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PROVISIONAL VERBATIM RECORD OF THE ONE HUNDRED AND SECOND MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Wednesday, 4 December 1985, at 10.30 a.m.

President: Mr. DE PINIÉS (Spain)
later: Mr. BOUZIRI (Vice-President) (Tunisia)

- The situation in Central America: threats to international peace and security and peace initiatives [21] (continued)
- Question of Palestine: [33] (continued)
 - (a) Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People
 - (b) Report of the Secretary-General
 - (c) Draft resolutions

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The meeting was called to order at 11 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 21 (continued)

THE SITUATION IN CENTRAL AMERICA: THREATS TO INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY AND PEACE INITIATIVES

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Spanish): I should like to inform representatives that a draft resolution (A/40/L.34) has been distributed on this agenda item.

AGENDA ITEM 33 (continued)

QUESTION OF PALESTINE

- (a) REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE (A/40/35)
- (b) REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/40/168)
- (c) DRAFT RESOLUTIONS (A/40/L.23 TO A/40/L.25)

Mr. KULAWIEC (Czechoslovakia): Our deliberations on the question of Palestine are taking place at a time when we are commemorating historical events of extraordinary importance to the Palestinian people. In 1947 the United Nations approved the partition of Palestine, a year later a resolution on the repatriation of the Palestinians was adopted and in 1965 at this time of the year the first Al Fatah operation was carried out in occupied Palestine. May I recall here yet another historic event which received world-wide attention in 1945 and which, owing to its significance, has not been forgotten and can never be forgotten. At this time of the year 40 years ago the trial of the major war criminals, the leaders of Hitler's Third Reich, was begun in Nuremberg. The development and the outcome of the Nuremberg trial demonstrated that the international community cannot forgive crimes against peace, war crimes and crime against humanity. That conclusion is still relevant today and applies to all parts of the world, including the Middle East.

(Mr. Kulawiec, Czechoslovakia)

Our Organization has exerted considerable efforts to establish peace and security in the Middle East and to guarantee fundamental human rights for all peoples living in the region. However, we regret to note that so far a just solution of the question of Palestine has not been achieved. The report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People includes facts indicating that, on the contrary, there is a tendency for the situation to deteriorate.

Our position on this question remains firm and unchanged. The Czechoslovak Government reaffirmed this position in its message of greetings sent to the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. It states, among other things, the following:

"The people of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic follow with understanding and great sympathy the just struggle of the heroic Arab people of Palestine for the fulfilment of their inalienable national rights, including the right to self-determination and the establishment of their own independent State on their territory. We condemn with deep indignation the efforts of the United States, Israel and other reactionary forces, aimed at imposing capitulation on the Arab countries by means of separate solutions that would impede an equitable solution of the Palestinian question, as the core of the Middle East problem, and enable Israel to continue its aggressive expansionist policy of repression and massacres of Palestinian patriots and trampling the rights of the Palestinian people."

We feel indignant when we receive news about the continued repression of the population of the occupied territories by Israel with a view to maintaining the results of its expansionist aggression. Despite the opposition of the world public expressed in resolutions of the United Nations and other international organizations and in a number of other international documents, Israel has

(Mr. Kulawiec, Czechoslovakia)

continued to pursue its schemes of annexation and colonization and to suppress by brutal force the legitimate resistance of the inhabitants of the occupied territories, exposing them to systematic political, economic, moral and physical oppression, not shrinking from attacks against those who were compelled as a result of its policy to flee to other territories - as shown, for example, by the repeated attacks against Palestinian camps in Lebanon. Manifestations of that policy include also the brutal terrorist bombardment of the PLO headquarters in Tunisia. It is quite clear that the purpose of that crime was not reprisal for action taken by the Palestinians. The Israeli publicist Amnon Kapelink wrote in the November issue of the French monthly Le Monde Diplomatique:

"The Israeli Government is in fact a Government of 'diplomatic paralysis' as far as all endeavours for peace with the Arab world, and particularly with the Palestinians, are concerned. It is known that Israel was far from enthusiastic about the Jordanian-Palestinian initiative. The aim of its diplomacy has been and still is to reach a direct agreement with Jordan which would make it possible at last to establish on the West Bank of the River Jordan a Begin-style autonomy. Begin tried to destroy the PLO physically during the war with Lebanon in order to achieve his 'administrative autonomy'. Peres wishes to exclude that organization from the political map in order to force King Hussein to sign a separate peace with Israel."

The aforementioned practices by Israel in the occupied territories, the illegal annexation of eastern Jerusalem and the Golan Heights and the continued occupation of southern Lebanon reveal the true nature of the separate talks that would make possible the continuation of that policy, which should be condemned. That policy, which harms primarily the Arab people of Palestine, and the people of other Arab countries, clearly reflects the interests of world imperialism, which continues to give allround assistance and protection to Israel, disregarding the many United Nations resolutions and appeals.

(Mr. Kulawiec, Czechoslovakia)

In pursuing this policy the ruling class in Israel plays the role of a striking force directed against progressive development in the Arab world. The Middle East crisis is thus not only a sharp conflict between the Zionist circles now ruling in Israel and the Arab people but also a clash between the Arab national liberation movement and one of the forms and branches of world imperialism, unreservedly supported by anti-popular imperialist circles in the United States. Such support may be more precisely called co-operation between partners based on the principle of communicating vessels.

The representatives of Israel and some of their closest allies very often put forward a cliché about the need to provide effective guarantees of the existence of the State of Israel. In 1975 the President of the World Jewish Congress, Nahum Goldman, commenting on this in an interview given to the West German Weekly, Der Spiegel, said:

"The continuing question of absolute guarantee is a naive question of a persecuted nation that has had no policy for 2,000 years. If the existence of Israel had not begun in 1948 by a war it could have looked more for quality than quantity and it would not have to have itself armed by the West to such an extent. Ever since that time the first commandment of Israel should have been to join the family of nations of the Middle East, both in the economic and in other spheres, and to co-operate with them. That, in the long run, is the only true guarantee of existence."

Thus in the sense of Goldman's words the destiny of Israel's existence lies entirely in its own hands. The Government of that State must therefore take into consideration the true realities of the international situation and proceed to seek a just solution to the question of Palestine. Israel should abandon its policy of aggression, colonization and annexation.

(Mr. Kulawiec, Czechoslovakia)

We demand Israel's immediate and unconditional withdrawal from all the occupied Arab territories, including the Arab sector of Jerusalem. The Arab people of Palestine should be allowed to exercise immediately, and to the fullest extent, all of their inalienable national rights, especially the right to return to their homes, the right to self-determination and the right to establish their own independent State on their national soil.

Speaking of a just and comprehensive settlement of the Middle East conflict, and particularly its core - the question of Palestine - we must emphasize that the only feasible way to achieve that is by the multilateral efforts of all the parties concerned. We therefore fully support the Soviet Union's proposal for the convening of an international conference with equal participation of all the parties concerned, including the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as the only legitimate representative of the Arab people of Palestine.

The Sofia Declaration of the Political Consultative Committee of the Warsaw Treaty member countries states that the settlement of the problems of the Middle East would be facilitated by the strengthening of unity, inter alia, in the Palestinian movement. A united Palestinian movement represented by the PLO is one of the prerequisites for a successful solution of the question of Palestine. Ever since its establishment, the PLO has been proving to the world its vitality in managing the affairs of the Arab people of Palestine. That is also why the Palestinians are not separated from the PLO even in the United Nations and why almost unanimous support is given here to the just and legitimate demand to negotiate the question of Palestine with the PLO as the representative of a sovereign and independent nation. Whoever is interested in negotiating with the Palestinians must negotiate with the PLO.

(Mr. Kulawiec, Czechoslovakia)

The Czechoslovak delegation identifies itself with the conclusion of the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People that the United Nations bears full responsibility for securing the rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination, national independence and sovereignty and the return to their homes and their property, as well as for safeguarding their physical protection and providing for their welfare in the refugee camps. The fulfilment of this responsible mission requires that all United Nations Members show political goodwill. Without that pre-condition, there will be little chance of achieving a just settlement in the Middle East and it may be a long time before the Arab people of Palestine are fully free and a serious threat to international peace and security has been averted.

The Czechoslovak Socialist Republic is ready to continue to support the efforts aimed at a just and comprehensive settlement in the Middle East and the securing of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.

