a key element; to immediately restoring the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination; and to ensuring an independent, contiguous and viable Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and a fair solution for Palestinian refugees, on the basis of General Assembly resolution 194 (III). That will guarantee the peace that the international community and the Palestinian people have long yearned for and are committed to.

**The Acting Chair:** I thank His Excellency Mr. Suárez Moreno and ask him to convey to His Excellency Mr. Nicolás Maduro Moros, President of Venezuela, the sincere thanks of the Committee for his important statement in his capacity as Chair of the Non-Aligned Movement.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Tété António, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations, who will read out a message from Her Excellency Ms. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma.

**Mr. António** (African Union): Let me start by congratulating His Excellency Ambassador Fodé Seck, Permanent Representative of Senegal, for his leadership in steering the work of this important United Nations body, and thanking all involved in maintaining the tradition of this meeting to commemorate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. It is indeed an opportunity to raise awareness among the international community about the unresolved question of Palestine and to reiterate our full and strong support to the Palestinian people in realizing their inalienable right to self-determination as soon as possible.

I would now like to convey to the Committee the following message of solidarity and support from

Ms. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, Chairperson of the African Union Commission.

“Since its inception, the Organization of the African Unity and later the African Union (AU) has defended the cause of Palestine, making it a priority on the agenda of all Heads of State and Government Summits.

“The African Union has extended its full support to our sisters and brothers in Palestine, and has adopted many decisions and resolutions that stress the urgency of achieving without delay an end to the Israeli occupation and a just, lasting and comprehensive peace agreement leading to the establishment of an independent and viable Palestinian State within pre-1967 borders.

“Regrettably, as we meet today, the path towards a durable peace remains bleak. We continue to helplessly witness the continuation of the Israeli occupation and the intensification of its illegal settlement activities and the related violence. These illegal actions have undermined all regional and international efforts to revive the peace process in a manner that upholds the internationally recognized parameters.

“The lack of implementation of the countless resolutions reaffirming the right of Palestinians to statehood has compounded the conflict over decades and inflicted grave hardships on the Palestinian people.

“The African Union strongly condemns all Israeli settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territories, as well as all acts of violence against civilians and attacks targeting religious sites. The AU is also gravely concerned about the critical situation of the Palestinian refugees who continue to face serious protection challenges due to ongoing occupation, armed conflict and displacement.

“The African Union reiterates its rejection and condemnation of the land and sea blockade imposed on the Gaza Strip and calls for the opening of all crossing points to allow the free movement of persons and goods.

“While we voice here our strong and unanimous desire to see the conclusion of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, we must never forget that we all have a permanent responsibility to the

Palestinian people that must be upheld until this question is satisfactorily resolved in all its aspects in accordance with international law and the principles of justice.

“It is our firm conviction that peace cannot be achieved in the Middle East without the international community, and the Security Council in particular, taking a firm and courageous stand to end the occupation of the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel since 1967 and enable the Palestinian people to exercise their right to self-determination and establish their independent State with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

“It is the moral and legal duty of the international community to protect civilians and put an end to the illegal occupation of the Palestinian territories.”

**The Acting Chair:** I thank His Excellency Mr. Tété António for conveying the important message of the African Union, which is a valuable partner of our Committee.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Agshin Mehdiyev, Permanent Observer of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to the United Nations, who will read out a message from His Excellency Mr. Yousef Al-Othaimeen, Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

**Mr. Mehdiyev** (Organization of Islamic Cooperation): We commemorate today the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People in accordance with General Assembly resolution 32/40 B, of 1977, which expressed the will of the world's countries and peoples with regard to the need for justice and solidarity with the Palestinian people in their just struggle to regain their inalienable national rights.

I would like to express the profound appreciation of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) for the role undertaken by the United Nations Committee for the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. We commend the tireless efforts of the Chair, Ambassador Fodé Seck; the Bureau and the members and observers of the Committee; the Division for Palestinian Rights; the United Nations Secretariat; and all United Nations bodies to promote international solidarity with the Palestinian people and support their legitimate national rights.

The OIC has been following the serious developments on the Palestinian issue with profound

interest and concern. Israel, the occupying Power, continues its aggression and mounting violations against the unarmed Palestinian people and their land and holy places. This year we have seen a surge in Israeli occupation crimes, including the burning of families and places of worship, extrajudicial killings of Palestinians, the arrest of thousands and the demolition of houses and blockades, in addition to other constant violations and irrational practices that arrogantly ignore the principles of international law and respect for human rights. Such behaviour demands that the international community assume its responsibility to provide international protection for the Palestinian people.

