



General Assembly

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DEC 7 1987

UN/PA/CONF/100

PROVISIONAL

A/42/PV.80.
1 December 1987

ENGLISH

Forty-second session

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

PROVISIONAL VERBATIM RECORD OF THE EIGHTIETH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 24 November 1987, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. FLORIN (German Democratic Republic)

later: Mr. WIJewardane (Vice-President) Sri Lanka

- Question of Palestine [38] (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 10.20 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 38 (continued)

QUESTION OF PALESTINE

- (a) REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE (A/42/35)
- (b) REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/42/277)
- (c) DRAFT RESOLUTIONS (A/42/L.33 to A/42/L.35)

Ms. NGUYEN BINH THANH (Viet Nam): Forty years ago, the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 181 (II), which recommended, among other things, the establishment of an Arab State in Palestine. Since then, numerous resolutions have been adopted year in and year out, yet the solution to the question of Palestine, the core of the Middle East crisis, the root cause of the Arab-Israeli conflict, is not in sight. The Palestinian people are still deprived of their inalienable fundamental national rights, the right to self-determination and independence and the right to establish their own State in their homeland. Half of the Palestinian population has been driven out of their homeland, languishing in exile in refugee camps or dispersed elsewhere in the world. The other half continue to live under the yoke of the barbarous, repressive régime of the Israeli occupation forces.

As has been indicated in reports and information on developments for the past year, Israel has not only persisted in, but has even intensified its repressive measures against the population in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories. Pursuing the "iron-fist" policy, the Zionist occupation forces have launched massive campaigns of detention and terror, arresting and detaining without charges or trials hundreds of Palestinians suspected of opposing the illegal occupation, shooting Palestinian demonstrators, closing schools and universities, and imposing curfews in several areas of the occupied territories. The Zionist authorities

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have, at the same time, sent their military aircraft to bombard repeatedly various Palestinian refugee camps, killing many innocent civilians, including women and children.

Together with those acts of aggression and terror, the Israeli occupation forces have, over the past year, speeded up the establishment of new Israeli settlements in an attempt to alter the political, cultural, religious and demographic features of the occupied Arab and Palestinian territories, thus realizing their scheme of colonization and expansion in that part of the world.

It is obvious that Israel could not have persisted for the past four decades in such policies of expansionist aggression, ruthless oppression of the Palestinian people, arrogant and insolent defiance of world opinion, which continue even today, without United States encouragement and assistance. Through its so-called strategic alliance with Tel Aviv, Washington has tried by all possible means to strengthen Israel's aggressive role, to encourage its escalation of aggression and colonization in an attempt to get rid of the Palestinian people's just struggle for their inalienable national rights and to sow division among Arab countries and peoples. Also, under the Free Trade Agreement for Mutual Co-operation within the framework of that strategic alliance, the United States has not only increased the supplies of sophisticated weapons, but has even developed military aircraft industries in Israel and secured the latter's participation in the United States Star Wars programme, causing serious danger to peace and security in the Middle East and in the world.

Of late, the United States Administration has been pressing for the adoption of a bill by the Senate to close the offices of the the Palestine Liberation Organization in the United States, including its Observer Mission at the United Nations. This act of the United States Administration has not only shown its

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hostile attitude towards the Palestinian people, led by the PLO, their only legitimate representative, but also constitutes a brazen challenge to the United Nations and the conscience of mankind.

Notwithstanding Israel's ruthless repression and terror, supported by the United States imperialists and other reactionary forces, and in spite of all their treacherous manoeuvres, the Palestinian people, under the leadership of the PLO, its sole legitimate representative, has overcome untold hardships and difficulties, heroically and steadily advancing along its chosen path. With its iron-willed determination, and the strong unity, further strengthened at the meeting of the Palestinian National Council at Algiers last April, with the solidarity of the Arab peoples and the strong sympathy and support of peace- and justice-loving people all over the world, the Palestinian people, led by the PLO, will certainly win final victory in its heroic struggle for its inalienable national rights. No brutal force, no treacherous or wicked scheme or manoeuvre can subjugate the heroic Palestinian people, who have continuously fought for the past 40 years for its independence and freedom. Its just struggle will certainly prevail.

Since the question of Palestine is at the heart of the Middle East crisis and the root cause of the Arab-Israeli conflict, it can be solved only within the framework of a comprehensive, just and durable solution to the situation in the Middle East. Such a solution, as has been reiterated time and again in various resolutions of the United Nations and of the Non-Aligned Movement, cannot be achieved without the total and unconditional withdrawal of Israel from all Palestinian and other Arab territories occupied since 1967, and the regaining and exercise in Palestine of the legitimate and inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to return to their homes, the right to

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self-determination and the right to establish a sovereign, independent State in Palestine. Any partial or separate solutions, as has been demonstrated in the past, can only lead to further complication and deadlock, and make the situation even worse.

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As the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, the PLO has the inherent right to participate on an equal footing in all endeavours, including international conferences, for the attainment of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

In the search for such a comprehensive solution to the situation in the Middle East, the United Nations has an important role to play, especially in convening the International Peace Conference on the Middle East with the participation of all parties concerned, including the PLO, on an equal footing. In that connection it is heartening to note, as observed in the Secretary-General's report, that none of the members of the Security Council opposed in principle the idea of an international peace conference under United Nations auspices and that

"in recent months there had been indications of greater flexibility in attitudes towards the negotiating process". (A/42/277, para. 3)

However, further efforts have still to be made to remove the obstacles raised by the negative attitude of the United States and Israel and to set in motion the preparatory process for an international peace conference to find a comprehensive, just and durable solution to the situation in the Middle East, the core of which is the question of Palestine.

Mr. BELONOGOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) (interpretation from Russian): The question of Palestine has now been on the United Nations agenda for 40 years. I believe that the causes of the present tragic plight of the Palestinians require no lengthy explanation. Those causes are the Israeli occupation of Arab lands, the policy of the creeping annexation of territories seized by force of arms with all the ensuing grave consequences for the indigenous Arab populations, and the Israeli authorities' refusal not only to leave those territories but also to recognize the legitimate national rights of the Palestinians.