Mr. ZAIN AZRAAI (Malaysia): It is no accident that the item the Assembly is discussing is entitled "Question of Palestine", because what is at issue is Palestine - the right of the Palestinian people to exist in an independent State. It is not a matter of boundary adjustments between Jordan and Israel, which could hardly be called a question of Palestine. It is not even a matter of the plight of the Palestinian refugees who have had to languish in camps for more than four decades, since that matter is discussed elsewhere in this Assembly. It is, to repeat, about the Palestinian people and their right to exist in an independent State of Palestine.

(Mr. Zain Azraai, Malaysia)

That right has been denied them not only in fact but also in principle by Israel, which has pressed into service much minutiae of history in an attempt to buttress its position. It would be futile to go into this academic argument, which in any event has been refuted on its own terms in the Assembly and elsewhere and which, incidentally, if pressed, would call into question the right to nationhood of many of the States represented in the Assembly. But we need not go into prehistory, ancient history, Roman history or even the more recent Arab and Ottoman history in Palestine for the 13 centuries before the First World War. The immediate point is simply this: the United Nations assumption of international responsibility for Palestine inexorably flows from its status as a Territory in the Mandate system of the League of Nations. Moreover, it belonged to the Class A Mandate group, whose existence, under the League's Covenant,

"as independent nations can be provisionally recognised subject to the rendering of administrative advice and assistance by a Mandatory until such time as they are able to stand alone".

The United Nations assumed in 1947 a responsibility to the Palestinian people which it has not yet discharged. Except for reasons which are politically motivated, no one truly denies that the Palestinians - Moslems, Christians and Jews alike - are an ancient and historical people. Why, then, are they deprived of that most basic right of any people, however small their number and however recent their history - the right to their own independent State? Yet this denial is made by the very people who wax eloquent and indignant at the mere suggestion that the Israelis should not have their own independent State. How can Israel, and the friends of Israel, insist on its right to exist when they seek to deny that right to Palestine?

(Mr. Zain Azraai, Malaysia)

In this Hall, we hear many protestations of commitment to freedom, democracy, self-determination and other lofty principles. My delegation simply asks those who make such protestations, in the name of what can the people of Palestine be denied their right to their own independent State? Sometimes, in response, arguments of Israel's national security are also pressed into service. Aside from the fact that such security can indeed be ensured in many other ways, can this be accepted as a serious argument from States which at the same time are vociferous in condemning such arguments when advanced to justify - to take recent examples discussed in the Assembly only weeks ago - the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan or the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea, neither of which, at least, denies the principle of the right to independent statehood of the Afghan and Kampuchean peoples? Are arguments of State security for denying a people their right to self-determination seriously to be accepted? How many Member States in this Assembly would not have come into existence, or would cease to exist, if this argument were to be accepted?

Neither arguments of history, then, nor arguments of security now can justify the denial to the Palestinian people of the right to their own independent state. That denial is the root of the conflict which has been characterized as the Arab-Israeli conflict. My delegation prefers to call it the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, because in truth they are the parties directly involved, even though at the same time the Palestinians regard themselves as part of the greater Arab nation. The conflict must therefore be resolved by them, and my delegation asks all those who insist on direct talks between the parties concerned, who are the parties but the Israelis and the Palestinians?

The United Nations has recognized the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, but it is more than that. Such recognition merely reflects the will of the Palestinian

(Mr. Zain Azraai, Malaysia)

people. But, like all colonial Powers, Israel continues to deny this reality. There are others, it is said, or there are divisions in its ranks, it is said, and so on, as if even in the most established democracies there is ever a single, monolithic view. But these are the familiar cries of the colonialist, and we have heard them before. A national liberation movement cannot, however, be denied for ever. Despite the awesome military might which Israel has unleashed on the PLO, despite the campaign of terror and intimidation and harassment, the Palestinian people have shown their commitment in blood, sweat and tears to the PLO. Despite even the awesome propaganda machinery which Israel has deployed throughout the world about so-called PLO terrorism, the international community's commitment to the PLO as the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people remains unswerving.

I should like to say a few words about this so-called PLO terrorism. First, Malaysia deplores the blatant exploitation of the emotion aroused by victims of terrorism to serve political ends. We say, let us not defile their memory; may the souls of these victims be blessed and rest in peace, mourned by all of us, unexploited by any of us.

Secondly, we note that the PLO itself - along with all States - has repeatedly and unequivocally denounced and condemned terrorist acts. Those who wish to be blind will, of course, not see.

Thirdly, who, indeed, are the terrorists? I need not go into the history of Israeli terrorist groups during the period of the Palestine Mandate. I would now only ask this: is the dropping of bombs from great heights or the shooting of missiles from long distances at camps and settlements not a terrorist act merely because we do not see the individual victims who are killed or maimed?

Fourthly, resort to arms in resistance against foreign occupation, domination and colonization is not terrorism.

(Mr. Zain Azraai, Malaysia)

Fifthly, at a more international level, the debate on terrorism, which must concern all of us, will lose its meaning if, in order to serve political ends, efforts continue to be exerted to associate terrorism subliminally with the PLO and to regard every member of the PLO and, indeed, anyone who seeks to resist Israel's current military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza as a terrorist or potential terrorist. These efforts falsify the issues, and it is we - all of us - that will pay the price for such a distortion of the debate.

I return now to the theme of direct negotiations between the parties immediately involved, which we insist are Israel and the PLO, representing the Palestinian people, under any auspices that are acceptable to them. Sometimes it is said that the PLO must first recognize Israel, not before Palestinian independence will be recognized, but - let us bear this in mind - before the PLO can be accepted as a partner in any discussion about the Palestinian future; in other words, explicit recognition by the PLO of Israel before it can be allowed an undefined role in undefined negotiations about an undefined future for Palestine. Is this a reasonable or, even, a serious proposition? The PLO has clearly stated its acceptance of the Fez plan of the Arab Heads of State and Government as well as the Declaration of the International Conference on the Question of Palestine, held in Geneva, whose provisions about the independence and security of all States in the Middle East are clear for all who wish to see. But none of this, apparently, is enough.

(Mr. Zain Azraai, Malaysia)

And yet, let us take the argument a step further. Let us ask those supporters of Israel, who insist on an explicit recognition of Israel by the PLO, whether they have, by the same token, asked Israel for an explicit recognition of the PLO and of Palestinian statehood? We all know the answer. All right, then, if not explicit, an implicit recognition. We all also know the answer. And yet, there is even more. Israel has not only neither explicitly nor even implicitly recognized the PLO and Palestinian statehood; it has explicitly and repeatedly rejected any possibility of dealing with the PLO or any prospect of Palestinian statehood. At whom, then, must the finger of responsibility be pointed?

In the meantime, the agony in the West Bank and occupied Gaza continues. This is made clear in the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People under its Chairman, Ambassador Massamba Sarré of Senegal, to whom Malaysia wishes to record a tribute of appreciation and admiration.

Israel continues to create new facts which would obstruct a just and peaceful solution. Let me only offer the following quotations from the Committee's report to substantiate my point:

"... the Israeli policies of illegally maintaining and establishing new Jewish settlements, and confiscating Arab-owned land, in the occupied Palestinian territories, had continued ..."

Or:

"... the continuing momentum towards settlement ... was accompanied by measures designed to stifle all forms of political, cultural, social and economic expression of the Palestinian people, as well as violence, harassment and provocation of Palestinians by armed Israeli settlers ..."

(Mr. Zain Azraai , Malaysia)

Or, again:

"... according to a report published by Law in the Service of Man, A West Bank-based affiliate of the International Commission of Jurists, indiscriminate detention, accompanied by torture and various forms of ill-treatment, was used for the purposes of ... intimidation of Palestinians."

Or, there have also been other reports

"... of detention without charges, torture and ill-treatment of Palestinians in Israeli prisons and detention centres, including arbitrary beatings, overcrowding, lack of food, of water and health care, denial of educational materials, and discrimination ..."

Or, again:

"In their effort to repress Palestinian opposition to occupation, the Israeli military authorities repeatedly broke up demonstrations, raided houses in villages and refugee camps, declared selective areas 'military zones' and closed them, and engaged in forms of collective punishment such as bulldozing houses, closing shops and imposing curfews."

Or, again:

"Academic and cultural freedom continued to be violated ... as shown by repeated closing of educational institutions, the confiscation of cultural materials, the banning of cultural exhibits and the armed repression and detention of student activists ..."