We should not bring up current developments without mentioning the gravity of what is happening in occupied East Jerusalem and its environs, in terms of Israel's illegal measures and systematic policies aimed at altering the city's indigenous Palestinian character and isolating it from its Palestinian surroundings. We have warned time and again of the danger of the continuing Israeli attacks on Islamic and Christian holy sites, especially the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque, which constitute an unprecedented provocation of the feelings of Muslims all over the world. They could turn the conflict into a religious one whose consequences would be borne by Israel alone.

Moreover, the Israeli settlement policy is still dismembering the occupied Palestinian territory and undermining the vision of a two-State solution. It also constitutes an assault on the rights of the Palestinian people to their land and destiny and is the reason for the failure of the political path of negotiations. It also embodies a challenge to the international will and is a flagrant violation of international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions. As such, it is incumbent on the international community to join forces to put an end to it.

The plight of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli detention centres is an ongoing denial of justice and a crime in the form of the most inhuman and unjust practice committed by the Israeli occupation against the Palestinian prisoners. We therefore reaffirm our commitment to those prisoners and our steadfast support of their message. We call for the international community to act effectively to defend their basic rights and internationalize the case in order to compel Israel, the occupying Power, to abide by the Fourth Geneva Convention and respect the provisions and principles of

international humanitarian law and the Charter of the United Nations.

At the same time, we reaffirm our position that the continuation of Israel's illegal blockade on the Gaza Strip is not only a further indulgence in injustice and aggression but also constitutes collective punishment and the flagrant violation of international humanitarian law. It would have serious humanitarian consequences for the Palestinian people, and it must end.

The OIC asserts that the growing challenges created by the Israeli occupation require that the international community act effectively and seriously to uphold the principles of freedom and justice, ensure respect for human rights and consolidate peace, security and stability in the region. It should galvanize efforts to remove the ongoing historical injustice inflicted on the Palestinian people, based on respect for United Nations resolutions, the principles of international law and the relevant international conventions.

We support the effort to adopt a Security Council resolution on the Israeli settlement activities and the provision of international guarantees and control mechanisms to ensure its implementation. That would be a real contribution to the vision of a two-State solution. We also reiterate our support to the French initiative, which calls for establishing an international support group and convening an international peace conference for launching a political process under multilateral international auspices, with a specific timetable to end the Israeli occupation.

In conclusion, I would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm the OIC's support of the Palestinian people and solidarity with them in their quest to reclaim their inalienable national rights, which include the rights of return and self-determination, the establishment of an independent State on the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and a just solution to the Palestinian refugee issue, according to the relevant United Nations resolutions.

**The Acting Chair:** I thank Ambassador Mehdiyev for his statement on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, which is an active partner of the Committee.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Abdelaziz Enani, Chargé d'affaires for the League of Arab States to the United Nations, who will read out a message from

His Excellency Mr. Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States.

**Mr. Enani** (League of Arab States) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to express my appreciation to Mr. Peter Thomson, President of the General Assembly, and to pay tribute to Mr. Riyad Mansour, Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine.

Today represents a painful memory for the Palestinian people. Their plight began on 25 November 1947, when the General Assembly adopted resolution 181 (II), which partitioned the Palestinian land — the land where the Palestinian people had lived since the dawn of history, until it was occupied by the Israelis. Since then, the lives of Palestinians have been marked by daily suffering as a result of the occupation that, since the Al-Nakba in 1948, has been responsible for the crime of the full-fledged ethnic cleansing of the indigenous Palestinian people.

In stressing the importance of the question of Palestine and the support of the international community for the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, particularly the right to self-determination and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital, in 1977, the General Assembly decided to declare this day as an International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. That solidarity has continued and expanded year after year, culminating in the adoption on 29 November 2012 of General Assembly resolution 67/19, granting Palestine non-member-State status on top of its participation as an observer. That reflects the international community's determination to end Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory, which began in June 1967, and to achieve peace and justice. The resolution has given all States and the permanent members of the Security Council the responsibility to achieve justice and equality for the Palestinian people and to compel Israel, the occupying Power, to heed the calls for peace and for ending the occupation of Palestinian territories.