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The aftermath of more than 20 years of Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories - since the 1967 war - is truly depressing. On the West Bank and in Gaza we see a continuous campaign of repression against all those who express disagreement with the occupation régime. Large parts of the Palestinian lands have been confiscated and, contrary to all international conventions, an ever increasing number of Israeli settlements are being established there. The line pursued in the economic field by the Israeli occupation authorities is nothing short of colonialist: the exploitation of natural resources and manpower is proceeding at full speed. The ruling circles of Israel are anxious to break down the national identity of the Palestinian Arabs in an attempt to force them to reconcile themselves to rule by the occupation authorities. But neither the policy of terror nor the attempts to drive an entire people into a ghetto have broken their will.

The Palestinians selflessly continue to resist occupation, and they continue as in the past firmly to support the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as the sole legitimate representative of the Arab Palestinian people. On the West Bank and in Gaza there is no doubt that the PLO is the only organization representing the interests of the Palestinian people and that it is their leading political body.

With the support of an overwhelming majority of States, the General Assembly has formulated principles for solving the Palestinian problem; those principles are generally recognized as unquestionable by all who sincerely seek to establish a just and stable peace in the Middle East. With utter clarity, they reiterate the inalienable right of the Palestinians to return to their homes, and their right to self-determination, independence and statehood. The material basis for the exercise of those rights - as for the achievement of a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict - can be laid only with the withdrawal of Israeli troops from all the Arab territories occupied since 1967. The only appropriate means of

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achieving a peaceful, just and comprehensive solution to the conflict is the convening of the International Conference on the Middle East.

Similar positions with respect to the problems of settling the Middle East question are held by the Arab world. That was reiterated once again at the conference of Heads of State or Government of Arab countries at Amman. But what is the position of the other side - Israel and the United States of America which supports it? While the Arabs advocate the idea of the International Conference, Tel Aviv and Washington sabotage it. While the Arab countries demand the liberation of the occupied lands, Israel, with the connivance of the United States, is trying to retain them. While the Arab States single out the Palestinian problem and say that the Palestine Liberation Organization, as the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, should be a party to the conference, Tel Aviv and Washington stubbornly ignore the PLO.

The cardinal aspect of the Middle East conflict is the question of the self-determination of the Palestinians. A just and durable foundation of peaceful relations based on the principles of equality and equal security among the countries of the region, including the State of Israel, can be built only when real conditions are created for the Palestinian people to exercise its inalienable national rights. As clearly demonstrated by the experience of almost 40 years, any other solution can only further worsen the situation in the region. That fully applies also to all sorts of plans to grant the population of the Palestinian territories so-called full autonomy or to create an "autonomous Palestinian administration" there.

The lack of a settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict results in the emergence of ever more problems. Of particular concern in the current circumstances is the arms race, which is taking on qualitatively new dimensions and is already approaching the level of nuclear missiles. Reports of Israeli testing of missiles

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of the Jericho 2 class, with a range of 1,500 kilometres, confirm the fear that reliance on force remains the corner-stone of Israeli policy towards neighbouring Arab States.

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As far as the Soviet Union is concerned, it is willing as before to co-operate actively and constructively with all those who are anxious - not only in words but in actual deeds - to bring a just and lasting peace to the Middle East. During the festivities on the occasion of the seventieth anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution in Moscow there was published a new book by the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Mikhail. S. Gorbachev, entitled Perestroika and New Thinking for our Country and for the World. Referring to the Middle East, Mikhail Gorbachev states:

"... we realize that in the current situation it is difficult to achieve a harmony of interests between the parties to the conflict. But it is necessary to go on searching, it is necessary to try to reduce to some common denominator the interests of the Arabs, Israel, its neighbours and other States."

Mankind is now living in conditions of interdependence. The edifice of peace cannot be strong if some part of it is subject to a threat of destruction. But the threat can be removed only when the existing contradictions are settled on a just basis, taking into account the legitimate interests of all parties, through their collective efforts.

It seems that something else should also be mentioned here. To have one's own interest does not at all mean to proclaim only one's own charter in our common house or to proclaim some particular area a sphere of one's own vital interests and on that basis to claim the role of overseer of its fate or to impose one's own norms and standards on its peoples. Such approaches have never yielded any good fruits, but today they are simply archaic.

Foreign policy, if it really claims foresight and wisdom, is impossible without accommodating interests of other parties and without an equitable democratic dialogue, which presupposes a readiness to find mutually acceptable

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solutions and compromises. It would be difficult in fact to imagine any solution to a problem involving conflicting interests of various countries and peoples - as is the case with the Arab-Israeli conflict - without compromises and agreements acceptable to all, not just to one side.

The Soviet Union has taken active and constructive measures in a search for a just and lasting settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. In our view, a solid basis for such a settlement can be provided by fulfilment of the following requirements, which, incidentally, have been reflected in many decisions by our Organization: first, withdrawal of Israeli troops from all the territories occupied by them since June 1967; secondly, ensuring of the legitimate national rights of the Arab people of Palestine, above all its right to self-determination and the establishment of its own independent State; and thirdly, ensuring of the right of each State in that region, including of course Israel, to uninhibited development and safe existence. We are convinced that the fullest implementation of those principles is in keeping with fundamental interests of both the Arabs, including Palestinians, and Israel.

Unfortunately, we have to state again that the forces which persist in the hope that they will continue to ignore the actual realities of the Middle East situation are still active. We believe that that approach is unwise and devoid of perspective. Nor does it correspond to the interests of the State of Israel itself. What is needed is a different, civilized way out of the impasse, that is, the convening of the International Conference on the Middle East under the auspices of the United Nations. All the parties concerned, including the PLO, and the permanent members of the Security Council would take part in the Conference, which is a tested and reliable instrument of collective diplomacy.

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There is no doubt that such a forum, which is called upon to find decisive solutions to key problems of the Arab-Israeli conflict, should be thoroughly prepared. That is why in July of last year we proposed the establishment of a preparatory committee within the framework of the Security Council. Today, as before, we believe it is necessary to ensure the most thorough preparation of all aspects of the Conference. As was stressed by Mikhail S. Gorbachev in the aforementioned book:

"... it is important that the negotiating process start moving, that it include existing bilateral and multilateral contacts, and that it ensure an active search for such a political settlement."