Or, finally:

"These repressive policies and practices ... have been accompanied by continuing measures to strengthen control over most aspects of life, with the objective of [turning the occupied territories] into a dependent entity aiming at its final absorption and annexation." (A/40/35, paras. 19, 20, 21, 22, 26 and 27)

(Mr. Zain Azraai, Malaysia)

I need not go on. The pattern is entirely clear. It is also consistent with the expressed objective of Israel to obliterate Palestine from the face of the earth and to absorb the occupied territories to be part of Israel. This is an army of occupation to further such an objective. Can we expect it to behave any differently? Can we expect Israel, whose attitude is to regard every Palestinian refugee camp as a legitimate military target, to treat every Palestinian who seeks nothing more than his birthright to his own independent homeland, as a terrorist? Can we expect that Government to follow any other policy than creeping annexation, invasion of its neighbours, and harassment and brutalization of its victims?

From Israel, for as long as it continues to deny the right of Palestinian statehood, we expect no better. The very logic of the Israeli position must lead to what we see today: the arrogance of might, the tendency to expansionism, and the increasing reliance on a military rather than a peaceful solution. But it succeeds in doing so only because of the unstinting and unquestioning support of a most powerful ally, which has only increased Israel's intransigence and truculence. From that Power, the United States, which is a great Power in more senses than one, we have a right to expect something more. A people which prides itself on the principles of its nationhood - democracy, freedom, justice and human rights - must surely know that it is not faithful to its best traditions when it denies those very principles to the Palestinian people.

In the meantime, we, all of us in the international community, are paying a heavy price. Who can deny, looking at the Middle East in the span of even the last decade, that the situation is now more dangerous and more ominous than it has ever been? A feeling of hopelessness and despair must lead to extremism. In Israel itself, more militaristic, Fascist, even racist, tendencies are on the rise. The prospects of a conflict involving the super-Powers remain more real than ever. Failure to resolve the Palestine question has also had a pervasive and pernicious effect on the tone and temper of the international dialogue.

(Mr. Zain Azraai, Malaysia)

The United Nations, by espousing the principles of peace in its Geneva Declaration of 1981, and by providing the machinery for peace in its proposal for an international conference, has pointed the way to a just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine. The Palestine Liberation Organization has accepted the principles and the machinery which represent the near-unanimous will of the international community. Who then is to blame if this opportunity for peace and justice, which reason and moderation and goodwill have created, is not now grasped?

Mr. MOUMIN (Comoros) (interpretation from French): Agenda item 33, "Question of Palestine", which is now under consideration, is one of the political issues to which our Organization has devoted most time, most effort, and even most of its resources, in order to arrive at a just and lasting settlement.

On the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of the founding of this Organization, and the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on decolonization, and the tenth anniversary of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, we are obliged to note that the situation of the Palestinian people remains unchanged, despite the will of the international community to spare no effort to ensure the triumph of right and justice over might and fait accompli.

The United Nations has historically and legally a responsibility to ensure the rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination, independence and national sovereignty.

(Mr. Moumin, Comoros)

So for more than three decades the General Assembly and the Security Council have, at their respective sessions, been adopting many resolutions and measures designed to put an end to Israel's illegal occupation of the Arab and Palestinian territories.

The Israeli Government's refusal to implement the Security Council resolutions calling on it to withdraw fully and unconditionally from those territories is, in our view, proof that Israel does not intend to co-operate with the United Nations in order to find a lasting settlement to the question of Palestine.

Two years ago, in resolution 38/58, the General Assembly recommended the convening of an international peace conference on the Middle East which would bring together all the parties concerned, including the Israeli and Palestinian authorities, with a view to seeking ways and means of peacefully settling the conflict of the century.

Unfortunately, Israel, supported by its natural allies, categorically refuses to participate in such a conference whose goal would be to find a peaceful settlement to the problem of the Middle East.

The Zionist entity has resolved to be the incarnation of evil. It does not hesitate to resort to all forms of repression against the Arab-Palestinian people of the occupied territories.

Indeed, the Israeli Government is continuing to pursue its policy of implementing settlers and confiscating of Arab land. Repressive measures are taken every day to stifle all forms of political, cultural, social and economic expression on the part of the Palestinian people who are the victims of acts of violence and intimidation of all kinds.

To this can be added arbitrary detention without charges and repression of the trade union movement of the Arab workers.

(Mr. Moumin, Comoros)

The Israeli Government has adopted this policy in order to eliminate any national activity by the Palestinian people within the occupied territories and in the neighbouring countries. We still remember the Israeli raid on the Palestinian camp near the capital of Tunisia. That criminal and barbarous act was perpetrated in contempt of the rules of international law and all moral and human conscience.

Faced with these Israeli policies and practices designed to wipe out any expression of thousands of men and women, the Palestinian people have always resisted this occupation both within and outside of the occupied territories.

The validity of the Palestinian people's struggle is rooted in a solid historical and cultural unity that has always characterized that people.

Today, under the courageous leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the sole, authentic representative of the Palestinian people, this struggle receives the unwavering support of all nations that cherish peace and justice.

The international community is deeply concerned over this continuing problem of Palestine, which is the underlying cause of the tension and state of war which has prevailed in the Middle East for the last four decades.

As I draw to the end of my statement, I shall take this opportunity to reaffirm, on behalf of my delegation, the full support of the people and Government of the Comoros for the just struggle of the Palestinian people.

We remain convinced that the establishment of an age of peace and security in the Middle East is linked to the actual exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

This is why the holding of an international peace conference on the Middle East seems to us essential in order to bring about the impetus and political will without which the problem remains.

(Mr. Mounin, Comoros)

Lastly, I should like to pay a warm tribute to Mr. Massamba Sararé, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, and to all the other members of that Committee for the work they are doing to ensure that through peaceful means the question of Palestine is brought to a successful conclusion.

Mr. GARVALOV (Bulgaria): We have to note with deep regret and growing concern that the situation in the Middle East continues to be a very complicated and tense one.

In spite of the explicit and unequivocal will of the international community and the numerous United Nations resolutions and decisions aimed at ensuring a just and lasting settlement of the Middle East problem, the vicious cycle of tragic events in that part of the world has not been broken yet. The underlying cause for this situation is well known to all. It is rooted in the aggressive and expansionist policy of Israel which continues to occupy the Arab territories seized since 1967 and persists in denying the inalienable national rights of the Arab people of Palestine. Without a just settlement of the Palestinian question, which is at the core of the Middle East conflict, no lasting peace can be established in that region. Everyone should realize that.

The fate of the Palestinian people has been and remains the main issue. Deprived of their sacred right to a homeland of their own, the long-suffering people of Palestine have been forced to live in exile or to endure military occupation. For many years the Palestinian people have been subjected to a policy of open terror, mass repression and national oppression. There have been attempts at unlawfully altering the legal status, demographic composition and historically established character of the occupied Arab and Palestinian territories. New forms of political, economic, social and cultural administration have been further

(Mr. Garvalov, Bulgaria)

imposed upon them. Threats have been openly issued by racist elements calling for dearabization of the occupied Arab territories and for a final solution to the Arab problem. The policy of State terrorism followed by Israel was illustrated once again by the raid against Tunisia.

It is also well known that the Arab territories occupied since 1967 are being annexed by Israel. New militarized settlements are being intensively built for this purpose while the existing ones are being expanded and fortified. This fact is amplified by information contained in this year's report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (A/40/35). According to this report over 51 per cent of lands on the West Bank have been appropriated and the number of Israeli militarized settlements built has risen to 179.

All this is being done in defiance of the explicit will of the international community and world public opinion and in flagrant violation of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the norms of international law and the collective decisions of the world Organization.

(Mr. Garvalov, Bulgaria)

It has been universally recognized that Israel would not have dared to challenge the international community so openly and defiantly but for its reliance on the all-round and unqualified support of its "strategic ally" and if the United States had not so systematically used its veto power in the Security Council to block any opportunity to take effective measures against the aggressor. It is precisely that military and economic assistance from beyond the ocean - which in 1986 is expected to surpass the astronomical figure of \$US 4 billion that has enabled Israel to pursue its aggressive and expansionist policy against its neighbours.

Perennial experience of the twists and turns in the Middle East indisputably demonstrates that the Middle East conflict and its core, the Palestinian issue, cannot be resolved through separate deals, back-stage machinations or partial solutions. To judge from past experience, such an approach is contrary to the interests of the Arab peoples and, what is more, provides no solution at all. In essence, the aim of that approach is to block the achievement of a just and lasting settlement of the Middle East problem, eliminate the Palestinian national liberation movement, and remove the question of Palestine from the United Nations agenda and erase it from the memory of the world community. Quite rightly, such an approach has been flatly rejected by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the overwhelming majority of Member States.

