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**Special Political and Decolonization Committee  
(Fourth Committee)****Summary record of the 23rd meeting**

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 13 November 2019, at 3 p.m.

*Chair:* Mr. Bahr Aluloom ..... (Iraq)  
*later:* Mr. Ahidjo (Vice-Chair) ..... (Cameroon)

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*The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.*

**Agenda item 51: Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories (A/74/356; A/74/219; A/74/357; A/74/468 and A/74/192)**

1. **Mr. Rodrigo** (Sri Lanka), speaking 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, and introducing the report of the Special Committee (A/74/356), said that, as in previous years, the Government of Israel had not responded to the Committee's request to access the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan. As a result, the Committee had visited Amman from 17 to 21 June 2019 to meet with Palestinian officials, United Nations representatives and Israeli, Palestinian and Syrian civil society representatives, victims and witnesses of Israeli violations.

2. The Special Committee had heard that Israeli settlement expansion and development continued in both the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan. Figures mentioned in the report indicated a sharp increase in planning for future construction and marked 2018 as the year in which the greatest number of settlement housing units had been approved since 2012. Settlements amounted to the transfer of parts of the occupying Power's civilian population into the territories it occupied, which was prohibited under the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (Fourth Geneva Convention). Settlements had a profound impact on the daily life of Palestinians and Syrians and their enjoyment of basic human rights, including freedom of movement and access to livelihoods, education and health care. The Special Committee had also heard concerns about recent statements made by Israeli legislators in connection with the annexation of areas of the West Bank.

3. The demolition of Palestinian homes and private property by Israeli security forces remained one of the major concerns. Between January and August 2019, Israeli security forces had demolished 106 housing units owned by Palestinians in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, displacing at least 295 Palestinians, including 145 children. Demolitions were largely carried out on the pretext of a lack of building permits, which were nearly impossible for Palestinians to obtain; they were also carried out for punitive reasons.

4. The Special Committee had also heard about a particularly worrying rise in settler violence and harassment and intimidation of Palestinians, carried out with impunity. The violence was especially prevalent in the H2 area of Hebron, a fact further aggravated by the decision made by Israel not to renew the mandate of the Temporary International Presence in Hebron.

5. The Special Committee had been especially concerned to hear about the continued massive loss of life and excessive use of force by Israeli security forces in the context of the demonstrations near the fence between Gaza and Israel that had begun on 30 March 2018 and continued on a weekly basis in 2019. According to information received by the Special Committee, 138 Palestinians had been killed and a further 15,901 had been injured in the period from September 2018 to August 2019, largely in the context of peaceful demonstrations. The primary cause of fatalities in Gaza was the use of live ammunition by Israel, and the primary causes of injuries were tear gas inhalation, individuals being hit by tear gas canisters and the use of rubber bullets. The Special Committee recalled that, when policing demonstrations, Israeli security forces must respect international human rights instruments pertaining to law enforcement, including the Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials, according to which firearms could be used against persons only in the event of an imminent threat of death or serious injury.

6. The prevalence of a culture of impunity was an issue of grave concern, especially in cases of excessive use of force by Israeli security forces. Confidence in the Israeli military justice system was undermined by the fact that investigations, when they took place, rarely resulted in prosecutions, and sentences frequently did not match the gravity of the violations committed by the Israeli security forces. The Special Committee called for the systematic investigation of all cases of excessive use of force that had led to death or serious injury, including in the context of the Great March of Return and other demonstrations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and for those responsible to be held accountable.

7. The continuous blockade on Gaza, now entering its thirteenth year, had been tightened following the demonstrations. The restrictions on freedom of movement of people and goods to and from Gaza had a significant negative impact on the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, including the rights to an adequate standard of living, health, education, work and family life and a healthy environment. Despite some improvements in the provision of electricity and fuel, supplies were still far short of adequate. The shortage of electricity had a particularly detrimental

effect on health care. Palestinians lacked access to adequate health care in Gaza because of shortages of medicines and supplies, which had been exacerbated after demonstrations had begun in March 2018. Israeli authorities regularly denied or delayed exit permits to access health care for injuries incurred in the demonstrations; the denial of medical treatment was a violation of international law. The restrictions on travel permits for companions of children in need of health care outside of Gaza were another major concern, and resulted in many young children traveling for medical care without their immediate family members.

8. Palestinians' access to natural resources, including clean water, was restricted in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. In Gaza, in addition to the lack of clean water, sewage problems persisted, making an imminent endemic disease outbreak or other public health crisis likely. Israel had been aerially spraying herbicides on areas near the fence between Gaza and Israel, damaging agricultural land in Gaza.

9. The Special Committee had been briefed extensively on the situation of Palestinian detainees in Israeli custody, who numbered some 5,150 individuals as at July 2019. It continued to have serious concerns about the use of administrative detention, which was often based on secret information to which detainees did not have access and which they did not have the opportunity to challenge. Administrative detainees were held without trial or charge on indefinite, renewable six-month orders. The Special Committee continued to receive reports that Palestinian detainees lacked access to health care. It remained gravely concerned at reports of deaths of detainees while in Israeli custody.

10. The Committee was seriously concerned about reports of Israeli practices that might amount to torture. In particular, it was outraged at the case of Samir al-Arbid, who had been arrested by Israeli security forces on 25 September 2019 on suspicion of involvement in a bomb explosion that had killed a 17-year-old Israeli girl. Following his interrogation, Mr. Al-Arbid had been hospitalized on 27 September in critical condition, including broken ribs and severe kidney failure. In that regard, the Special Committee noted that the prohibition of torture was absolute.

11. In Gaza, between 1 September 2018 and 29 August 2019, Israeli security forces had killed 29 Palestinian children and injured 4,387 during demonstrations and in other circumstances. In the West Bank, six children had been killed by Israeli security forces in the same period, and 1,238 had been injured. The Special Committee had heard about a 9-year-old boy who had been shot in the

head by Israeli security forces on 12 July 2019 during a weekly protest in the village of Kafr Qaddum.

12. Children's right to education was severely restricted in Gaza and the West Bank. In Gaza, escalations in hostilities had directly disrupted education. In the West Bank, Israeli restrictions on the construction of new schools, demolition of structures used as schools, attacks in or around education facilities, and access restrictions had all had a severe impact on children's education. The Special Committee deeply regretted reports that arrests of children were on the rise and that children continued to suffer from ill-treatment during arrest and detention. As at July 2019, there were 210 children in detention.