In spite of the fact that so far it has not been possible to proceed directly to convening the International Conference, we can say that over the past year the international community's support for this approach has grown substantially. A political potential has been created capable of giving, through the United Nations mechanism, a necessary impetus to the Middle East settlement process.

Unfortunately, thus far it has not been engaged to its fullest capacity, although the adoption of Security Council resolution 598 (1978) has demonstrated that there actually exist real possibilities for effective interaction among Security Council members, including its permanent members. It is important now to multiply efforts to shape an international consensus on the need to convene the Conference.

We call upon all States to make a constructive contribution to resolving the conflict in the Middle East and achieving a just settlement - the solution of the Palestine issue being, naturally, its key element.

Mr. OTT (German Democratic Republic): In the history of the United Nations there is hardly any other problem that has been dealt with so often and for such a long time as the question of Palestine. A major part of the work of the General Assembly, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the

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Palestinian People and other bodies is aimed at settling that conflict, which has been smouldering for decades. Efforts in that regard have been intensified as it is increasingly recognized that the continuation of the unsettled question of Palestine is not only preventing a settlement of the entire Middle East conflict but is also seriously threatening international peace and security.

Also, this year we have heard alarming reports about Israeli attacks against Palestinian refugee camps, murdered Palestinian students and the continuation of an inhuman occupation régime. Now, as before, an entire people is deprived of its homeland and denied its right to determine its own destiny. Millions of people are living in refugee camps and the whole Palestinian people is still exposed to arbitration, violence and Israeli aggression and occupation.

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That would not be possible without the backing and assistance given to Israel by its strategic ally. After the deliberation of the question of Palestine for more than 40 years at the United Nations, it has not been possible so far to find a solution to that problem. The main reason for this is that certain imperialist quarters are still striving for hegemony and domination, when dialogue, co-operation and realism are required and are, indeed, the order of the day. That is a course which does not allow for tranquillity and stability to prevail in the Middle East, although the peoples desire and need them for their own development and for securing world peace.

It becomes ever more evident that the question of Palestine, as the core of the Middle East conflict, is linked with all the other problems, which must also be solved. Otherwise a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the entire sorely afflicted region will be impossible. The question of Palestine is an expression of the complex and manifold, interrelated and complicated nature of the problems that have arisen in that region, problems that can only be solved in their interrelationship and through joint efforts by all parties. This also becomes clear from the report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly at its forty-second session, in which he stated, with regard to that question:

"... the search must by all means be sustained for a comprehensive settlement through a negotiating process, under United Nations auspices, in which all parties would participate". (A/42/1, p. 2)

In the general debate, the German Democratic Republic outlined its principled position on the solution of the Middle East conflict and on the necessity for convening an international Middle East peace conference.

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Foreign Minister Oskar Fischer stated:

"... there is a growing response to the proposal to convene an international peace conference on the Middle East in which all interested parties would participate, including the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. Direct arrangements by the United Nations Security Council for a negotiating mechanism could bring such a conference nearer." (A/42/PV.10, p. 76)

This position is not subject to tactical fluctuations, but stems from the necessity to settle existing conflicts by exclusively peaceful means and thus to contribute to strengthening international peace and security. Hence, it is in full conformity with the purposes and principles of the United Nations and the desires and hopes of the overwhelming majority of States.

There are continuing attempts to exclude the Palestine Liberation Organization from the solution to the problems in the Middle East. Their aim is to deny the internationally recognized representative of the Palestinian people its right to have a say in the matter in which it is directly involved. Recently an attempt has been made to question the role of the PLO by denying the obligations undertaken in the Headquarters Agreement.

Especially at a time when the convening of a Middle East peace conference and thus the quest for solving the question of Palestine meets with an ever-growing response, such steps must be regarded as attempts to prevent a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Middle East conflict. Typically enough, relevant United Nations decisions are trampled under foot.

But, despite all difficulties and problems, the Palestine Liberation Organization has, over the more than 20 years of its existence, furnished proof that it is the sole, legitimate representative of its people. It cannot be excluded

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from a solution to the question, for that would mean not taking into account the interests of the Palestinian people and would give rise to a sham solution.

Everyone who is really interested in a solution to the question of Palestine must involve the Palestinian people and the PLO in the settlement so that future tensions and conflicts can be avoided. Without the implementation of the sovereign national rights of the Palestinian people, in particular its right to establish its own independent State, a just and lasting solution of the Middle East conflict is bound to remain utopian. Only together, and with the inclusion of all States and peoples of the region, with the involvement of the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council and of other interested parties, can the complex and difficult problems be solved. This is the main reason for holding the conference and we support its convocation. Many resolutions of the United Nations, the Arab League and of the Movement of the Non-Aligned States are guided by that approach.

No country - large, medium or small - can today withdraw from the realities of the international situation. When we work jointly for a comprehensive system of international peace and security in view of the threatening destruction facing mankind, then we cannot remain passive when the solution of international conflicts is at stake, since a spark from there can set the world on fire.

Every State and every responsible politician must be measured by how they meet the challenges of the future, and how they respect the right to life and all other rights of the peoples.

The German Democratic Republic advocates that the question of Palestine and the entire Middle East conflict be settled as early as possible. This requires, first and foremost, the withdrawal of Israeli troops from all Arab territories occupied since June 1967. The events in that region do not leave us unaffected nor does the suffering of the people.

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It is also for that reason that the German Democratic Republic has for many years made its contribution, as a member of the United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, to a solution by negotiation so that the Palestinian people may at last enjoy its sovereign rights. I should like to thank the permanent representative of Senegal, Ambassador Massamba Sarre, Chairman of the Committee, and all its members for their untiring efforts. In this connection, the Government of my country would like to invite the Committee to hold the 1988 European regional seminar on the question of Palestine in the German Democratic Republic. We are convinced that such a seminar would contribute to a better understanding in Europe of the question of Palestine and would constitute a supportive step towards its solution.