We would like once again to point out in this respect that the tragic events of recent years have clearly shown that no power on earth can extinguish the desire of the Palestinian people for freedom and independence. The valiant struggle for the exercise of their inalienable national rights has won them the respect and solidarity of peoples all over the world. The inalienable rights of the Palestinian people have been recognized by the United Nations. The International Conference on the Question of Palestine, held at Geneva in the summer of 1983, and

(Mr. Garvalov, Bulgaria)

the Geneva Declaration adopted unanimously by the States participating in that Conference, were an eloquent and forthright demonstration of the growing world-wide awareness of the just cause of the Palestinian people - a cause reflected in a number of United Nations resolutions and decisions adopted over the past two decades, which enjoys the active support of the vast majority of Member States.

The position of the People's Republic of Bulgaria and other Member States of the Warsaw Treaty Organization concerning the comprehensive settlement of the Middle East problem - an integral part of which is the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Arab people of Palestine - was once again reaffirmed most categorically in the Political Declaration adopted at Sofia on 23 October of this year. That Declaration points out that a comprehensive, just and durable settlement of the Middle East problem can be achieved only through the collective efforts of all the parties concerned on the basis of the total withdrawal of Israel from all Arab territories occupied since 1967; the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Arab people of Palestine, including the right to independence and to establish a State of their own; and ensuring the right of all States in the region to independent existence and development. Furthermore, the Political Declaration underlines that the convening of an international conference on the Middle East under the auspices of the United Nations, with the participation of all the parties concerned, including the PLO, is the practical road leading to a Middle East settlement.

That constructive and realistic programme encompassing all basic components for a lasting and just settlement of the Middle East conflict is in agreement with the principles for resolving the Middle East problem adopted at the Fez Conference of Arab leaders in September 1982, as well as with the position of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries as reflected in the Luanda Political Declaration. Moreover,

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that programme is fully in accord with the United Nations Charter and the numerous decisions of the world Organization pertaining to the Middle East and the question of Palestine.

The overwhelming majority of Member States are unanimous in their support for the holding of an international conference on the Middle East. Suffice it to mention in this respect the Geneva Declaration on Palestine of 7 September 1983 and General Assembly resolution 38/58 C adopted by a large majority of votes. Nevertheless, for two well-known reasons that idea has not been implemented yet, and hence there has been no solution of the Palestine problem.

In the present conditions, strengthening the unity of the Arab countries and of the Palestinian national liberation movement is an important factor for the just and successful settlement of the Middle East conflict and its core problem, the question of Palestine.

Loyal to its consistent foreign policy of principle, my country, the People's Republic of Bulgaria, has provided and will continue to provide wholehearted support for the just cause of the Palestinian people in their endeavour to live in an independent and sovereign State of their own, in peace and co-operation with all the countries of the region.

Mr. JANKU (Albania): The discussion of the "Question of Palestine" once again at this session of the United Nations General Assembly is one more opportunity for world public opinion to see the continuation of the grave tragedy that the Palestinian people have been suffering for many decades now, owing to the policy of genocide of Israeli Zionism supported by world imperialism and reaction.

It is very a significant fact that the discussion of this very crucial problem coincides with the fortieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, and was almost 40 years ago when Israeli reactionists began their savage crusade against the Palestinian people. I mention this to show that the Israeli Zionists

(Mr. Janku, Albania)

not only have not changed their cruel and anti-Palestinian policy but, on the contrary, have continuously and persistently defied world public opinion, which has denounced and condemned it in various international forums, especially in the United Nations.

The events that have occurred since the previous session of the General Assembly testify that Israel has continued to strengthen its régime of repression and violence against the Palestinian people in the occupied territories, and intensified its policy of force and threats against other Arab peoples as well, especially those who have offered shelter to the Palestinians expelled from their own lands.

The facts are numerous and frightful. It is very difficult to find words to describe the horrible crimes that the Zionists have committed and continue to commit against the Palestinians in both the occupied territories and the Palestinian camps in Lebanon. Scenes such as those in which children, under a volley of shots, run to seek out their murdered parents, or where bewildered women pass from one dead body to another in order to identify their relatives are perturbing and revolting.

It is obvious that in committing such deeds the Israeli Zionists aim at inflicting a death blow on the heroic struggle of the martyred Palestinian people and their just cause so as to close the chapter of the struggle of the Palestinian people. From the very first act of aggression to the most recent events, their aim has been physically to liquidate the Palestinian people. To that end they have always pursued a twofold policy, of terrorism and denationalization.

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As a consequence, the number of Palestinians who have been forced to abandon their country and live far from their land has increased. Every Israeli act of aggression and every campaign of violence and repression have brought about the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from their territories in Palestine.

In order physically to liquidate the Palestinian people and suppress their just cause, the activity of Israeli reaction is not limited to the occupied territories; in collaboration with world reaction, Israel has extended its criminal activity to other countries as well, where it has been committing bloody massacres against the Palestinian population living there as refugees.

Who can forget the bloody crimes, the thousands of Palestinian civilians slaughtered in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps during the Israeli occupation of Lebanon, or the unborn massacred in their mothers' wombs? The Israeli politicians have also threatened to undertake new and special punitive actions against Palestinians living in other countries as well.

By so doing the fascists of Tel Aviv are not only saying that they are planning an escalation of their policy of genocide against the Palestinian people, but at the same time signalling that they will intervene further in other Arab countries also. A typical example of Tel Aviv's policy of extermination and terrorism is the latest outrageous act by Israel, whose aircraft, after having flown more than 2,000 kilometres, assaulted the headquarters of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in Tunis.

Such threats not only constitute a new, dangerous precedent in the Middle East but at the same time testify to the accuracy of the analysis made in 1982 by the beloved leader of the Albanian people, Comrade Enver Hoxha, when he said:

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"After Camp David, Israel attacked Lebanon. Now it is demanding the submission of Jordan and is threatening Syria with war. Whose turn will it be tomorrow - Iraq's, Saudi Arabia's or Iran's? The American and Israeli staffs are thinking about and working for this."

Nobody doubts that Israel, in arrogantly continuing to pursue its policy of genocide against the Palestinian people, has always had and continues to have the all-round assistance and support of American imperialism. It was no accident that the most outrageous act of banditry perpetrated by Israel against the Palestinian and Tunisian peoples was immediately endorsed by United States imperialism when it claimed that it had been a "legitimate act of self-defence". The whole world knew that that was a monstrous lie and unanimously denounced it. There is nothing magic or supernatural in the might of the Israeli military machine, which is pressing on the Palestinian people and has continued to terrorize them for many decades now. It is the dollars, the arms and the military potential of the United States and other imperialist Powers that stand behind Israel and incite it to act against the Palestinians and other Arab peoples.

The anti-Palestinian policy of Israeli Zionism and the hysteria that drives it to further intensify that policy are a logical continuation of its expansionist plans to perpetuate its domination over the occupied territories and to extend them yet further. It is always Israel that threatens, provokes and assails other peoples and countries. Acts like the aggression against Lebanon or the recent and most outrageous terrorist act against the PLO headquarters in Tunis can be perpetrated against other countries also. The Israeli fascists now claim that they have the right to invade and trample on the national sovereignty of other States in the Middle East.

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It is in no way an accident that, precisely at this difficult time for the Palestinian people, when they are being killed and tortured, when they are being denied the most elementary human rights and forcibly driven from their homes, a great fuss is being made about alternatives available for "the peaceful solution" of the crisis in the Middle East in general and the Palestinian question in particular. The timing chosen by the enemies of the Palestinian people is intended to deal the Palestinian question a heavy blow. The aim is to create difficult situations for them, situations involving plots and intrigues. But even a quick consideration of the plans of American imperialism at the present stage demonstrates that it wishes the Palestinians to be denied their homeland and their destiny to be decided by others.

In this respect the United States has gone further with its plots. It is doing its best to activate as many Arab countries as possible to serve its persistent determination to achieve its strategic ambition of American domination in the Middle East.

The Soviet social-imperialists too are trying to use the question of Palestine as a card in the bargaining and manoeuvres in their own interest. They continue firmly to persist in their proposal for the convening of an international conference on the Middle East, at which they want to be represented. Although Soviet propaganda claims to be concerned about the question of Palestine, it cannot hide the real aims of its global plans in the Middle East. Moscow is weeping for the destiny of the Palestinian people not because it is really worried about them but because existing situations make it concerned about its interests, which it fears could be affected by the policy and ambitions of the United States in the region.

It is quite obvious that the Palestinian people stand between two fires: the bloody genocide of Israeli Zionism and the diabolical plots of imperialism and reaction. Both of them aim at achieving the same objective, namely, the final blow

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to the Palestinian people and the liquidation of the question of Palestine. And this is all because the Palestinian people are at the forefront of the struggle of the Arab peoples to destroy the plans of zionism, American imperialism and Soviet social-imperialism. It is they that, more than any other people in the Middle East, regardless of the many super-human sacrifices they have made for many decades now, have been waging a heroic struggle to return to their plundered lands and be free and independent as are all other peoples in their own homelands.