13. In the occupied Syrian Golan, Israeli settlements were expanding in violation of international law. In April 2019, the Israeli Government had revealed a new settlements plan, which involved the transfer of 250,000 settlers to the area by 2048. Additionally, the Special Committee had heard serious concerns that local elections, which had been held in October 2018 in Syrian villages for the first time since 1967, were in fact a manifestation of the desire of Israel to impose its sovereignty. The elections had sparked outrage and had been boycotted by a majority of the local population; hundreds of Syrians had protested outside polling stations. The Special Committee recalled Security Council resolution 497 (1981), in which the Council had determined that the Israeli decision to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration on the occupied Syrian Golan was null and void and without international legal effect, and that the Fourth Geneva Convention continued to apply in the occupied Syrian Golan.

14. Israeli discriminatory practices against Palestinians and Syrians were on the rise, causing further deterioration of the human rights and humanitarian situation across the occupied territories. Against that backdrop, there was an urgent need to revive the peace process towards a two-State solution. The Special Committee called upon the Government of Israel to end its occupation of the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan in compliance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 497 (1981); to cease all settlement activity in the West Bank and the occupied Syrian Golan; to lift the land and sea blockade and closure imposed on Gaza; and to take all necessary precautions to ensure that Israeli security forces acted in accordance with the Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials. It also called on the international community to use its influence to bring an end to the Israeli occupation of the occupied territories, to cease all

settlement activity and to end the blockade and closure of Gaza.

15. **Mr. Gilmour** (Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights and Head of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in New York), introducing the reports of the Secretary-General under the current agenda item, said that the report on the applicability of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the other occupied Arab territories ([A/74/219](#)) summarized the responses received from the Permanent Missions of Ireland, Qatar and the Syrian Arab Republic to a request for information about steps taken to implement General Assembly resolution [73/97](#).

16. The report of the Secretary-General on Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan ([A/74/357](#)) covered the period from 1 June 2018 to 31 May 2019 and was based on monitoring and other information-gathering activities carried out by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and information from other United Nations entities, Israeli and Palestinian non-governmental organizations and media sources. The report provided an update on settlement-related activities in the territories occupied by Israel since 1967 and in-depth consideration of settlement expansion and the coercive environment in the West Bank. Compared to the previous reporting period, Israeli demolition of Palestinian structures had increased by 50 per cent. Settlement expansion had continued at a higher rate than in the previous reporting period: 10,900 housing units in the West Bank were being built or had been approved, and 11 new outposts had been established. Settler violence, including the use of live ammunition, had also increased. The impact of settlements on Palestinian communities at risk of forcible transfer and the impact of settler violence on the rights of Palestinians were examined extensively in the report.

17. While the Israeli authorities had made some effort in recent years to prevent, investigate and prosecute settler violence, settlers continued to enjoy a general climate of impunity. In Nablus Governorate and the Hebron H2 area, in particular, Israeli security forces had reportedly failed to prevent attacks and protect Palestinians, and at times had directly participated in aggression. Lastly, in the run-up to the two elections held in April and September 2019, Israeli officials had made statements on their intentions to expand settlements and annex parts or all of the West Bank. The Israeli authorities should immediately end all settlement

activity in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem; immediately halt demolitions and forced evictions and cease any activity that would further contribute to the creation of a coercive environment; and take all measures possible to ensure the protection of Palestinians and their property from settler violence.

18. The report of the Secretary-General on Israeli practices affecting the human rights of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem ([A/74/468](#)), covered the same period as the report on Israeli settlements ([A/74/357](#)) and was based on the same monitoring and information-gathering activities. The Israeli authorities' use of force continued to be excessive, notably along the fence that sectioned off the Gaza Strip: 94 Palestinians, including 24 children, had been killed by Israeli security forces during demonstrations in the reporting period. A total of 42 children in Gaza and six in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, had been killed by Israeli security forces. Serious concerns remained about possible impunity for the use of excessive force by the security forces, and about arbitrary detention and ill treatment of Palestinians, including children. Practices that might amount to collective punishment, including the Gaza closures, and restrictions on freedom of movement, expression, assembly and association, were also addressed in the report. Israel should ensure that any use of force was compatible with international law; end practices that might amount to collective punishment; immediately lift the closure of Gaza; and ensure that the right to freedom of movement was protected, and that journalists, human rights defenders and civil society actors were able to conduct their activities without harassment or subjection to legal proceedings in violation of international human rights law.

19. The report of the Secretary-General on the occupied Syrian Golan ([A/74/192](#)) summarized the responses received to a request for information about any steps taken or envisaged concerning the implementation of General Assembly resolution [73/100](#). Responses had been received from the Permanent Missions of Cuba, Ireland and the Syrian Arab Republic.

20. **Ms. Abdelhady-Nasser** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that the reports of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 and the United Nations Commission of Inquiry on the 2018 protests in the Occupied Palestinian Territory complemented one another. Member States should focus on the reports' factual and legal content, and reject any attempt to politicize those assessments, which were

independent, neutral and grounded solely in international law and the resolutions of the United Nations. By failing to cooperate with the Special Committee and other United Nations mandate holders, Israel had violated its obligations as a Member State. It could not, however, conceal the systematic and deliberate nature of its crimes, or their racist and discriminatory character, or their massive scope and scale. The situation had been documented by Palestinian and Israeli human rights organizations and by United Nations agencies on the ground. Indeed, Israeli officials had publicly declared their intent to commit further crimes, boasted of a shoot-to-kill policy and extrajudicial assassinations and vowed to annihilate Gaza, and the Prime Minister of Israel and his extremist coalition partners had threatened to annex occupied territory. The high number of Palestinian civilians killed by Israel had been thoroughly documented; for instance, the Commission of Inquiry had found that, of the 189 fatalities investigated in the period from March to December 2019, the use of live ammunition by Israeli forces had been unlawful in all but two cases.