The German Democratic Republic will continue to stand at the side of the Palestinian people and the PLO, its sole, legitimate representative, and to support its just struggle for national independence, statehood, peace and social progress. It will also support all steps aimed at strengthening the unity and cohesion of the PLO and the Arab States for a peaceful solution in the Middle East. The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the United Nations as a whole, can also rely on the German Democratic Republic in the future as a partner for a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Middle East conflict and its core, the question of Palestine.

Mr. SHIHABI (Saudi Arabia) (interpretation from Arabic): This year, for the fortieth time, the problem of Palestine is being addressed by the United Nations. Forty years have elapsed since the problem first entered the consciousness of the United Nations, and for 40 years it has moved through its lobbies and ascended its rostrums in the hope of a just solution. Forty years have passed since the child was stolen from its true mother and claimed by a false, deceitful mother. It was brought before a judge who the upholders of justice hoped would restore their rights; they expected justice to be done with respect to their complaint. That judge ruled that the baby should be divided into two halves, one for the real mother, who screamed in shock and fear at the loss of her own flesh and blood, and one for the false mother, who quickly accepted the judge's ruling and fell into the snare.

Forty years - remembered by the United Nations and recalled by us today - have elapsed since the adoption of that impious General Assembly resolution, which violated the United Nations Charter, and which is rotten in its roots and blemished in its ramifications because of the illegal means through which it was adopted. At the third session of the General Assembly the imperialists represented their colonies and the occupiers the peoples of the countries they occupied. They cast their votes against the wishes and expectations of those peoples. Subsequently those peoples were liberated from their rule and stand proudly amongst us today as proud States with full membership of this international Organization. That fair-minded majority today rejects zionism and deplores its practices and objectives. Now, when those proud independent States have taken their rightful place and are raising their true voices in the councils of the international community, we all know that if the false Zionist claim were to be presented to the General Assembly today it would be defeated just as any thief is defeated in the face of justice and any counterfeiter in the face of the righteousness of the law.

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We have witnessed 40 bad, dark years under the false umbrella of the resolution adopted at the third session of the General Assembly. Then as now the Palestinian people has opposed zionism and Israel and demanded its rights in the international community. Before then Palestine had for 30 years been under the yoke of foreign colonialism, with the Palestinian people fighting a colonial Power which opened the gates of their country to foreign immigrants who came there to settle in an attempt to realize illusory dreams. They artificially created the conditions that enabled them gradually to take over the country and transform its people, the rightful masters of the country, into aliens in their own homeland, in their homes and in the homes of their forbears.

The Zionists' real asset is their strong influence in the countries of colonialism and the centres of foreign influence. By imposing their influence in certain capitals, they have been able to take over the land of another people that was living in safety in its homeland. After that, they secured a warrant of theft from the General Assembly at its third session, just as we had witnessed at the second session, in November 1947. That was a shameful occurrence, the vestiges of which the United Nations should erase from its records. The United Nations should free its conscience of its consequences; today, that conscience has become a true expression of the conscience of all the peoples of its Member States.

The question has been before the United Nations for 40 years. What has happened in Palestine? And what direction is Israel taking? What path should we follow? What is the future? It is nearly 90 years since the Zionist organizations proclaimed their dreams and went on to usurp a place for themselves in the land of Palestine under the protection of colonialism, which brought them there. They then took over a part of Palestine, with foreign support that provided them with the means of conquest and the instruments of despotism. After that, they took over the

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rest of Palestine, extending their usurpation and realizing their dreams. Through all this, the situation in the region went from bad to worse. All Israel's claims amount to one falsehood outpacing, competing with and manipulating an earlier falsehood, all with the aim of committing the grave sin of their dreams: a "Greater Israel" from the Nile to the Euphrates.

Despite all this, Israel talks of security and peace and complains of the injustice of the Arabs not surrendering to its despotic desires, not voluntarily relinquishing their countries to the usurper, not recognizing the legitimacy of the theft of their homelands and not hailing with appreciation the usurpers who imprison them and inflict all forms of oppression on the owners of the land they occupied, with the aim of settling and building a State on a foundation of Arab skulls.

We have before us the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, document A/42/35, summarizing the 1987 fruits of what was sown in the land of Palestine by zionism and its supporters in 1947; fruits of the suffering for the Arab Palestinian people, the legitimate owners of that land. The Arab people in Palestine constitute the most important, the most serious and the greatest reality in the land of Palestine; they impose their presence as the core of the problem both within and outside the United Nations. It is a people that has been tried by 70 years of tragedy, since 1917, and which has gained, through its experience and its ability to survive and grow, all the means by which to confront the Israelis. Added to this is its absolute right to its country; no one can challenge this in order to save a wicked oppressor, for right has its own intrinsic power that cannot be defeated. It will in the end remain as master of the arena.

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I should like to put on record here my appreciation of the Committee's objective report, which reflects an honest effort to arrive at the truth, which Israel is tarnishing and preventing the world from perceiving, using unjust and illegitimate means of every kind. But right will triumph in the end and cannot be subdued, and the truth will inevitably surface, despite the Zionist establishment and without it. The Committee's efforts are but one of the manifestations of the living conscience of the United Nations following the attainment of its comprehensive, universal character and a proper decision-making process. The Committee's work, judging by what is mentioned or not mentioned in the report - because Israel and its elements are fighting the Committee even in administrative departments in this building - is this year's testimony and reaffirmation that Israel and Zionism are mocking the international Organization, as is done every year, violating right and law and committing criminal acts that call for condemnation and punishment, until rights are returned to the Palestinian people.

What are the Israelis doing in Palestine? Some people choose to defend Israeli racism, but Palestine and the Palestinian people are not objects in the auctions of election circles or the international political markets of subjugation. Let them go to Palestine and see how racism competes with Zionism, how it becomes jealous of it and envies its achievements. The racism of Zionism starts outside its borders; it starts with those who are to be permitted to come to settle in the land of the Palestinian Arab people. Racism accompanies the newcomers in its worst form.