It is also aimed at enabling the State to exercise its independence and sovereignty. In that context, Palestine's efforts to obtain full-fledged membership of the United Nations remain a rightful demand, in accordance with the principles of international law and international legitimacy, and are supported by all the States members of the League of Arab States.

The Palestinian people have accepted the notion of a two-State solution out of a genuine desire to achieve

peace, coexistence and prosperity for Palestinians, Israelis and all peoples of the region, and based on the firm belief of the League of Arab States in the need to end the decades-long Arab-Israeli conflict. The Arab Summit Conference held in Beirut in 2002 therefore approved the Arab Peace Initiative, which includes the implementation of Israel's withdrawal from all Arab and Palestinian lands occupied after 5 June 1967, the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital, and the achievement of a just solution to the Palestinian refugee problem, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

Every other country in the world welcomed that initiative, but Israel continues to reject it, as it has also rejected a two-State solution. It persists in its violations and racist practices, perpetuating its occupation by expanding settlements, encircling Palestinian villages and towns with a separation wall, attacking Muslim and Christian holy sites, demolishing houses, setting up military barriers in the West Bank and imposing an unjust blockade on Gaza for almost 10 years. Palestinian prisoners and detainees held captive by Israel are suffering in tragic situations that destroy their lives and those of their families, who seek a glimmer of hope that could restore some sense of normalcy to their lives.

Israel is in flagrant breach of international law and violates the rights of the Palestinian people. However, the international community will be rewarding Israel if it grants it access to the Organization's organs and committees through election to a non-permanent seat on the Security Council in 2019 and 2020. Israel is now also chairing the Sixth Committee, which is contradictory and illogical in the light of Israel's violations and disregard for international norms and instruments and which the League of Arab States has denounced. We also encourage the international community to stand firm against Israel's campaign to obtain a non-permanent seat on the Security Council, which contradicts the most basic rules of logic and justice. The Palestinian occupation must come to an end and should not be rewarded with membership in a United Nations organ mandated to maintain international peace and security and promote justice and equality.

Since 1977, when the General Assembly adopted resolution 32/40 B, proclaiming 29 November the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, we have held meetings and events in solidarity with the Palestinian people to encourage them to cope with the injustices committed by Israel against them.



However, Palestinians need such words of solidarity to be translated into tangible measures that can compel Israel to fulfil the requirements for peace. Only then will the international community succeed in ending a seven-decade-long occupation, prove its friendship for and solidarity with the Palestinian people and enable the values of friendship, peace and coexistence to eclipse hatred and aggression. That means that 2017 should be the year for ending the occupation, in accordance with the decision of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

I would like to commend various countries for their positions and the members of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for their sincere efforts. Once again, we emphasize that we support all constructive efforts and are willing to take part in all Committee activities to ensure that 2017 becomes the year that the Israeli occupation is ended and the State of Palestine can enjoy its independence and sovereignty.

**The Acting Chair:** I thank Mr. Enani for his statement and ask him to kindly convey the Committee's sincere appreciation to Mr. Ahmed Aboul-Gheit, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States.

I now give the floor to Ms. Suhad Babaa, Executive Director of Just Vision, to make a statement on behalf of civil-society organizations active on the question of Palestine.

**Ms. Babaa** (Just Vision): It is an honour to be present here today and I appreciate having the opportunity to engage the Committee on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

The tireless work of Palestinian and Israeli human rights defenders, activists, journalists and community organizers agitating for rights and dignity has never been easy. Those courageous advocates too often face derision or are made invisible by our mainstream media and political leaders. Yet their stories and their work to challenge abuses of power are invaluable for holding our Governments accountable and inspiring our communities to organize and create change.

For those Palestinians and Israelis working to build a future that is just, equal and free, it has been a particularly challenging year. While the international community largely views the situation in Israel and Palestine as the status quo, developments on

the ground are rapidly changing, notwithstanding the daily brutality of the occupation, the second-class existence of Palestinians living in Israel and the millions of Palestinian refugees who live in increasingly dire circumstances. We continue to see egregious unchecked violations of international law by the Israeli authorities, including extra-judicial killings of Palestinians, ongoing home demolitions and forcible displacement, collective punishment campaigns, discriminatory housing policies, illegal settlement expansion, arrests and detentions without due process, including of Palestinian children and severe limitations on Palestinian communities' ability to develop economically and sustain their livelihoods.