21. As was noted in the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict ([A/73/907-S/2019/509](#)), a total of 2,756 Palestinian children had been injured in the Occupied Palestinian Territory in 2018. Her delegation would appreciate more detailed reflections on the profound impact of the Israeli occupation on children, including as a result of the pervasive violence, the blockade of the Gaza Strip, the denial of permits to access medical care, home demolitions, night arrests and the interrogation and detention of children.

22. **Mr. Gilmour** (Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights and Head of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in New York) said that the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner for Human Rights had both expressed their concern regarding the effect of the Israeli occupation on children. In the reporting period, Israeli security forces had killed 48 children and injured thousands, the highest numbers since 2014. Palestinian children should not be encouraged to put themselves in harm's way, and Palestinians should not fire rockets at Israeli communities where there were children. That said, there was no excuse for the vast majority of Israeli attacks on children: it was implausible that the expertly-trained snipers who gravely harmed thousands of children, causing lifelong injuries such as loss of sight or limbs, did so by mistake. Stone-throwing Palestinian children were being shot across the Gaza fence, and hundreds of Palestinian children were being harassed, threatened, beaten, shot and imprisoned in the West Bank, including

East Jerusalem. It was difficult to imagine an approach more likely to radicalize the next generation of Palestinians.

23. The occupation was now 52 years old – it was ever-deepening and appeared unending, unrelenting, unremitting and unconscionable. Taken as a whole, it represented a massive injustice, and an awful example of systematic discrimination and humiliation. It was a stain on the occupier, and on all of humanity, and it drove violent extremism around the world, as many courageous Israelis were the first to recognize. In 2018, the world had celebrated the seventieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; it was impossible, when reading that document in the light of the Israeli occupation, not to observe how every right enshrined therein, whether civil or political, economic, social or cultural, was being systematically violated in the occupied territories.

24. **The Chair** invited the Committee to engage in a general discussion on the item.

25. **Ms. Abdelhady-Nasser** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that the findings of the Special Committee reflected a situation that was similar to that of previous years, but was becoming more severe as the occupation became more violently entrenched. Defenceless Palestinians were killed and injured by the occupying forces in military raids on towns, villages and refugee camps in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and in military operations against the Gaza Strip, which included airstrikes on civilian areas. In just the previous 24 hours, 21 Palestinians had been killed in yet another military attack. Since the Great March of Return protests had begun, more than 310 Palestinians had been killed and more than 34,000 injured. Israeli settlers also continued to wage a campaign of terror under the complicit gaze of the occupying forces; settler violence accounted for 23 per cent of casualties during the reporting period. The decision of Israel to terminate the Temporary International Presence in Hebron had increased settler violence. For its part, the State of Palestine reiterated its absolute rejection and condemnation of all acts of violence, provocation and terror against civilians.

26. The colonization and de facto annexation of Palestinian land continued by all means possible, the settlements and the wall being the most insidious. In 2019 so far, 8,300 settlement units had been developed, and more than 2,000 had been announced only the previous week, enabling the illegal transfer of tens of thousands more settlers. It was a clear attempt to alter the demography, geography, character and status of the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The seizure of land and



property, the demolition of homes and structures, the eviction of families and the revocation of residency permits were resulting in the dispossession and displacement of thousands. Occupied East Jerusalem and its environs were the most aggressively targeted areas: 100,000 Palestinians there faced the threat of home demolition.

27. The blockade of Gaza, which had been in place for more than 12 years, amounted to a collective punishment of some 2 million people, half of whom were children and young people. The dire situation in Gaza was characterized by rampant unemployment, poverty and despair, with little hope of socioeconomic recovery; health, water and sanitation systems on the brink of collapse; and psychological coping capacities eroded to the point where a widespread mental health crisis was imminent. The United Nations country team predicted that Gaza would be unliveable by 2020.

28. Thousands of Palestinian civilians, including women, children and elected officials, were held in abhorrent conditions and subjected to mistreatment, including physical and psychological torture and medical neglect that had resulted in three deaths in 2018. Arrests were made almost every day. At least 460 civilians were being held under administrative detention without charge, and 210 children, some as young as eight, were in prison or under house arrest.

29. Constant incursions and assaults on holy sites, including the Haram Al-Sharif, by Israeli occupying forces and extremists, as well as religious provocation, violated the historical and legal status quo and risked igniting a religious conflagration. Restrictions on the movement of people and goods were enforced by hundreds of military checkpoints and an arbitrary permit regime. The occupying Power restricted access to education, health care and livelihoods, obstructed humanitarian access and controlled every aspect of Palestinian life, inflicting untold indignities and hardship. Israel also blatantly exploited Palestinian natural and financial resources, depriving the Palestinian people of its right to sustainable development. The actions taken by Israel glaringly violated numerous resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly, ran counter to the 2004 Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice in the case concerning the *Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*, and amounted to war crimes under the Fourth Geneva Convention and the Protocol additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the protection of victims of international armed conflicts, as well as the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

30. International inaction, coupled with ongoing appeasement – despite the clarity of international law, the relevant United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), and the longstanding consensus on a two-State solution based on the pre-1967 lines – had led Israel to believe that it was above the law, so much so that it had openly declared its plans to annex Palestinian land, in breach of the prohibition of the acquisition of territory by force. The failure to hold Israel accountable had prolonged the conflict and was accelerating the replacement of the two-State solution with an apartheid State, undeniably damaging the efficacy and credibility of international law and rules-based order.

31. Only collective and individual action could give real meaning to the international consensus regarding a just solution and bring to an end the Israeli occupation and violations, protect the rights and legitimate national aspirations of the Palestinian people and establish Palestinian-Israeli peace and security. Immediate measures should be taken in the light of the recommendations of the Special Committee, special rapporteurs, independent inquiries and other actors. The Security Council, the General Assembly and all States, intergovernmental organizations and civil society actors must take practical measures to fulfil their respective duties. All legitimate political and legal tools and measures must be pursued, including sanctions and prosecution of war crimes. States had a duty to refrain from recognizing any decisions or measures taken by Israel to alter the geography, demography, character or status of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. Any such action on the part of Israel was illegal, null and void, and must incur consequences if not rescinded. Israel must be reminded that it was not the sovereign in any part of the territories it had occupied since 1967 and that, as an occupying Power, it was bound by international humanitarian law and United Nations resolutions.