The report does not discuss the racism of Zionism, but it clearly depicts the disparity between the condition of the true people of the country who are legitimately there and within their rights and that of the Zionist who comes from abroad to take over the home and land of the Arab citizen, the owner of the home and the land; to take his place in the economic field, as well as his right to

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water and space; to usurp his place in the sphere of learning and being educated; to steal his land, his home, his farm, the water he needs for irrigation and the markets for his products; and to attack him because he is an Arab, while the attacker escapes punishment because he is a Jew. In this connection the Committee states the following in its report:

"In particular, the Committee noted reports relating to the growing confiscation of agricultural lands and water resources, to the arbitrary taxation and restrictions imposed on the commercial and industrial sectors, and to the continuing destruction of the economic, demographic, social and cultural structure of the occupied territories." (A/42/35, para. 25)

That is the truth of the Zionist presence in Palestine.

If one examines the past and present of most of the Israeli rulers a unique record of terrorism in all its aspects is revealed. If Rabbi Kahane were a citizen of any country in the responsible world and committed the crimes of which representatives are aware, he would be behind bars from now to the end of his days. But for the Israeli authorities he - and there are many like him - is a deputy and a leader enjoying parliamentary immunity, criticized superficially by the authorities but actually protected for his crimes. Anyone who wants a detailed study of the racism of Zionism can get it at any time. I wish to preserve the dignity of this international Organization, and I hope that nobody will take on the defence of Zionist racism. Today it is the crime of our time. It is the crime of all times, of any day, a crime spreading over the land of Palestine against every one of its Arab people because he is an Arab - every day and every hour. Anyone who is ignorant of its reality should try to witness its practices and visit Palestine to see for himself what the Committee says in the following extract from its report:

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"The Committee remained gravely concerned at the continued imposition of the 'iron-fist' policy by Israel, the occupying Power, in the occupied territories, in an effort to curb popular sentiment and activities in opposition to the occupation and in support of PLO." (para. 22)

Is there any entity calling itself a State in this world that does not itself recognize its own borders? Ask the Israeli establishment where the borders are. Is there an entity in the world in which the people that own the land on which it claims to establish itself do not comprise its essence? Ask Israel where is the place of the Arab people, the owners of the Palestinian land, on their own land. In 1948, when the British Mandate over Palestine was terminated, the Jewish immigrants under the umbrella of foreign rule owned - with the connivance of that foreign rule - only 6 per cent of the land of Palestine, while 94 per cent was owned by the Arabs. What is the position of the Arab population now, the 5 million Palestinians? Where is their location on the land of their own country? The Committee's report states:

"The Committee wished once again to express its utmost concern at these policies and practices of Israel, the occupying Power, and to bring them forcefully to the attention of the General Assembly and the Security Council as they clearly violated the Fourth Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949 and had serious repercussions not only on the attainment by the Palestinians of their inalienable rights, but also on peace and security in the region, and on international efforts to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive solution to the question of Palestine, the core of the Middle East conflict." (para. 26)

That needs no explanation.

Israel claims that it desires peacefulness and seeks peace. What has Israel done for peace and peacefulness? It usurped the rest of the land of Palestine. It usurped the Golan. It invaded Lebanon and now controls the southern part of that

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country, it attacked Arab countries, from Tunisia to Iraq. It initiated four wars against the neighbouring Arab countries, after it had usurped Palestine itself. It attempted to impose on Lebanon the peace of capitulation. It continually threatens the safety of the region and its States. It rejected the Arab peace plan adopted by the 1982 Fez summit, despite the great sacrifices that represented for the Arabs. It rejected the plan because it did not want a balanced peace. Last, but not least, it rejects and disrupts by all possible means United Nations efforts even merely to convene an international conference to discuss the possibilities of peace. Even discussion of the possibilities of peace is rejected by the Israeli authorities. Do such people really want peace?

(Mr. Shihabi, Saudi Arabia)

What then do they want? Golda Meir, a former Prime Minister of Israel, said in 1969, "There is no such thing as Palestinians; they have no existence." That is what they wanted. Golda Meir disappeared and what she said have disappeared, and here are the 5 million Palestinians working to regain their rights.

Zionists certainly realize that they live on usurped land and survive with borrowed money. They reject a balanced peace as if they were racing against time until the hour when they will confront the whole Arab and Moslem world throughout its extensive area and with its numerous peoples. Time is not on their side and the future could be full of surprises. Is the continuance of oppression and blindness the objective of people who want to establish a State? Can any State be established in any other way than on the basis of stability, justice, peacefulness and peace, all of which the Israeli entity lacks? Can any State be established today except on a definite territory and by people who legitimately and historically own their land and gain their livelihood from its resources?

The Israeli entity lacks all this. Furthermore, it wants war to be a mode of living, a means of sustenance and a justification for stability. Does not this fundamental contradiction call for investigation of the basis on which the United Nations deals with the Palestine problem and its effects and consequences for the people of Palestine, the peoples and States of the region, and even international relations as a whole? The most important function of the United Nations is to provide a just peace, stability and balanced relations between peoples and States.

We find in the Committee's report the following statement:

"The Committee considers that, at this critical juncture, urgent positive action by the Security Council is required on the recommendations formulated by the Committee in its first report and those adopted by the International Conference on the Question of Palestine held at Geneva in 1983."

(A/42/35, p. 23)

(Mr. Shihabi, Saudi Arabia)

Should we not, therefore, consider seriously the problem of the Arab people of Palestine as we record today, for the fortieth year, the failure of this Organization to restore their rights to the Palestinian people, and the failure of the Member States of the Organization to deter Israel and to charge the Israeli establishment and those that support it and supply it with the instruments of arrogance, the means of war and the money that enables it to commit its crimes against Arabs and Moslems with the responsibility for what is taking place on the land of Palestine and outside Palestine against Arabs and Moslems?

Al Quds, the first kiblah and the third holiest mosque, stands as a steadfast citadel in the conscience, thoughts and commitment of every Arab and Moslem. The Zionists, now and ever since their presence desecrated it, are attempting to tamper with its character and change its features. We warn them that tampering with it and with its Holy Places will be the spark that will ignite the Moslem world to defend its sanctity. There is no doubt about the Moslem world's determination to restore its full Arab context and religious nature to Al Quds, and to ensure the complete preservation and safety of its Holy Shrines.