The enemies of the Palestinian people, the Israeli Zionists in particular, would like not only to subjugate but even to liquidate the Palestinians. But, just as they have failed to subdue the Palestinians for many decades now and will continue so to fail in the future, so the Zionists will fail to make their insane dreams come true.

The Palestinian people know how to resist and survive. Torrents of blood have washed their lands. They know how to continue their heroic struggle in the face of the cruelty of the occupiers without falling into the traps of the numerous and sophisticated plots hatched by their sworn enemies. They know how to fight, weapons in hand, in order to fulfil their national aspirations.

The People's Socialist Republic of Albania and its people have always stood at the side of the fraternal Arab peoples and the heroic Palestinian people. They have supported and continue to support their just cause and their struggle to oppose imperialist-Zionist aggression, to liberate their occupied territories and to stand up to the plots of American imperialism and Soviet social-imperialism. In these difficult moments more than ever before we stand at the side of the Palestinian people, always in full solidarity with them in their heroic struggle.

The Albanian people are confident that, however protracted the struggle, however great the difficulties, however numerous the enemies and however many the sacrifices required of them, the Palestinian people are indomitable in their

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just cause, which will therefore triumph. It will triumph because it is a sacred cause that has the full and unreserved support of democratic countries and peoples all over the world, the fraternal Arab peoples in particular.

Mr. WIRYONO (Indonesia): The General Assembly is once again taking up the question of Palestine or, more specifically, the core of the Middle East conflict, namely, the continued denial to the Palestinian people of their inalienable rights. On this the fortieth anniversary of the Organization it should be stressed that perhaps no other conflict has so preoccupied the United Nations as that in the Middle East. Indeed from its very first session the General Assembly has been seized of the search for a peaceful resolution of the contending interests and claims and the profound animosities and hostilities that have kept the cauldron of enmity bubbling and all too often boiling over into armed conflict and war.

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Throughout the ensuing years there have been scores of initiatives and decisions designed to create the framework for a just and peaceful negotiated settlement. Since this is also the thirtieth anniversary of the Asian-African Conference, I should like to recall that as early as 1955, at the Bandung Conference, the newly emergent States of Asia and Africa recognized the denial of the rights of Palestinian people as the cause of the Middle East conflict and affirmed their support for a peaceful settlement of the Palestinian question. With the founding of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries in 1961, the attainment of their inalienable rights by the Palestinian people continued to gain increasing prominence in the international community's search for a solution.

Hence, as the ranks of the United Nations continued to expand with the admission of more and more newly independent States, the question of Palestine was brought into full focus within its proper perspective by General Assembly resolution 3236 (XXIX), as well as the decision according observer status at the United Nations to the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Thus, the cause of the Palestinian people for national independence, including a State of their own in Palestine, was elevated by the United Nations to its proper place and the PLO recognized as the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and an equal party in all efforts to seek a comprehensive solution to the conflict.

The subsequent establishment of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People underscored the critical importance the international community attached to those decisions and the fact that the United Nations would henceforth be active in promoting their implementation. My delegation regards the tenth anniversary of the founding of that Committee, on which my Government has had the honour to serve since its inception and which has enjoyed the full support and confidence of the Organization, as an appropriate occasion to reaffirm our collective support for the Committee's set of specific

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recommendations designed to enable the Palestinian people to exercise their inalienable rights. Moreover, those recommendations have remained valid and relevant since they were first submitted to and endorsed by the General Assembly at its thirty-first session, and even more firmly endorsed at every subsequent session. Hence, owing in large measure to the commendable work of the Committee, those recommendations are overwhelmingly supported by the international community and by world public opinion.

It is sufficient to recall that an apex in this regard was the convening two years ago of the historic International Conference on the Question of Palestine. The Declaration and Programme of Action adopted at that Conference reaffirmed that the vast majority of Member States agreed that no effort should be spared to seek effective ways and means to enable the Palestinian people to attain and exercise their rights in Palestine in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the principles of international law. In this connection the Conference also called for the convening of an international peace conference on the Middle East under the auspices of the United Nations and stressed that an essential element of a comprehensive solution would be the establishment of an independent Palestinian State in Palestine. Although the proposed peace conference has been overwhelmingly endorsed at the thirty-eighth and thirty-ninth sessions of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General, despite his diligent efforts to make progress, was nevertheless compelled to issue consecutive reports indicating that the conditions required for the convening of the proposed conference with any chance of success have not yet been met.

Given the seemingly insurmountable obstacles that continue to stand in the way of the early convening of the international peace conference and the fact that the Security Council had not considered the question of Palestine in a comprehensive manner for almost a decade, the countries members of the Non-Aligned Movement, at

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their Conference of Foreign Ministers held at Luanda last September, again called upon the Security Council to consider the situation in the Middle East, including the question of Palestine. In this connection the non-aligned countries reiterated that it is the responsibility of the Security Council to facilitate the convening of the peace conference and to provide the appropriate institutional arrangements to ensure the implementation of the agreements to be concluded at that conference.

My Government fully supported the decision to resort to the Security Council, for the continuing deterioration of the situation in the Middle East, particularly for the Palestinians in the Israeli-occupied Arab territories, points up the urgent need for concerted international action. At the Security Council meetings held last September, speaker after speaker stressed the undeniable fact that responsibility for that state of affairs falls squarely on Israel, for its policies and actions have always been at the root of the aggravated tension and conflict in the region.

My delegation believes that the thorough debate in those Council meetings, as well as the debate on Israeli practices in the occupied territories held by the Special Political Committee at this session, fully documented the endless list of Israeli transgressions against the United Nations Charter and the norms of civilized behaviour. Hence, it is sufficient for my delegation to reiterate that Israel's incessant aggressions against its neighbours, its stepped up repression of the Palestinian Arabs in the occupied territories, as well as its systematic attempts to destroy the PLO, both politically and physically, in the vain hope of extinguishing Palestinian nationalism and obliterating Palestinian national identity, have given no respite either to the States or to the Palestinian people in that region that has for so long been so tragically torn by strife. There can be no question but that Israel's singleminded purpose is ultimately to annex the occupied territories, as it has already done with the Golan Heights and Jerusalem

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and, thereby, permanently to deny to the Palestinian people their inalienable right to self-determination and independent statehood. And it is to that nefarious end that Israel is pursuing and exploiting every chance and opportunity to thwart progress towards the convening of the international peace conference.

While my delegation is aware that certain permanent members of the Security Council were less than enthusiastic about the proposal to hold an international peace conference and that the Council has shown itself deadlocked on this point, we were none the less disappointed that at its meetings last October the Council adjourned without pronouncing itself on the essential requisites for a solution to the problem as embodied in the final documents of the Geneva Conference and the long-pending recommendations of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

On this point my delegation shares the concerns expressed by the Secretary-General in his report, which states:

"that the increasingly divergent policies among the permanent members of the Security Council on the Middle East are one of the factors which have made it more difficult to use the United Nations machinery in the peace process."

(A/40/779, para. 35)

For its part, the PLO has time and again affirmed its readiness to co-operate in the convening of the peace conference, as most recently demonstrated by the agreement reached by between King Hussein and Chairman Arafat in February 1985. Our hope is that Israel's powerful friends will now lend their full support to the Secretary-General's continuing efforts by recognizing that it is ultimately in their and Israel's own interests not to delay any longer the convening of the peace conference. The dangers inherent in ignoring the plight of the Palestinian people and their just cause to gain a State of their own in Palestine are all-too-painfully obvious. My delegation therefore reiterates its appeal to the

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major Powers to eschew their strategic designs on the region and to work together, within the overall framework of the international peace conference, to establish a negotiating process or structure acceptable to all the parties concerned.

After five destructive wars in the region since the founding of the United Nations, and after too many missed opportunities for moving forward to a comprehensive and peaceful settlement, it is time for all States in a position to help to make every determined effort to assure that the opportunity offered by the peace conference can and will still be seized upon.*

*Mr. Bouziri (Tunisia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Mr. KURODA (Japan): In this year of commemoration, one cannot but be reminded that through most of its 40-year history the United Nations has been deeply involved with the question of Palestine. It is therefore particularly disheartening, as we meet in this anniversary year, to note that the decades have not brought us any closer to a settlement of this tragic situation. Indeed, if anything, the plight of the Palestinian people has worsened in recent years.