32. Israel must also be prevailed upon to comply with Security Council resolution 2334 (2016) and others in which the Council had called on States to refrain from providing Israel with any assistance to be used specifically in connection with its settlements in the occupied territories. In that regard, her delegation reiterated its call for the publication of the database compiled pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 31/36 listing businesses involved in activities related to the illegal settlements. Moreover, all Israeli measures aimed at annexing occupied East Jerusalem, including attempts to replace education and health services offered by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), must be

firmly rejected. The legal and historic status quo of the holy sites in occupied East Jerusalem, including the Haram Al-Sharif, and the role of Jordan as custodian of the Muslim and Christian holy sites, must be respected. The international community must act responsibly, ethically and humanely to bring an end to the Israeli occupation of Palestine and other Arab lands. The Palestinian people must be enabled to exercise their inalienable rights and to live in freedom in an independent State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital. That outcome would be the cornerstone of peaceful coexistence in the Middle East and would enable all peoples to live in security, dignity and prosperity.

33. **Ms. Baghirova** (Azerbaijan), speaking on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, said that the Movement condemned the Israeli Government's continuing settlement of the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan and was deeply concerned that Israel had prevented the Special Committee from holding consultations with the relevant Israeli authorities and from gaining access to the occupied territories in line with its mandate. Though the Special Committee had been aware of the illegal Israeli activities for decades, the Government persisted with total impunity. Those activities had severely exacerbated the conditions on the ground, causing immense human suffering, and directly threatened the viability of the two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders. In that regard, the Movement strongly condemned the Israeli Government's *de facto* annexation of occupied East Jerusalem and its threats to annex more Palestinian land.

34. The increase in the illegal colonization practices of Israel demonstrated that country's total disregard for international law and United Nations resolutions. The findings in the report of the Special Committee were deeply concerning, particularly the military incursions and raids and the excessive use of force against young Palestinians and peaceful protesters in or near refugee camps in the Gaza Strip and in many other parts of the West Bank, including occupied East Jerusalem. The dire humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip was deeply concerning and constituted a serious violation of international law requiring immediate attention. The civilian population in Gaza must be provided with relief in order to counter the reversal of development in that area. It was important to promote expeditious economic reconstruction and recovery in the area and provide firm support for UNRWA and its mandate. Israel must end its illegal blockade of Gaza without delay or conditions, in accordance with international law and all relevant United Nations resolutions.

35. Violence and incitement by Israeli settlers continued to cause Palestinian casualties, contributing to their expulsion from their land. Illegal settlement activities undermined the contiguity of Palestine and the viability of the State of Palestine; put the two-State solution at risk; and violated the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. Israel had used several purportedly legal and administrative measures to expand its control over more Palestinian territory, including the declaration of "State land" and seizure of Palestinian land for archaeological and recreational activities. Furthermore, the illegal exploitation of the natural resources of Palestine denied the right of Palestinians to sovereignty over their natural resources, including water and energy resources, and their right to development. The international community, particularly the Security Council, must take urgent action to compel the occupying Power to immediately comply with all its obligations under international law, in order to avert further human suffering and prevent the further destabilization of the situation on the ground. The lack of accountability for the violations committed by Israel fostered impunity and endangered the prospects for peace.

36. With reference to the Syrian Golan, the Movement reaffirmed that all unlawful actions perpetrated by Israel, including recent attempts by that country to claim sovereignty over the occupied Syrian Golan and the convening on 30 October 2018 of local elections in four Syrian villages, constituted clear violations of international law, the Charter of the United Nations and relevant resolutions, including Security Council resolution 497 (1981). Israel must abide by that resolution and withdraw completely to the borders of 4 June 1967. In that connection, the Movement condemned the unilateral, arbitrary and provocative decision by the United States of America to recognize the Syrian Golan as part of Israel.

37. At its recent Summit, held on 25 and 26 October 2019 in Baku, the Movement had emphasized the urgency of achieving a just, lasting and comprehensive settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on the basis of a two-State solution within the pre-1967 borders. The Movement reaffirmed its unwavering commitment to the immediate restoration of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination in an independent and viable State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and to a just solution for the Palestine refugees on the basis of General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

38. **Mr. Al-Mouallimi** (Saudi Arabia), speaking on behalf of the Group of Arab States, said that on 12 November 2019, Israel had committed a political

assassination in Gaza, followed by air raids on parts of Gaza that had killed and wounded some 100 individuals. The international community must take a firm position with respect to such disregard for international law and explore ways to hold the perpetrators accountable.

39. The Palestinian cause was a fundamental one for the Arab world. It would occupy a central place in joint Arab action in all international and regional forums until such a time as the Palestinian people could enjoy its inalienable rights. The reports before the Committee showed that the Israeli occupation authorities had continued to violate United Nations resolutions and basic human rights, using excessive and arbitrary force that did not spare children, women or the elderly. In detaining thousands of Palestinians, Israel had been aided by the silence of the international community, particularly the Security Council, whose role it was to uphold the authoritative international resolutions and the rights of the vulnerable.

40. In all relevant international instruments and resolutions, the issue of East Jerusalem was recognized as fundamental to the peaceful and just resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Group of Arab States therefore categorically rejected all attempts by Israel, the occupying Power, to rewrite law and history in Jerusalem. In the relevant United Nations resolutions, it was emphasized that all steps taken by Israel to annex or control Jerusalem, expel its Palestinian residents, construct settlements in it, confiscate the property of its residents, harass its Palestinian inhabitants into leaving or declare it to be the capital of Israel were null and void and had no legal or moral basis. In Security Council resolution 242 (1967), it was stated that land could not be seized by force and that Israel must withdraw from all territories occupied in 1967. Jerusalem, according to international law and United Nations resolutions, was an integral part of the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 and was the eternal capital of the Palestinian State.

41. The ongoing attempt to change the facts on the ground through the expansion of Israeli settlements on Palestinian land blatantly violated international law and undermined any remaining chance at a two-State solution. Arab States called on the United Nations to protect Palestinian rights, hold Israel accountable, end the occupation, end expansionist settlement policies and lift the unjust and illegal embargo on Gaza. The Group strongly condemned the statements made by the head of the occupation Government regarding the intention to annex the West Bank lands occupied in 1967. Israel was fully responsible for any consequences of such dangerous and irresponsible statements.