At previous sessions, on the occasion of the the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, members have heard messages from King Fahd bin Abdul-Aziz to the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, in which he reaffirmed the commitment of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the rights of the Arab Palestinian people from the time the problem began until it is concluded and injustice is abolished from the land of peace, and said that our commitment to the right of the Arab Palestinian people to establish their own independent State on their own territory, under the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization, their sole, legitimate representative, would remain a commitment until the triumph of the

(Mr. Shihabi, Saudi Arabia)

rights of the Arab and Islamic people, as would its commitment to security and a just peace. Within the next few days, members will hear again the message of the Custodian of the Two Holy Places on the occasion of the commemoration here of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

The Arab call for peace in the Fez summit peace plan of 1982 provided a historic opportunity had the Zionists wanted peace. But, as can be clearly seen, they are exerting every effort to prevent peace.

I conclude my statement by affirming that every day that passes with the Israeli authorities persisting in their oppression and injustice will further delay the prospects of peace and confront the United Nations with more serious responsibilities than those it now faces. The Geneva Declaration adopted by the United Nations International Conference on the Question of Palestine, held in 1983, included the following statement:

"a just solution of the question of Palestine, the core of the problem, is the crucial element in a comprehensive, just and lasting political settlement in the Middle East".

It also referred to

"the international tension that has persisted for several decades in the Middle East, the principal cause of which is the denial by Israel, and those supporting its expansionist policies, of the inalienable legitimate rights of the Palestinian people". (A/CONF.114/42, para. 1)

Can we see the truth before it is too late?

Mr. ZAPOTOCKY (Czechoslovakia) (interpretation from Russian): Forty years have passed since the adoption, at the second session of the United Nations General Assembly, of resolution 181 (II), on the partition of Palestine. For all these years, despite repeated appeals and endless efforts by the international

(Mr. Zapotocky, Czechoslovakia)

community, Israel has been impeding the establishment of an independent Arab
Palestinian state. As a result, the Middle East has for decades now been shaken by
crisis and violence and become one of the most serious hotbeds of international
tension.

(Mr. Zapotocky, Czechoslovakia)

Since the formation of the State of Israel, the peoples of the region have experienced a series of wars, acts of violence and terror, often with the direct participation of Powers located thousands of kilometres away from that sorely tested region. The unresolved Palestinian question remains at the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict in the Middle East, without a settlement of which it will be impossible even to think about restoring peace and stability to the region or eliminating that dangerous hotbed of tension.

Over past decades, the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people have been affirmed in a series of General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. The international community has worked tirelessly to realize those rights, as reflected in the positions and activities of the League of Arab States, the countries of the socialist community, the Non-Aligned Movement, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and many other international governmental and non-governmental organizations. We take this opportunity to commend the efforts made by the United Nations, its various bodies, its Secretary-General and the relevant units of the Secretariat.

Unfortunately, however, we must note that, despite all these international efforts, the situation has not improved. On the contrary, as pointed out in the report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Population of the Occupied Territories,

"the general policy of the Government of Israel continues to follow the same lines as in the past". (A/42/650, para. 206)

The policy of persecution and terror persists against the Arab population of the occupied territories, while threats and acts of aggression continue against neighbouring countries.

(Mr. Zapotocky, Czechoslovakia)

Until there is a radical change in the policy of the Israeli administration and its political, financial and military supporters, the volatile situation in the region will continue to stand on the threshold of military conflict. That too confirms the fact that no one's security can be guaranteed at the expense of the legitimate rights and interests of others.

Israel's myopic policy, based on the violent trampling on the rights of the Palestinian people and on the refusal to accept the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as that people's sole legitimate representative, engenders the persistence and exacerbation of the situation.

Czechoslovakia welcomed the outcome of the eighteenth session of the Palestinian National Council, which it considers a major step towards the restoration of the unity of the PLO and the strengthening of its authority and ability to act. The PLO should be acknowledged and respected as a full-fledged sovereign partner in negotiations on a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine.

In our view, the only genuine way to achieve such a settlement is through the convening of an international peace conference on the Middle East, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 38/58 C, with the participation of all interested parties, including the permanent members of the Security Council, the Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel. A year ago, we welcomed the Soviet initiative to accelerate preparations for such a conference through the establishment of a preparatory committee, comprising the permanent members of the Security Council.

In his reports, the Secretary-General has repeatedly kept the Security Council and the General Assembly informed about how international positions are lining up on this question. In this year's report on the work of the Organization, the Secretary-General states that:

(Mr. Zapotocky, Czechoslovakia)

"it has not yet proved possible to obtain the agreement of all the parties to the principle of an international conference and this has hindered my efforts to make progress on the procedural issues. ... In spite of these set-backs the search must by all means be sustained for a comprehensive settlement through a negotiating process, under United Nations auspices, in which all parties would participate". (A/42/1, p. 2)

In that connection, the Czechoslovak delegation reiterates that the current situation urgently demands a speeding up in the preparations for the international peace conference on the Middle East, including the start of the work of the preparatory committee. It is necessary, however, for those who have assumed that a separate solution would be possible to re-examine their positions and demonstrate the political will necessary to achieve a just and lasting settlement of the Palestinian problem, and thus of the Middle East problem.

We often hear references to "terrorism" in regard to the situation in the Middle East. In that connection, I must point out that we have always consistently opposed and continue to oppose all forms of individual and, especially, state terrorism. But, we vigorously condemn demagogic campaigns and those who wage them with the intention of using the label of "terrorist" to discredit the national liberation struggle, while simultaneously financing armed terrorist mercenaries. That hysteria and hypocrisy work hand in glove with those who do not actually want a just settlement in the Middle East and who thus stir up distrust of Arab countries and the Arab resistance movement. The fact is that those loud campaigns distract attention from the genuine causes of the Middle East crisis and feed off the tragedy of the peoples of the Middle East.

That is why we think Syria's proposal to hold an international conference under United Nations auspices to define international terrorism and distinguish it from the national liberation struggle deserves the most careful study.