We have also witnessed increased censorship and attacks on freedom of expression. For years, the Israeli Government has been ratcheting up its efforts to silence every form of political protest and dissenting voices, sometimes in coordination with the Palestinian Authority's security forces. That repression takes myriad forms, from laws that aim to stigmatize non-governmental organizations as agents of foreign Powers and create chilling effects among those who advocate for the use of boycotts — a classic, peaceful form of civil and economic resistance — to arbitrarily arresting Palestinian journalists and holding them under administrative detention; from monitoring, arresting and torturing Palestinians, including children, for no more than a Facebook post, to violently squashing unarmed protests; from imprisoning Palestinian human rights defenders and activists who organize their communities non-violently, to full-fledged Government-sanctioned campaigns aimed at undermining Israeli and Palestinian human rights organizations.

To give an example that hits particularly close to home for our team at Just Vision, the Palestinian human rights defender and non-violent activist Isa Amro is currently facing trial in Israeli courts for 18 baseless charges that have been accumulated by the authorities over the past several years. During those years, Isa has been organizing non-violently in Hebron, mentoring youth leaders on protecting and taking unarmed action for their communities in the face of encroaching illegal settlements and settler violence as the Israeli military turns a blind eye; digging wells; building schools for children and holding marches and peaceful demonstrations. For that, Isa has been accused by the Israeli Government of incitement and being in breach

of law and order. It is a clearly Government-sanctioned and -coordinated campaign to silence him. In short, the Israeli Government has all but declared war on anyone who speaks out or seeks to protect the inherent freedom, dignity and equality of Palestinians and Israelis alike.

My team at Just Vision has been researching, documenting and disseminating the stories of Palestinian and Israeli grassroots leaders for 13 years. Our work is about non-violent resistance and rights. It is also about pluralism and role models. We find the people who embody those values and put a spotlight on them so that they can inspire others. We do that through a variety of media, including documentaries that have been delivered to world leaders and screened for millions around the globe; graphic novels that we share with youth in refugee camps and women at community centres across Palestine; and our Hebrew-language news site, *Sikha Mekomit*, co-run with *972 Magazine*, which transforms the Israeli mainstream media conversation with stories of human and civil rights issues and grassroots activism and which is capturing the attention of the country's top political and mainstream media outlets.

While our team of human rights advocates, film makers and journalists has been in the field for 13 years, front-line activists have been organizing for decades, and I would like to share one story that is especially salient as we enter 2017. Next year will mark the shameful anniversary of 50 years of Israel's military occupation and more than 70 years of the dispossession and subjugation of the Palestinian people. It also marks 30 years since the first Intifada, the most disciplined and sustained civil resistance movement in Palestinian history. It was a people-powered movement that put such severe pressure on the machinery of the Israeli occupation that it demanded that the international community reckon with Palestinians' right to self-determination for the first time.

Unbeknownst to most people today, in 1987 a group of courageous and committed Palestinian women clandestinely helped to fuel that extraordinary effort. For those who have a visual memory of the time, the dominant images that come to mind are probably of stone-throwing Palestinian youths facing off against Israeli military tanks, or of Molotov cocktails and burning tyres — at least, those were the stories that were captured in the headlines. In reality, however, the movement was largely unarmed, and women were on the front lines. They drafted leaflets that set the

agenda for civil-disobedience campaigns and delivered them secretly in bags of spinach and pita sold at the market. They determined strike days and marched in demonstrations. They formed and led committees for teaching children, growing food and treating the sick and injured. All of this was done as they faced the brutal policies that Israel used to squash the movement, seeking to criminalize any act that threatened its power — from those as simple as making a Palestinian flag, to convening in groups of 10 or more, to raising cows to produce their own dairy products in an effort at self-sufficiency. All of it goes to say that what held true 30, 50 and 70 years ago holds true today. People will not sit quietly as their rights are abused, and those with power will not readily give it up.

What happens in Israel and Palestine has ramifications across the region and the globe. For too long, the international community has failed to take concrete, meaningful action in the face of injustice in Israel and Palestine. When communities and ordinary people put their bodies and lives on the line to demand change in the face of violations of human rights, it is incumbent on us to act. That is not merely a question of political will, expediency or strategy. It is a moral obligation. It means that we should not only support but also defend the organizers, activists, journalists and human-rights defenders who are a lifeline to the values we hold sacred and whose work is essential to ensuring sustainable, meaningful solutions to these issues. Moreover, if it is true that the international community wishes to see a peaceful solution, based on mutual respect, in the Israeli-Palestinian context, it is absurd that Western democracies and international Powers should keep arming and militarizing the region. That must stop.