42. The Group rejected the ongoing Israeli control over the occupied Arab Syrian Golan and the illegal actions taken towards its annexation. Any measures to impose Israeli will on the people of the Golan must be halted immediately. The Group also condemned the Israeli seizure of agricultural lands and plunder of natural resources in the Golan.

43. The Arab Peace Initiative initiated by Saudi Arabia in 2002 showed that Arabs and Muslims were ready to make peace, in accordance with United Nations resolutions, on the basis of an end to the Israeli occupation of all Arab lands including the Arab Syrian Golan and Lebanese territories. By continuing to violate those resolutions and rejecting the Arab Peace Initiative, Israel would exacerbate tensions in the Middle East, undermine confidence in the peace process and weaken the prospect of a comprehensive, lasting and just two-State solution. Peace, security and stability in the Middle East could be based only on a comprehensive and just settlement of the Palestinian issue and the Arab-Israeli conflict as a whole.

44. **Mr. Pontiroli** (Observer for the European Union), speaking also on behalf of the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia, the stabilization and association process and potential candidate country Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the European Free Trade Association country Liechtenstein, a member of the European Economic Area, said that the European Union remained committed to a just and comprehensive resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through a two-State solution and an agreement that would end the occupation, end all claims and fulfil the aspirations of both parties, including Israeli and Palestinian security needs and Palestinian statehood and sovereignty aspirations, on the basis of the relevant Security Council resolutions and internationally agreed parameters. The European Union was ready to work with both parties, its partners in the region and the international community towards the resumption of meaningful negotiations to that end.

45. The European Union had consistently stated its strong opposition to the settlement policy pursued by Israel. Settlement activity in East Jerusalem seriously jeopardized the possibility of Jerusalem serving as the future capital of both States. The European Union had also made clear that it would not recognize any changes to the pre-1967 borders, including with regard to Jerusalem, that were not agreed on by the parties. Both parties, including any future Israeli Government, must act in accordance with international law.

46. The political and security situation in Gaza remained volatile, and the humanitarian situation was a



matter of grave concern. All the violence in Gaza, including the firing of rockets into Israel, served as a reminder that in order to reduce violence and contain extremism in the region, it was essential to restore the political prospects for peace. Israel must respect the right to peaceful protest, and Hamas must ensure that protests remained non-violent. All parties should take urgent steps, in accordance with Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), towards a fundamental change in the humanitarian, political, security and economic situation in Gaza, including an end to the closure policy and the full opening of crossing points and granting of humanitarian access, while addressing the security concerns of Israel.

47. The Palestinian Legislative Council had been dissolved in December 2018. Strong, inclusive, accountable and functioning Palestinian institutions, based on the rule of law and on human rights, were vital to the two-State solution. Noting the intention of President Abbas to hold elections, the European Union considered that a date should very soon be set for elections in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and in the Gaza Strip. All Palestinian factions should unequivocally commit to democratic principles prior to the elections. The recent agreement reached on tax revenue transfers demonstrated that the two parties were capable of negotiating successfully when there was the political will: both parties should use that political will to advance a two-State solution. Ultimately, the lack of enforcement of international law was the real challenge to achieving peace and security in the Middle East. Progress towards a solution to the conflict would also bolster efforts towards the resolution of other crises in the region.

48. **Mr. Kim In Chol** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that his delegation strongly condemned the violent atrocities committed by Israel in the Occupied Territories and supported the work of the Special Committee. Israel had provoked the indignation of the international community by increasingly aggravating the situation in Palestine through its fanatical schemes to eternally Judaize and annex Jerusalem, including by entering and encroaching on Islamic holy sites, and its continued settlement and eviction activities. The Government of Israel was doing its utmost to undermine the peace process in the Middle East and block a peaceful solution to the question of Palestine. The attempts by Israel to expand its territory flew in the face of the will of international community and undermined the sovereignty of the Palestinian people.

49. In accordance with Security Council 2334 (2016), an independent State of Palestine should be established

on the pre-1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital. In several other resolutions, the Security Council demanded that that Israel cease all settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and refrain from attempting to change the status of Jerusalem. The Special Committee should recommend that the Security Council investigate Israeli settlements and take stringent measures, including the imposition of sanctions, in response to violations of international law by the Government of Israel. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea would continue to support the Palestinian people in its endeavour to end the Israeli occupation of its territory and establish an independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital. It fully supported the Syrian people in its struggle to regain control of the illegally occupied Syrian Golan and restore the territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic.

50. **Mr. Morita** (Japan) said that his Government remained committed to supporting a two-State solution. The parties must be encouraged to find resolution through negotiations, including on the final status of Jerusalem, based on the relevant Security Council resolutions and established norms. For its part, his Government would continue to promote confidence-building measures and engage with both parties.

51. His Government deplored the continued settlement activities, in violation of international law, and the demolition of Palestinian-owned structures by the Government of Israel. Along with the international community, his Government urged the Government of Israel to freeze its settlement activities, including construction plans that undermined the viability of a two-State solution. It condemned the violence and terror inflicted on innocent civilians in Gaza and the West Bank and the losses sustained by Palestinians and Israelis alike in the cycle of retaliatory violence. Both parties must take immediate steps to prevent violence, provocation and incitement.

52. The recent rise in tensions in Gaza and the surrounding areas was alarming. His Government condemned the indiscriminate firing of numerous rockets from Gaza into Israel and urged both parties to show maximum restraint in the interest of forestalling further losses. It would continue to follow the situation on the ground and assist in stabilizing Gaza and the Middle East through temporary assistance, emergency humanitarian aid and long-standing commitments. All parties should take the necessary measures to ensure free and fair general elections in Palestine, which should contribute to regional peace and stability.

53. **Mr. Al-Jarba** (Qatar) said that the violations documented in the reports before the Committee (A/74/356) gave a worrying account of the repressive measures imposed on the residents of the occupied territories, including home demolitions, forced evictions, settler violence, the use of excessive force, the detention and abuse of children, the denial of fair trials, and restrictions on freedom of movement affecting the rights to health, employment and education. The embargo on the Gaza Strip had led to a deterioration of the economic and humanitarian situation, had adversely impacted the ability of Gazans to exercise their rights, and had turned Gaza into an open-air prison. The practices of home demolition and the punitive denial of work and travel permits could constitute collective punishment, which was prohibited in international humanitarian law and incompatible with many human rights principles, including those set forth in the Fourth Geneva Convention, which applied to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and other Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967. The decision of Israel to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration on the occupied Arab Syrian Golan was null, void and without international legal effect.