(Mr. Zapotocky, Czechoslovakia)

We were gravely concerned to learn that the United States Senate had passed Bill No. 940, by the terms of which the establishment, existence and activities of the Permanent Observer Mission of the PLO to the United Nations would be declared illegal. In that connection, we fully agree with the communiqués issued by the Non-Aligned Movement and the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and with the position of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People: that United States Senate Act is the latest in a series of recent measures by the executive and legislative branches of the Government of the host country with respect to several Permanent Missions to the United Nations. It is not only clearly illegal and in contravention of the Headquarters Agreement, but it is also an attempt to discredit the PLO in the eyes of the United States public and to damage the interests of the PLO at a time when the United Nations is making intensive efforts to seek a just, lasting and comprehensive settlement of the Middle East problem and to solve the question of Palestine.

(Mr. Zapotocky, Czechoslovakia)

In conclusion, I should like to express my conviction that the international community will increase its efforts on behalf of the just cause of the Arab people of Palestine, including the implementation of their inalienable right to establish their own State. However, in order to find a just solution to the question of Palestine and to ensure a stable peace in the region, it is necessary for Israel to renounce its policy of aggression, occupation and annexation and to withdraw its forces from all the territories it has occupied since 1967. We believe that the Palestinian people's heroic struggle for their national liberation will meet with success and that the United Nations will make a substantial contribution to that cause.

Mr. AL-GHAILANI (Oman) (interpretation from Arabic): The question under consideration in the General Assembly today is as old as the Organization itself. It is a question that has claimed the Assembly's attention ever since the first session and the Assembly has continued to discuss it for over four decades.

The question of Palestine is well known to everyone; it is the core and crux of the Middle East problem. It is discussed year after year in the General Assembly, the Main Committees, special committees, the Security Council, in conferences and numerous symposiums. In spite of that, positive steps towards the desired resolution of this main humanitarian question - which must be based on Security Council and General Assembly resolutions - have, unfortunately, not been taken to date. This is what has made the problem more and more complicated and made it one of the most serious issues threatening international peace and security and regional peace. The deteriorating situation has affected the international community's credibility and its attempts, through the United Nations, to uphold the principles enshrined in the Charter.

The situation in the Middle East came into prominence in 1967 with one resolution, namely, Security Council resolution 242 (1967), which Israel rejected

(Mr. Al-Ghailani, Oman)

at the time and which it refuses to implement even until this day. The United Nations has been unable to make Israel comply with it. Israel has escalated its aggressive practices and perpetuated its occupation, and that has led the United Nations to adopt repeated resolutions.

At this time the world welcomes the overwhelming desire of the international community for a speedy solution of the question which is before the Assembly and calls upon the five permanent members of the Security Council to find an early solution to the current deadlock with regard to the holding of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East with the participation of all the parties concerned. The Palestinian people continue to suffer Israeli occupation and they look forward to such a conference as a means to attaining their legitimate rights, including the right to self-determination in their country, their homeland. The peoples of the entire region wish to see the Conference bring about a just, honourable and permanent peace.

The circumstances that have led to agreement among the parties to the Middle East conflict as regards the importance of peace provide an important opportunity that must be seized, otherwise peace will never be established in one of the most dangerous areas of the world. The General Assembly is called upon to strive for the early convening of the International Conference on Palestine and the situation in the Middle East so as to restore peace to the region.

In conclusion, my delegation wishes to commend the efforts of the United Nations Secretary-General and his assistants in regard to the question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East. In his report the Secretary-General recognizes the different circumstances involved, both positive and negative. In supporting that report we have great hope that an international peace conference will be convened at an early date and that the scourge of war and the killing and displacing of peoples in the Middle East region will be avoided.

Mr. BASENDWAH (Yemen) (interpretation from Arabic): I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of the southern and northern parts of Yemen, namely, the Yemen Arab Republic and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen.

The discussion of the question of Palestine at this session is of particular importance in view of the fact that it coincides with the seventieth anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, the fortieth anniversary of the creation of the State of Israel under the resolution calling for the partition of Palestine, and the twentieth anniversary of Israel's occupation of the remainder of Palestine, namely, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, and the Holy City of Jerusalem, in June 1967, as a result of Israel's aggression against Egypt, Syria and Jordan.

Israel has been in Lebanon for five years, starting in 1982. That invasion was intended to eliminate the Palestinian existence and was followed by frightening, pitiless massacres in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps, resulting in hundreds of victims among unarmed Palestinian refugees - women, children and old people. Those sad memories indicate clearly the scope of the tragedy of our brother people of Palestine whose sons are still exposed to mass assassination, imprisonment and exploitation, only because what they want to do is claim a right guaranteed to others; they wish to live free in an independent State on their own national soil.

If the General Assembly by its resolution 181 (II) of 1947 guaranteed the establishment of a Jewish State, it has not thus far been able to guarantee the establishment of an Arab State, despite the fact that 40 years have passed since the adoption of resolution 181 (II).*

* Mr. Wijewardane (Sri Lanka), Vice President, took the Chair.

(Mr. Basendwah, Yemen)

But things did not stop with the expropriation of a part of Palestine in order to establish a Jewish State. Israel has plundered all of Palestine; it persists in its behaviour owing to the United Nations inability to impose the implementation of its various resolutions.

Thus Israel is practising a policy of unjust oppression of the Palestinian people both within and outside their homeland. Those familiar with the intrigues and acts of aggression perpetrated against the Palestinian people, those who are familiar with what the Palestinian people have had to endure since the British Mandate know that no people - with the exception of the Namibian and South African peoples - has suffered such an overwhelming tragedy as the Palestinian people. Foreigners in that Arab State have become the leaders and the masters, and the people of the State are persecuted, imprisoned or living as refugees in neighbouring Arab States.

Palestinians in exile are unable to contact members of their families. They keep on rehearsing their memories without knowing when they will be able to return to their country, from which they are being kept out by the occupation authorities. Palestinians are often facing death because of Israeli air raids against Palestinian refugee camps or of terrorist operations by mercenary bands.

A number of Palestinians have been martyred in several capitals of the world. Because we do not wish to take up too much of the time allotted to the Assembly on the item I shall not cite the names of all the victims of these Israeli terrorist acts committed within and outside Palestine, which they occupy by force, whenever such acts can be carried out.