There continue to be reports of clashes between Palestinians and the Israeli authorities in the occupied territories, where Israel, despite an international outcry, is relentlessly pursuing its policy of settlements. In Lebanon, many Palestinian refugees have lost their homes, and their security is constantly threatened. Moreover, each year the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) reports that it is being called upon to render assistance to ever greater numbers of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and the occupied Arab territories.

As a concrete step toward the early solution of the Palestinian problem, Japan believes that it is essential that both Israel and the Palestinian people make sincere efforts to dispel mutual distrust and to foster a genuine will to coexist. From this point of view, Japan regards Israel's policy of establishing settlements in the occupied territories as an obstacle to peace efforts. Nor can it condone Israel's measures to change unilaterally the status of the occupied Arab territories, such as its annexation of east Jerusalem and the Golan Heights. My Government strongly appeals to Israel to make special efforts to protect the human rights of the Palestinian people in accordance with the Fourth Geneva Convention. At the same time, Japan calls upon Israel to demonstrate its desire for peace by

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adopting a fair and just attitude regarding its administration of the occupied territories.

I should like to take this opportunity to restate the basic position of the Government of Japan on the Middle East problem, at the centre of which is the question of Palestine. First, peace in the Middle East should be just, lasting and comprehensive. Secondly, such a peace should be achieved through the early and complete implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and through the recognition of and respect for the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to self-determination, under the United Nations Charter. Thirdly, each and every path towards the realization of such a peace must be explored, with careful consideration given to the legitimate security requirements of the countries in the region and to the aspirations of all the peoples in the region, including the Palestinian people. Fourthly, Japan is of the view that the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) represents the Palestinian people. Thus, in order to advance the cause of peace in the Middle East, Japan believes that it is essential that Israel and the PLO recognize each other's position and that the PLO participate in the peace process.

The prospects for an early settlement of the Palestine question may be dim, but we must not lose sight of the various international efforts that are being made to achieve peace in the Middle East. These include the accord reached in February of this year by Jordan's King Hussein and PLO Chairman Arafat, under which they agreed to work together for a peaceful settlement. This accord has, in turn, spurred other efforts. The Government of Japan strongly hopes that the parties concerned will show a willingness to make the necessary accommodations to ensure that these efforts will be fruitful. In this regard, my Government is heartened by the Secretary-General's impression, as indicated in his recent report on the situation in the Middle East, that the parties concerned

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"are fully conscious of the urgency of finding an agreed settlement of this most complex problem and of the dangers that further delay could entail for their region and beyond"

and that they have shown

"some signs of flexibility as regards the negotiating process" A/40/779, para. 41).

At the same time, Japan believes that it is the responsibility of the international community to ensure that these efforts are neither ignored nor denigrated but rather that they are further developed so that they will gain the broad support that is necessary if they are to be truly effective. In this regard, my Government would support the idea of establishing a kind of international framework for a peaceful settlement if this would facilitate the peace process.

Japan, for its part, has been making efforts to foster conditions that will lead to a peaceful settlement of the problem. These include, for example, the discussions which Foreign Minister Abe held this summer with the leaders of the countries concerned, as well as the PLO. Japan is also extending increasingly large contributions to UNRWA, which will continue to work to ease the suffering of the Palestinian refugees as long as the situation requires it. Japan does so out of deep humanitarian concern as well as in the knowledge that such assistance also contributes to regional stability.

The Palestinian people are the heirs to a rich and centuries-old tradition. That many of them are living now in exile and many others are experiencing great hardship and are deprived of their basic human rights in the occupied territories is a cruel and senseless tragedy. There is, of course, no simple solution to the Palestine question. But it is my Government's earnest hope that all parties concerned will do their utmost to see that the Palestinian people are accorded the opportunity to embark on a new and brighter chapter of their long history.

Mr. KASEMSRI (Thailand): It was only a few days ago that we observed the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People here at the United Nations. The world was once again reminded that the question of Palestine, which is the core issue of the Middle East conflict, has remained an intricate and intractable issue facing the international community for 38 years now. The concern expressed by other speakers in this Assembly and other international forums on this issue year after year is a clear demonstration of the consensus of world opinion on the gravity of and lack of satisfactory progress in solving this fundamental question. Unless the question of Palestine is resolved on a just and lasting basis, taking into account the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the legitimate security concerns of all States in the region, there can be no permanent peace in the Middle East.

Thailand's stand on the question of Palestine has always been firm and consistent. It is based on the purposes and principles of the Charter and international law as well as a sense of objectivity. In this connection, I wish to quote part of the message that the Prime Minister of Thailand, His Excellency General Prem Tinsulanonda, addressed to the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People on 29 November 1985. It reads:

"As we commemorate this International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, I would like to reiterate, on behalf of my Government and the people of Thailand, our deep sympathy and firm support for the just struggle of the Palestinian people aimed at transforming the concepts of freedom, independence and self-determination into political realities. Indeed, the Royal Thai Government shares the view of the international

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community that a lasting peace in the Middle East, which is vital to world peace and security, cannot be realized while the Palestinian question remains unresolved.

"Thailand opposes any act which is contrary to the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter and international law. We therefore reject the use of force by any State as a means of imposing its will on others and support the legitimate demand that the Arab territories occupied since 1967 be returned. Any comprehensive, just and durable settlement of the problem must be based on the relevant United Nations resolutions. The Palestinian people must be allowed to exercise their inalienable rights to self-determination. ..."

My delegation wishes to add that we view Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which contain the basic elements for a comprehensive settlement, as the corner-stone of a peaceful solution to the Palestinian question. We also believe that, in addition to the right to self-determination, the Palestinian people should be given their inherent right to national independence and sovereignty and their right to return to their homes and properties as well as their right to nationhood. At the same time, the right of all States in the region to live in peace within their secure and internationally recognized boundaries should be respected. We oppose any attempt to annex the Holy City of Jerusalem and to alter its legal and demographic status. We are strongly against the occupation of other countries' territories by force and we condemn the violations of the rights of the people living in the occupied territories. In this regard, my delegation wishes to register our concern over the plight of the Palestinian refugees, whose suffering and hardship necessitate continued international assistance and attention.

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My delegation believes that a negotiated settlement could be brought about only when all parties concerned, including the Palestine Liberation Organization, which is the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, come together at the negotiating table on an equal footing. Therefore, my delegation is in favour of the early convening of an international peace conference on the Middle East to deal with this important matter in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 38/58 C and 39/49 D. We believe that, in the process, an atmosphere of mutual trust and confidence should be created. This would benefit the Middle East peace process as a whole. Without persistent distrust and suspicion, the much-needed progress towards the achievement of a political breakthrough could finally be attained. My delegation therefore appeals to all parties concerned, including the permanent members of the Security Council, to further strengthen their political will and to redouble their efforts in order to bring a just and lasting peace to the Middle East.

In this connection, to quote once again the words of the Prime Minister of Thailand:

"The Royal Thai Government would like to urge all parties concerned to revitalize the peace process so that a just and durable settlement of the Palestinian problem can be realized. The settlement must encompass the legitimate rights and aspirations of all concerned parties. To this end, a climate of confidence and understanding, as well as a true spirit of compromise between all parties, must be nurtured and enhanced."

In conclusion, my delegation would like to take this opportunity to express its sincere appreciation to the Secretary-General and to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, under the able

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leadership of the Permanent Representative of Senegal, Ambassador Massamba Sarré, for their unrelenting efforts and invaluable roles in enhancing international awareness and in facilitating a concerted effort by the world community aimed at resolving the question of Palestine.

Mr. WOOLCOTT (Australia): If there is any one issue which has dominated the history of the United Nations since its founding 40 years ago, it is the web of subjects relating to Israel's relations with its Arab neighbours and the fate of the Palestinians. This issue has dominated not only the plenary Assembly but many of the Assembly's Main Committees as well as other subsidiary bodies. Qualities of patience and good will have been devoted to discussing the issue and trying to resolve the problems. Often, also, rancour and disagreement have won the day. A comprehensive solution, however, still eludes this Organization.

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In recent debates in the Security Council on the question of Palestine the Australian delegation has played an active role. We took the opportunity to encourage discussion along positive, non-polemical lines, in which attention could be focused on possibilities for future action rather than on recriminations over the past. We know from comments made to us, both publicly and privately, that that approach is one shared by many delegations. It is the Australian delegation's hope that discussions in the Assembly will be along similar lines.