54. A lasting, just and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian question would require serious negotiations between the Palestinian and Israeli sides on the basis of agreed terms of reference, United Nations resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative, with the aim of establishing a viable Palestinian State on the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital; the end the Israeli occupation of all Arab territories, including the Syrian Golan and the occupied Lebanese territories; the immediate and complete cessation of settlement activities; the return of refugees; and the restoration of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. The status quo of Jerusalem and its Christian and Islamic holy sites, particularly the Aqsa Mosque, must be preserved.

55. **Ms. Hussain** (Maldives) said that the international community must not ignore the plight of Palestinian children, who ran the daily risk of being injured or killed by Israeli settlers or law enforcement officers. The illegal Israeli occupation of Palestine and other Arab territories had resulted in discrimination against generations of people, and the draconian blockade of the Gaza Strip amounted to the collective punishment of the population. The Israeli practice of restricting the access of the population of Gaza to electricity, water, medical care, education and economic opportunities had had a negative impact on well-being, health, education, livelihoods and the environment. Such measures, in addition to the seizure or destruction of property and the

construction of illegal settlements, did nothing to establish peace; they simply perpetuated poverty and suffering.

56. The Maldives reaffirmed its solidarity with the people of Palestine and its unwavering support for their legitimate and inalienable right to a sovereign and independent State. Her Government supported a two-State solution on the basis of the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine, without which it would not be possible to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Her delegation reiterated its unwavering support for the quest of Palestine to achieve worldwide political recognition and obtain full membership of the United Nations.

57. **Mr. Alduwaisan** (Kuwait) said that Israel, the occupying Power, was the party in violation of relevant Security Council resolutions, international treaties and laws. An example of such a violation was the brutal repression of peaceful demonstrations that had begun on 30 March 2018 at the Great March of Return. According to the reports of the United Nations and international organizations, Israel had committed heinous crimes in the territories which it occupied; yet the Security Council had failed to take the necessary deterrent measures or to hold the perpetrators responsible. His delegation was deeply concerned about the unilateral measures taken by Israel, the occupying Power, to create facts on the ground in the occupied Arab territories, most notably the continuation of settlement activity and the expansion of existing settlements in flagrant violation of international law. His delegation supported the call of the State of Palestine for the mobilization of existing international mechanisms such as the Quartet. In order to revitalize the Quartet, membership should be expanded to other regional parties, and its activities should take place under the auspices of the United Nations.

58. His delegation supported all legal and peaceful measures taken by the State of Palestine at the national and international levels to establish its sovereignty over the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. Accordingly, it supported the recommendations set forth in paragraph 90 of the report of the Special Committee and stood alongside the Palestinian people in its defence of its rights, including its historic and established right to Jerusalem. His delegation urged all States to recognize East Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Palestine.

59. **Mr. Mabhongo** (South Africa) said that the failure of the United Nations to ensure respect for the human dignity and rights of the Palestinian people amounted to the normalization of violations of human rights and

international law. The international community had refused to accept an overtly racist Government in South Africa; it should show the same indignation towards the situation of the Palestinian people. His delegation condemned violence in all its forms, regardless of the perpetrator, and wished to express its condolences to the families of those who had been killed or injured in the recent violence in East Jerusalem and the West Bank and in Gaza. The deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza gave particular cause for concern. All Member States should urge the parties to resolve the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, which was an impediment to peace, security, stability and development in the Middle East more broadly.

60. South Africa remained concerned about the situation of Palestinian prisoners and detainees, in particular women and children, and called on Israel to respect their human rights and abide by the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War and other relevant instruments of international humanitarian law. Israel should also implement the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules) and the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders.

61. Any further construction of settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory would threaten the territorial contiguity of the future Palestinian State and seriously undermine the possibility of a two-State solution. His delegation condemned the continued demolition of Palestinian homes and property provided as humanitarian assistance and was particularly concerned about the situation of the Bedouin communities in Area C of the West Bank, which the Israeli Government appeared to be attempting to remove through demolitions and forced displacement. Furthermore, the blockade of Gaza must be lifted as a matter of urgency. The only way to bring about genuine and lasting peace between Israel and Palestine, and thereby promote peace and security in the wider Middle East, was through comprehensive and unconditional negotiations addressing all final status issues.

62. *Mr. Ahidjo (Cameroon), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

63. **Ms. Al Memari** (United Arab Emirates) said that her Government was committed to the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace leading to the establishment of an independent Palestinian State on the borders 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid principles, the Arab Peace

Initiative and the road map developed by the Quartet. It was therefore concerned about deteriorating economic, political and humanitarian conditions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and stressed the need for the international community to take immediate action to save the peace process and the two-State solution by calling on Israel to end its illegal policies, which were being exploited by extremist and terrorist groups to spread violence and extremism in the region. For that purpose, all unlawful and provocative measures undermining the two-State solution should come to an end. Israel must therefore halt settlement construction and expansion, land confiscation, the demolition of Palestinian property and violations of holy sites in Jerusalem, and renounce any intention to annex the parts of the West Bank under its control.

64. Israel should fully withdraw from the occupied Syrian Golan to the borders of 1967, and all States and parties should respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria. Her delegation supported a political solution to the Syrian crisis in accordance with Security Council resolution [2254 \(2015\)](#). International momentum should be harnessed towards the launching of credible Middle East peace negotiations, in which all final-status issues should be addressed in accordance with United Nations resolutions.

65. It was important to address the deteriorating humanitarian and economic conditions in the Palestinian territories, particularly in the Gaza Strip, which suffered from shortages of medicines and health care equipment, limited electricity and water, and high unemployment and poverty rates. To that end, the international community must increase its contributions to UNRWA, the United Nations Development Programme and other United Nations entities working to improve the lives of Palestinians and strengthen the economy. For its part, her Government had, over the previous five years, provided more than \$630 million in funding to vital sectors in Palestine, including education and health. During the 2018 and 2019 financial crises at UNRWA, her Government had provided a total of \$100 million in order to ensure that the Agency received a constant level of support.