It means that we should celebrate the women who have held our communities together and fueled some of the most transformative movements for social change of our time, and especially in view of the political leaders today who have attacked their bodies and called into question their involvement in public life. It means, importantly, that we should pay attention and listen to, invest in and respect the communities in Israel and Palestine that have been experiencing dehumanization for decades and have persistently called for rights and equality. And, significantly, it means that the United Nations should wield its power not just with soft words but with firm action.

Communities in Israel and Palestine have been holding steadfast to human dignity by exercising some of the most honourable forms of peaceful civil resistance, thereby preserving human decency in the face of inhumane acts of power on the part of their political leaders. But they cannot do it alone. The United Nations has an obligation to protect those communities and defend their cause, which aligns in every way with the values and principles that the Organization represents. I urge it to take swift, decisive action to uphold the sanctity of international law as it applies in Israel and Palestine. In the months ahead, the Security Council will probably deliberate on the question of Palestine once again. It will be an opportunity for the Council to exercise its full sanctioning power, end the occupation, protect the rights of refugees and uphold the dignity and equality of every human being in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories. We urge the United Nations to act and to act now.

**The Acting Chair:** I thank Ms. Babaa for her insightful statement. I would once again like to take this opportunity to thank all civil-society organizations around the world that are working actively on the question of Palestine for their efforts in support of and solidarity with the Palestinian people.

It is now my honour to announce that the Committee has received messages of support and solidarity from many Heads of State and Government and from Ministers for Foreign Affairs, Governments and organizations. I would like to read out the list of the officials who sent them, in the order they were received.

We have received messages from the following Heads of State: the President of the Socialist Democratic Republic of Sri Lanka, the President of the Republic of Djibouti, the President of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, the President of the Republic of Indonesia, the President of the Republic of Nicaragua, the President of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, the President of the People's Republic of China, the President of the Republic of Senegal, the Leadership of the State of Kuwait, His Majesty the King of the Kingdom of Morocco, His Majesty the King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the President of the Republic of Belarus, His Majesty the Sultan of Brunei Darussalam, the President of the Republic of Turkey, the President of the United Arab Emirates, the President of Brazil, the President of the Russian Federation, the President of the Republic of

Maldives, the President of the Republic of Mali and the President of Iraq.

We have received messages from the following Heads of Government: the Prime Minister of Pakistan, the President of the Council of Ministers of Lebanon, the Prime Minister of Malta, the Prime Minister of India, the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand and the Prime Minister of Malaysia.

The Committee has also received messages from the following Ministers for Foreign Affairs: the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Argentina, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Madagascar, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belarus and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia.

We have received messages from the following Governments: the Government of Oman, the Government of Tunisia, the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Government of South Africa, the Government of Guyana, the Government of Namibia and the Government of El Salvador.

Lastly, the Committee has also received messages from the intergovernmental organization of the European Union and from the civil-society organization Just Vision.

All the messages of solidarity received will be posted on the website on the question of Palestine maintained by the Division for Palestinian Rights, [unispal.un.org](http://unispal.un.org).

On behalf of the Committee, I would like to express our sincere appreciation to the Heads of State and Government, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs, the Governments and organizations I have just mentioned, and to all participants, for their persistent efforts aimed at achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine, and for the support they have always given to the mandated activities of the Committee.

I would like to thank everyone who has made this meeting possible, in particular the staff members of the Division for Palestinian Rights, the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, the Department of Public Information, the Office of

Central Support Services, the interpreters and everyone who has worked behind the scenes.

At 3 p.m. today, the General Assembly will begin its debate on the question of Palestine, during which the Chair of the Committee will introduce draft resolutions A/71/L.18, A/71/L.19, A/71/L.20 and A/71/L.21 under that agenda item, and Ambassador Ingunez, the Committee's Rapporteur, will introduce the report of the Committee (A/71/35). We strongly encourage

delegations to attend and support the adoption of the draft resolutions.

I would also like to invite representatives this evening to the inauguration of a photo exhibit entitled "Palestinian Embroidery: Threads of Continuity, Identity and Empowerment", which will be held at 6.30 p.m. in the Public Lobby of the General Assembly building and will be followed by a reception. I look forward to seeing everyone this evening.

*The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.*