The Middle East has been an area of tension and uncertainty for the last 40 years. While there have been times of relative tranquillity, all too often the world has been galvanized by hostilities in the region or by the threat of outbreaks of fighting. The cost to the inhabitants of the region in terms of lives and property is incalculable. Many wrongs have been done. New generations of refugees have been born. Events have given rise to a cycle of violence which is still very much with us, the consequences of which in the future are difficult to gauge. No country can, however, regard itself as insulated from events in the region. The Australian delegation believes that action taken in this body must take account of the overwhelming desire of the peoples of the Middle East for a lasting settlement. This is a goal Australia shares with them. My delegation also believes that any action taken by the Assembly should be carefully weighed lest any ill-considered action upset the volatile situation in the region.

Many proposals have been advanced for negotiation between the parties. Mediators or would-be mediators have come and gone. Resolutions have been passed, motions carried and the debate has continued. There is thus no shortage of ideas. It is not for Australia to attempt to dictate to the parties how they might settle their differences - other than of course to recall to them their obligations under the United Nations Charter. Australia has not adopted any blinkered view of the

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many proposals that have been advanced. We believe, however, that they should be judged by others on their merits rather than on their provenance. In Australia's view, for example, a suitably prepared international peace conference could be part of the process of bringing the parties together for a mutually negotiated settlement. If any agreement on the future of the Middle East is to be a durable one, it is necessary of course to take into account the rights and legitimate aspirations of all the peoples of the region.

That suggests that a comprehensive and durable settlement would only prove possible on the basis of a series of related understandings. Those would include the withdrawal of Israel from occupied Arab territories; recognition by the States of the region and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) of Israel's right to exist within secure and mutually accepted boundaries; the acceptance by all parties of all elements of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973); and acknowledgement of the right of self-determination for the Palestinian people, including the right, if they so choose, to independence and the possibility of their own independent State. A lasting settlement in the Middle East is only possible with the involvement of all the interested parties. At the core of the Middle East problem is the future of the Palestinians, and in our view it is necessary to remove the barriers to direct discussions with representatives of the Palestinian people.

The mere identification of the parameters for a possible solution indicates the complexities confronting the international community. If we are to achieve a lasting settlement, we shall need flexibility and political commitment. In the view of the Australian delegation, however, the first important step must be to begin the process of reconciliation and dialogue. This is a most difficult task in some ways and will demand courage and determination. Unpalatable as it is, the

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present cycle of violence and rigidity may seem to some less dangerous than to chart a new course. Any such complacency would in the view of my delegation constitute a great disservice to the peoples of the region and indeed to the peoples of the world.

The peoples of the Middle East, especially the Palestinians, have been the victims of uncertainties and hostilities for far too long. Many of them despair of the international community having anything to offer them in the way of a more stable and peaceful future. Some of them have turned to violence. Indeed a pattern of attack and counter-attack has characterized events in the Middle East. Recent incidents have shown clearly the futility of killing based on vengeance, retaliation or the desire to terrorize. Violence on one side has not pre-empted a response on the other but instead seems only to have perpetuated the hostilities.

It is against this sombre and depressing background that any signs of positive progress should be embraced. To my delegation, the initiative of King Hussein of Jordan seemed to offer the promise of progress.

The Australian delegation hopes that all those concerned will continue to explore the possibilities for a lasting peace in a spirit of mutual tolerance and understanding. A lasting and durable peace in the Middle East will continue to be elusive unless that commitment is demonstrated by all concerned.

Mr. BANGULZAI (Pakistan): The question of Palestine is the oldest issue on the agenda of the United Nations, and this points to the inability of this world body to bring about a just settlement, as well as to its continuing concern over the problem. The question of Palestine is also at the heart of the Middle East conflict which has intensified with time and poses a grave threat to international peace and security.

For nearly 30 years the General Assembly and the Security Council have debated the issue and adopted decisions to promote a just settlement. We expect these

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efforts to continue unremittingly because the issue concerns a denial of the right of a people to self-determination, something which is sanctified by the United Nations Charter as one of the fundamental human rights.

The tragedy of the Palestinian people began with the creation of Israel and the consequent systematic Zionist aggression to deprive them of their national rights in their ancient homeland. Millions of Palestinian people have no choice other than to live under repressive Israeli occupation or to leave their land and face the rigours and hardships of exile.

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In their ruthless attempt to transform the whole of Palestine into a greater Israel, the Israeli authorities remain engaged in a relentless campaign to erase every symbol of Palestinian nationalism and to suppress every manifestation of the Palestinian people's struggle to regain their national right to self-determination and independence. They are also attempting to change the status and the historical character of the occupied territories, especially the Holy City of Jerusalem.

Many speakers have highlighted the Israeli policy of terror and persecution practised against the Palestinian people inside the occupied territories, Israeli attempts at the permanent absorption of those territories and Israeli acts of aggression against its Arab neighbours and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). None the less, those illegal and aggressive actions are germane to the Palestinian question and bear repeated mention.

The occupied territories remain the scene of deliberate Israeli policies of persecution and harassment of the Palestinian population, aimed at driving the Palestinians out of their land or into isolated enclaves in order to make room for new Israeli settlers. The Israeli settlements are the most glaring evidence of Israeli schemes for annexation of the occupied territories.

According to one study Israel had seized 51.2 per cent of the total area of the West Bank by May 1984 and has continued to create new settlements as well as to confiscate additional Arab lands during the year under review. The continuing momentum towards settlements has been accompanied by measures designed to stifle all forms of political, social, cultural and economic expression by the Palestinian people and by violence, harassment and provocation by the police and armed Israeli settlers against the Palestinians. Reacting to growing resistance to these repressive measures by the Palestinians in the West Bank, the Israeli Government decided last August to reinstate its policy of administrative detention for up to

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six months without laying charges and deportation of persons considered to be security risks. Those policies and practices aimed at suppressing Palestinian national expression and resistance to Israeli military occupation are reinforced by further measures to strengthen Israeli control over most aspects of life.

Outside the occupied territories Israel continues to pursue a policy of expansionism and aggression against its Arab neighbours and relentless attacks against the Palestinians and the PLO, which symbolizes the Palestinian aspiration to self-determination. A case in point is the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, the consequent tragedies of Sabra and Shatila and the continuing incursions by Israel into the Palestinian refugee camps in southern Lebanon. The murderous attack on PLO premises in Tunisia and the campaign aimed at maligning the PLO reflect the driving vengefulness with which Israel is attempting to silence the Palestinian voice calling for freedom.

Israel's illegal measures and its acts of aggression against its Arab neighbours have been firmly denounced by the international community. In numerous United Nations resolutions it has repeatedly called upon Israel to desist from aggression and its illegal policies and practices inside the occupied territories. The Security Council and the General Assembly have repeatedly declared null and void the Israeli measures to change the status of the occupied territories, especially Jerusalem.

The United Nations has also offered a basis for a just and lasting settlement of the Palestinian question and the Middle East conflict. The imperatives of such a settlement are immutable and were outlined in the guidelines prepared by the International Conference on the Question of Palestine convened under United Nations auspices in Geneva in 1983. These are:

(Mr. Bangulzai, Pakistan)

"(a) The attainment by the Palestinian people of its legitimate inalienable rights, including the right to return, the right to self-determination and the right to establish its own independent State in Palestine;

"(b) The right of the Palestine Liberation Organization, the representative of the Palestinian people, to participate on an equal footing with other parties in all efforts, deliberations and conferences on the Middle East;

"(c) The need to put an end to Israel's occupation of the Arab territories, in accordance with the principle of the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force, and, consequently, the need to secure Israeli withdrawal from the territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem;

"(d) The need to oppose and reject such Israeli policies and practices in the occupied territories, including Jerusalem, and any de facto situation created by Israel as are contrary to international law and relevant United Nations resolutions, particularly the establishment of settlements, as these policies and practices constitute major obstacles to the achievement of peace in the Middle East;

"(e) The need to reaffirm as null and void all legislative and administrative measures and actions taken by Israel, the occupying Power, which have altered or purported to alter the character and status of the Holy City of Jerusalem, including the expropriation of land and property situated thereon, and in particular the so-called 'Basic Law' on Jerusalem and the proclamation of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel;

(Mr. Bangulzai, Pakistan)

"(f) The right of all States in the region to existence within secure and internationally recognized boundaries, with justice and security for all the people, the sine qua non of which is the recognition and attainment of the legitimate, inalienable rights of the Palestinian people as stated in subparagraph (a) above." (A/40/35, annex II, para. 4)

(Mr. Bangulzai, Pakistan)

In order to give effect to those guidelines, the Conference recommended an international peace conference on the Middle East. The idea of such a conference, with the participation of all parties to the conflict, was subsequently approved by the General Assembly in 1981, and it became the subject of intensive consultations in the Security Council. Regrettably, like several peace initiatives in the past, the proposal for an international peace conference remains deadlocked.