66. **Mr. Shaddad** (Jordan) said that the plight of the Palestinian people, particularly in the Gaza Strip, underscored the scale of the historical injustice that had been visited upon them. Jordan and the Arab and Islamic worlds were committed to achieving a comprehensive peace that would restore rights and foster security, stability and prosperity. That aim could be achieved through a two-State solution in accordance with the agreed terms of reference, which enjoyed international consensus, and the Arab Peace Initiative. Israel must

seize that historic opportunity before it was too late. Doing so would require courage, determination and effective and meaningful engagement in the peace process. Peace would not be achieved through the construction and expansion of illegal settlements, the expropriation of Palestinian land or home demolitions. Nor would it be achieved by attacking UNRWA and depriving more than 500,000 Palestinian refugee children of their right to education. Security would not be achieved by annexing the occupied Golan or by declaring intentions to annex the Jordan Valley and the northern Dead Sea in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, something that would deal a fatal blow to the two-State solution.

67. Notwithstanding the growing threats to the Islamic and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem, responsibility for their protection could not be bartered away. In view of the historic role of its King as custodian of the Islamic and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem, Jordan would continue to protect those holy sites, especially the Aqsa Mosque, and to preserve their Arab and Islamic or Christian character. Any endeavour to change the historical and legal status quo in that regard would be steadfastly opposed. Jordan commended the efforts of King Mohammed VI of Morocco, Chair of the Quds Committee, in support of the holy city, and welcomed the Appeal for Jerusalem issued by King Mohammed VI and by Pope Francis, which affirmed the status of Jerusalem as a symbol of coexistence and mutual respect and part of the heritage of humanity.

68. With respect to the developments in Gaza on 12 November 2019, it should be emphasized that the occupation was the ultimate cause of all the tension and violence in the area, and that aggression against Gaza would not make Israel secure. The international community must act to immediately stop the aggression against Gaza and to fulfil the right of the Palestinian people to freedom and to a State. Jordan acted as a peacemaker and would continue to be a champion of justice moderation; but the prospects for peace were dwindling, and decisive action must be taken before it was too late.

69. **Ms. Gantana** (Namibia) said that the Special Committee's report once again drew attention to the ongoing human rights violations being committed with impunity in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip, as well as in the occupied Syrian Golan. Her Government was concerned about the Israeli Government's illegal settlement activities and its stated intention to annex the Jordan Valley. Settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory were a key driver of human rights violations, which were being carried out

with impunity. Her Government was deeply concerned about the destruction and confiscation of the property of Palestinians, the exploitation of the natural resources of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the blockade of Gaza, and the arbitrary administrative detention of civilians in the occupied Arab territories. Moreover, the humanitarian, social and political situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory had worsened in recent years and tensions had risen drastically as a result. No amount of humanitarian or economic support could be a substitute for a two-State solution, which would address the legitimate aspirations and security needs of both Israelis and Palestinians.

70. Her delegation strongly condemned all forms of violence against civilians and called for calm in the Gaza Strip following the recent escalation of violence. Despite positive developments in Gaza, such as the significant increase in energy supplies to households, the easing of import and export restrictions and the extension of the fishing zone, the humanitarian situation remained extremely concerning. The state of the health care system was particularly worrying. The continued presence of UNRWA and other human rights organizations was therefore critical.

71. The volatile environment in which Palestinians continued to labour was unsustainable, and the international community could not allow it to continue any longer. Her delegation therefore called on all warring parties to exercise maximum restraint to avoid further endangering the lives of civilians, especially women, children and the most vulnerable. Her Government remained committed to the cause of the Palestinian people and its struggle to exercise its inalienable right to establish an independent State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital. Negotiations should be resumed with a view to reaching a two-State solution, which was the only viable route to peace. The Palestinians' hopes for justice, equality and peace and their longing to be free from fear and exercise their right to self-determination should be at the forefront as the international community sought to assist in resolving that conflict.

72. **Mr. Al-Tememy** (Iraq) said that the Israeli occupation entailed systematic violations of international law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including discrimination, the excessive use of force, could only inflame tension and undermine efforts to revive the peace process. The Zionist entity continued to occupy the Syrian Golan and had imposed its laws on that territory, a decision that was characterized in Security Council of resolution 497 (1981) as null and void. The international community should put pressure on the Israeli entity to curb settlement expansion and

settler violence, and grant the Special Committee access to the Occupied Palestinian Territory. His delegation condemned the Israeli entity's repeated attacks on Palestinian citizens in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, especially in the Haram al-Sharif; the excessive use of force against defenceless civilians, particularly the elderly, women, children, medical personnel and journalists; the systematic demolition of homes, schools, vital services and facilities; the closure of roads and expropriation of land expropriation; the ongoing construction of the separation wall; and all acts of violence, harassment and provocation perpetrated against Palestinians by Israeli settlers, soldiers and police. It called on all Member States and United Nations entities and agencies to continue to assist the Palestinian people so that it could enjoy its inalienable rights, especially that of self-determination.

73. The excessive force wielded by the occupation forces against demonstrations betrayed their fear that such demonstrations would give way to a major popular uprising that would disrupt their activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The Palestinian people had suffered for more than half a century and deserved to see an end to the conflict and the establishment of a free and independent State of Palestine with Jerusalem as its capital. A just and comprehensive peace in consistent with the agreed terms of reference would promote stability in the region and bolster international peace and security.

74. **Mr. Rivero Rosario** (Cuba) said that the reports before the Committee revealed that the Government of Israel was pursuing a strategy of annexation in the occupied territories through, among other measures, the expansion of settlements; the de facto annexation of the occupied Syrian Golan and parts of the West Bank; efforts to strengthen the application of Israeli laws in the West Bank; its attempts to change the status quo concerning Palestinian refugees and the right of return; its failure to contribute to UNRWA; and its decision not to renew the mandate of the protective Temporary International Presence in Hebron.

75. His delegation was deeply concerned at the continued suffering of the Palestinian people following more than 51 years of foreign occupation by Israel, in violation of international and humanitarian law. Cuba rejected the unilateral declaration by the President of the United States of America announcing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, which constituted a serious and flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations, international law and relevant United Nations resolutions. It also violated the legitimate interests of the Palestinian people and of the Arab and Islamic nations.

76. Furthermore, Israel still had not complied with the relevant Security Council resolutions on the occupied Syrian Golan. Any measure taken by Israel to alter the legal status or demographic composition of the occupied Syrian Golan, or to exercise its jurisdiction and administration in that territory, was null and void and without legal effect. All such actions, including the illegal construction and expansion of Israeli settlements in the Syrian Golan since 1967, constituted violations of international law, United Nations resolutions and the Charter of the United Nations. The decision by the United States to recognize the occupied Syrian Golan as Israeli territory, which Cuba rejected in the strongest terms, violated the legitimate interests of the Syrian people and of the Arab and Islamic nations. Israel must withdraw fully and unconditionally from the Syrian Golan and all occupied Arab territories, and constructive and respectful dialogue must be maintained among all parties. The blockade of the Gaza Strip, which had inflicted an economic and humanitarian crisis on more than 2 million Palestinians for over a decade, must be lifted immediately.

77. His delegation welcomed recent efforts to reinstate peace talks between Palestinians and Israelis and to foster intra-Palestinian unity. Cuba also reaffirmed its support for the admission of Palestine as a full Member of the United Nations and called on the Security Council to officially declare its support for such a development. If the Council failed to do so, the General Assembly must act decisively. His Government would continue to support a broad, just and lasting settlement based on a two-State solution leading to Palestinian self-determination with a free, independent and sovereign State within 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital and with the right of return of Palestinian refugees.

78. **Ms. Sarbini** (Brunei Darussalam), said that the report of the Special Committee underscored the deteriorating human rights and humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, one that was both tragic and unacceptable. The recent escalation in tensions following increased illegal settlement activities and a rise in settler violence against Palestinians also gave cause for concern. Her Government called on the occupying Power to comply with international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant United Nations resolutions by putting an end to all illegal and unfair practices that were negatively affecting Palestinians and their rights.

79. In the light of the current situation, the need to resume dialogue was more urgent than ever. Her Government was in favour of a negotiated peace settlement on the basis of a two-State solution within the



pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine. All parties concerned must refrain from any actions that could undermine trust and participate in a credible international peace process. The United Nations had a moral and legal obligation to enable Palestinians to enjoy their fundamental rights to peace, freedom, justice and self-determination and to ensure accountability for violations of international law. The United Nations should retain the question of Palestine on its agenda, protect the human dignity and the rights of the Palestinian people and galvanize multilateral action to help resolve the conflict. The election of the State of Palestine as Chair of the Group of 77 and China in 2019 was a significant step towards global recognition of its just pursuit of lasting peace, security, justice and statehood. Her delegation supported the admission of Palestine as a full Member of the United Nations.

80. **Ms. Ali** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the question of the Israeli occupation of Arab lands and the repercussions of that occupation on regional security and stability had reached a critical stage, as the international community remained derelict in its duty to compel Israel to end its occupation and its other manifold violations of international law. It was high time for the Organization to take serious action to end the brutal, decades-long Israeli occupation.

81. Israel had been trying to alter the legal and political status of the occupied Syrian Golan by attempting, unsuccessfully, to impose Israeli citizenship on its Syrian inhabitants, who had spectacularly thwarted the so-called local elections Israel had attempted to hold in the Syrian Golan in October 2018. By discriminating against, curtailing the freedom of movement of, arbitrarily arresting and conducting show trials of Syrian citizens, who were treated like war criminals, Israel violated many of their rights, including the right to resist occupation and the right to communicate and meet with relatives in their home country of Syria. The Israeli occupying forces had rearrested the Syrian activist Sidqi al-Maqt, who had been released recently after spending 27 years in Israeli prisons, sentencing him to a further 14 years in prison, purely for having released video footage exposing Israeli cooperation with the Nusrah Front and other terrorist organizations in the area of separation.

82. The Israeli authorities also prevented Syrians living in the Golan from building on their own land and had destroyed homes built by their forefathers, citing the failure to obtain a building permit as a pretext. Moreover, they had embarked on a new set of projects to entrench the occupation, such as a wind farm and a cableway that was being installed in cooperation with

the Italian company Leitner. Syrians in the Golan had been forced to register with the Israeli authorities, under pain of confiscation, land that had been in their families for generations.

83. Students in the Syrian Golan had been forced to follow Israeli educational curriculums, and many Syrian teachers, accused of participating in anti-occupation activities, had been fired and replaced with Israeli teachers. In addition, the Israeli authorities had plundered several archaeological sites in the Syrian Golan.

84. The economic life of the inhabitants of the occupied Syrian Golan was also profoundly affected, with Israeli occupying forces having confiscated over 75 per cent of the territory and repurposed agricultural land for military use and for the construction of more than 40 settlements inhabited by 23,000 Israeli settlers. Hazardous waste disposal sites had caused an unprecedented rise in cancer cases in the occupied Syrian Golan. In addition to prospecting for hidden oil and gas reserves and asserting control over groundwater resources, the Israeli authorities diverted water resources to Israeli settlements, depriving the inhabitants of the occupied Syrian Golan of their right to their own water. Furthermore, Syrian farmers were prevented from selling their crops in their home country of Syria.

85. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic condemned in the strongest terms the illegal and immoral decision of the President of the United States of America to recognize the supposed sovereignty of Israel over the occupied Syrian Arab Golan. That decision was a flagrant violation of international law, the Charter of the United Nations and relevant United Nations resolutions, particularly Security Council resolution [497 \(1981\)](#). The document signed by the President of the United States and given to the Prime Minister of the Israeli occupation force was simply a unilateral act by a party with neither the standing nor the political, legal or moral competence to decide the fate of the peoples of the world or to dispose of lands that were an integral part of the Syrian Arab Republic. Any such unilateral measures were null and void and without legal effect.

86. The acts of aggression perpetrated by Israel, such as its open support of armed terrorist groups active in the area of separation of forces, including the Nusrah Front, and its attacks on sites in Syria, had exacerbated regional tensions to unprecedented levels. The most recent such incident, on 11 November 2019, had claimed many innocent lives. The United Nations should therefore to assume its responsibility and compel Israel to withdraw from all occupied Arab territories to the border of 4 June 1967.

*The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.*