Important peace initiatives have come from the Arab leaders themselves, but all have foundered on the rock of Israeli intransigence. The Fes Peace Plan, offered in September 1982, and the most recent proposals initiated by King Hussein of Jordan are part of a series of such initiatives, which reflect the sincerity of the Arab States in seeking a just and lasting solution of the Palestine and Middle East questions, consistent with the principles of the Charter.

The Israeli response to these initiatives has been outright rejection, intensified campaigns to vilify the Arab States and the PLO and the wanton use of force to destroy chances of peace. Clearly, Israel desires to keep the region in turmoil and the Arab States destabilized in order to consolidate its hold on the occupied territories and to push its expansionism. The support available to it from its powerful allies has emboldened Israel to pursue this policy with impunity.

The inherent justice of the Palestine cause ensures its eventual triumph. Israeli repression cannot subdue the heroic struggle of the Palestinian people, under the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization. The day will soon come when the Palestinian people will regain their national right to a sovereign State of their own in their homeland - Palestine. Pakistan salutes the valiant people of Palestine, and we pledge our solidarity with them in support of their cause, that of freedom.

(Mr. Bangulzai, Pakistan)

Until the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people are restored, the international community, especially the United Nations, has a sacred obligation to help them in their just struggle. Firm action by the Security Council, such as that prescribed in Chapter VII of the Charter, has become urgently necessary to force Israel to heed reason and respect the relevant United Nations decisions and resolutions for a just solution of the problem. Meanwhile, it is also important that the basic rights of the Arab and Palestinian population living under Israeli occupation are fully protected.

Before concluding, I wish to place on record our deep appreciation of the work of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the dedication and skilled guidance of its Chairman, Ambassador Massamba Sarre. The activities organized by the Committee, including seminars, conferences and symposiums for non-governmental organizations serve to keep the focus on the Palestinian tragedy and to mobilize international opinion for a just settlement of the problem.

MR. TURKMEN (Turkey): This year the debate on the question of Palestine, which is the central element in the search for peace in the Middle East, is taking place against a background of rising expectations, combined with dramatic events reflecting the desperation, frustration, bitterness and hatreds engendered by 40 years of conflict. The peoples of the area and the world community have again vacillated between hope and disappointment. The divergence of interests and perceptions, not only between the opposing parties, but also sometimes between the protagonists of the same cause, the intricacies of the relationships in the area, the antagonistic involvement of non-regional countries, should not obscure the core of the problem, which is to bring justice and peace to the Middle East by recognizing the rights of the Palestinian people.

(Mr. Turkmen, Turkey)

While the overall situation in the Middle East obviously continues to be unstable and potentially dangerous, there is now a greater consciousness, at least among some of the parties most directly affected, of the urgent need to make progress towards a negotiated settlement. There seems to be a new recognition that the alternatives to an agreed solution are too dangerous, both for the region and the world. There are complex questions to be resolved, but the international community wishes to believe that we are, after nearly 40 years, closer to the beginning of a process which may open the way to a negotiated settlement that will bring security and lasting peace for all the parties involved.

The developments of the past four decades in the Middle East have shown that there can be no peace without justice, and that the lack of a comprehensive solution which effectively addresses all aspects of the problem breeds nothing but insecurity, instability and immense human suffering. We strongly believe that this is the time to make a major and determined effort with a view to changing this state of affairs in the region, exploring all possibilities in this regard and giving firm support to the evolution of a just and lasting settlement.

Turkey has always had a direct interest in the peace and stability of the Middle East. This stems both from our geographical situation and our historical legacy, as well as our special ties of friendship with the people and countries of the region.

We are dismayed that the upheavals and the destabilizing effects of the conflict have brought immense suffering and human, political and economic losses to the region for an intolerably long time. The consequences have extended beyond the bounds of the Middle East and have severely strained international relations on an ever-growing scale. Over the years new elements of tension have been injected into the basic situation, and a cycle of escalating violence has often obscured the

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search for a solution to the fundamental question. We have, from the very beginning, deeply felt the tragedy of the Arab people of Palestine, and have been convinced that unless and until the Palestinian people find their rightful place in the political map of the Middle East, through the recognition and the exercise of their inalienable rights, there can be no lasting peace in the region.

We have never minimized the difficulties in the way of a peaceful settlement, and we do not do so now. But we have always believed that resolute steps should be taken if these difficulties are ever to be surmounted. It is evident that these steps will require substantial contributions from all the parties concerned. We are convinced that their real interest will be best served by promoting conditions conducive to dialogue and conciliation. Actions which hamper the search for a peaceful solution and distract attention from this basic goal should be abandoned, and the movement which we have witnessed this year towards creating a sound basis and format for negotiations should not be permitted to suffer any set-back.

(Mr. Turkmen, Turkey)

There is an evident need for all the parties involved to establish, as a matter of priority, a consensus within themselves on their respective intentions and positions on the approach to a peaceful settlement.

The courageous initiative undertaken in February this year by His Majesty King Hussein and Chairman Arafat of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) constitutes, in our view, the driving force of the search for a negotiated settlement. Recognizing the importance and serious nature of this initiative, we have regarded the Jordanian-PLO accord of 11 February 1985 as an opportunity which should not be wasted. Following this initiative, we have witnessed resistance to it and counter-productive actions which have for months created ambiguity as to the fate of this genuine effort for peace. But we hope that the Jordanian-PLO initiative will survive the dangers and the difficulties of the past months and prove its lasting value.

His Majesty King Hussein eloquently elaborated before the General Assembly the approach embodied in the Jordanian-Palestinian accord. He then stated:

"We are prepared to negotiate, under appropriate auspices, with the Government of Israel, promptly and directly, under the basic tenets of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). These negotiations must result in the implementation of Security Council resolution 242 (1967) and resolve all aspects of the Palestinian problem." (A/40/PV.12, p. 17)

The responsibility of the United Nations on the Palestinian question and the Middle East crisis was also emphasized by King Hussein, as well as the role of the countries with a special interest in the conflict. The General Assembly reaffirmed last year its call for the convening of an international peace conference on the Middle East. It also reaffirmed that a just and comprehensive settlement of the situation in the Middle East could not be achieved without the participation, on an

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equal footing, of all the parties to the conflict, including the PLO. These constitute the basic issues which need to be satisfactorily resolved in the near future in order to open the way to a negotiated settlement.

The role of the United Nations in the question of Palestine and the Arab-Israeli conflict does not need much elaboration. It is true that this involvement has not so far produced results, but the parameters of a just and lasting solution have been drawn in the United Nations context and it will be up to the parties involved to translate them into concrete steps towards a comprehensive settlement. As the Secretary-General has observed in his report on the situation in the Middle East, the support of the major Powers, especially the Soviet Union and the United States, will be essential for any lasting peace in the area. We hope that the beginning of the dialogue between these two countries will be sustained and bring a positive contribution to the peace efforts in the Middle East.

My Government's basic position on the conflict in the Middle East has been repeatedly stressed from this rostrum. No peace can be achieved without the withdrawal of Israel from all Arab territories occupied since 1967, the recognition of the right of full self-determination to the valiant Palestinian people in the format which they will freely accept, and respect for the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity, and the right to live in peace within secure and internationally recognized boundaries, of all the countries in the area.

There is no doubt that such a peace can only be attained by a radical change in Israel's mentality. Israel should understand, especially in the light of its recent experiences, that the use of force will only be counter-productive in the long run, that the international community as a whole abhors and condemns Israeli practices and faits accomplis in the occupied Arab territories, that it cannot sustain forever its present policies of egocentrism and intransigence based on

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military superiority and reliance on only one country in the world, that it has no right to seek security by creating conditions of insecurity for its neighbours and by threatening regional and world peace. We hope that the leaders of Israel will finally understand that the lasting interests of their country requires not the use of force and defiance of the international community, but a determined effort to achieve security through peace and conciliation.

It is difficult to under-estimate the obstacles to a comprehensive settlement in the Middle East which will encompass a solution to the Palestinian problem. But it is equally clear that as long as such a settlement eludes us, the Middle East will continue to be a source of tension, conflict, convulsion and violence, with repercussions extending beyond the region and severely reducing the prospects of an improved environment for international peace and security.

The whole world, therefore, has a stake in a just and peaceful solution to the Palestinian problem. This can only come about if the prejudices, the rigidities, the illusions and the influence of entrenched interests which affect political approaches to the Palestinian problem are overcome. It is only then that gradually a convergence of views and interests might emerge to the benefit of the peace of the area and of the world as a whole.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.