In an attempt to deceive the international community, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Israeli entity, Shimon Peres, in the general debate at this session, spoke of his Government's desire for peace, but his utterances were laden with lies. He conveniently forgot that the way to peace has been well laid out by the

(Mr. Basendwah, Yemen)

United Nations in General Assembly in resolution 38/58 C, calling for a Middle East peace conference with the participation of all the parties concerned, including the Palestine Liberation Organization, on the basis of equality. All the permanent members of the Security Council would also participate in the conference. Everyone knows which party refuses to go along with the convening of such a conference, thereby rejecting peace. The Palestinians have declared, and continued to declare, to the entire world - as recently as yesterday, through Mr. Farouk Kaddoumi, who made a statement from this rostrum - that they are ready to participate in the conference when it is convened; while the Israelis, through their Prime Minister continue to state that they reject the convening of such a conference and the relevant United Nations resolution. Who, then, is refusing and rejecting peace?

Any peace based on recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people will be rejected by Israel, since the solution of the question of Palestine is the only way to establish a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

The laudable efforts of the Secretary-General and his colleagues, who have prepared a report on the situation in the Middle East, deserve our thanks. We appreciate that the report cannot describe the full details of all the criminal Israeli practices against the defenceless Palestinian people, since thousands of pages would be required to do so. However, the report does expose the crimes of the Israeli occupation authorities, such as the negation of freedom and human rights.

Recently we learned of the Shin Beth crimes against Palestinian prisoners. We have finally learned of what the authorities in the Israeli secret service have been doing. We have been informed of their means of torture and of how they have forced the courts to condemn the accused. They have been so consistently encouraged in this by Israel's leaders that the scandal is being constantly mentioned in the press.

(Mr. Basendwah, Yemen)

We call upon the Secretary-General to continue his efforts for the convening of the international peace conference, even in the face of Israel's rejection of such a conference. We hope that the resolution calling for the convening of the conference will not suffer the same fate as other, earlier, resolutions relating to the question of Palestine and the solution of the Israeli-Arab conflict.

We wish to pay a tribute to the Special Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, under the chairmanship of Mr. Massamba Sarré. We thank the Committee for its work in carrying out the tasks entrusted to it by the General Assembly. We also pay a tribute to the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Population of the Occupied Territories, as well as UNWRA, which render valuable assistance to the Palestinian people until it recovers its right to self-determination and to the establishment of an independent State on its national soil.

Ever since Israel was created, 40 years ago, the Palestinian people have never ceased their legitimate struggle to regain their rights, but in June 1967 Israel seized all of Palestine and desecrated Palestinian soil. Israel continues its policy, based on aggression, violence, expansion and settlements and its practices against the Palestinians - both before and after the establishment of the Israeli State.

(Mr. Basendwah, Yemen)

Such policies deserve our condemnation. Israel is forgetting that the peace it is seeking will not guarantee security against attacks resulting from that policy. We know that the United States is aiding Israel endlessly. It is using every imaginable means to support Israel in international forums.

We really do not know now who is leading whom. For example, there is a problem with Israel's activities and the way in which its practices affect its relations with the United States. Israeli agents do not hesitate to kill United States citizens of Arab origin within the United States. Israel commits acts of aggression against unarmed civilian Palestinians. Israelis kill Palestinians, imprison Palestinians, expel Palestinians. Despite this, in the eyes of the United States Government, Israel remains a Palestinian State which respects human rights and freedoms.

The United States Congress intends to pass a bill which would close the office of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) Observer to the United Nations, after having decided to close that organization's information office in Washington. Thus the United States Congress violates the United Nations host country agreement, and it does so to please Israel. If such a bill were passed, it would be a dangerous precedent for the delegations of Member States of the United Nations, because the PLO's acceptance as an Observer to the United Nations was decided on not by the United States Administration but by the General Assembly. It is high time the United States Administration reconsidered its position, which should not be based on its favourable attitude towards Israel.

We know that the people of the United States struggled for their national independence; consequently they should understand the Palestinian people's struggle to regain their legitimate rights and not support Israel, which is occupying

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Palestine and is denying the rights of the Palestinian people. The United States today, more than ever before should oppose Israel's arrogance and its challenge to the international will, as seen in its refusal to implement the resolutions calling for the return of Palestinians to their national homeland and also those calling upon Israel to return the Syrian and Lebanese territories it is occupying. The international conference envisaged in a General Assembly resolution would provide a historic opportunity for establishing a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

Whether we are speaking about Palestine, southern Lebanon or the Golan Heights, we find that Israel acts in the same way as the Pretoria régime acts in South Africa, Namibia and Angola. The Israeli and South African régimes are two sides of the same coin. The Israeli leaders must yield to the will of the international community, just as South Africa must yield to it with regard to the people of Namibia and of South Africa. The Palestinian people will carry on the struggle, under the guidance of the Palestine Liberation Organization, its sole, legitimate representative. The peoples struggling for their independence will finally triumph.

Mr. KANE (Mauritania) (interpretation from French): Only a few days ago our Assembly was considering the question of the South African policy of apartheid, which is in essence a flagrant denial of human values and a defiance of all the norms of universal law. Today we are considering Israeli policy in occupied Palestine. Both policies, while they are not completely identical, have characteristics and manifestations so similar that one would think they stemmed from the same ideology. In fact they are both based on discriminatory concepts and use force to perpetuate themselves. In spite of repudiation and condemnation by the international community, the systems they represent continue to trample under foot all the norms and principles of international law, in defiance of morality and

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and all sense of human feeling. It is perhaps this shared characteristic of the two policies that had already been perceived by the architect of apartheid, the sinister Mr. Verwoerd, when in 1961 in this very Hall he cried out in reaction to what he considered to be deviant behaviour on the part of Israel in its vote of condemnation for the policy of apartheid:

"Do not tell me that there is a difference between the two countries, since one is based on the separation of the races and the other on that of religions. If discrimination is to be condemned in one case, it is in the other as well. ... The Jews took the territory of Israel from the Arabs who had lived there for a thousand years, and I support them in that ... but Israel is, like us, a country of apartheid."

We fully understand the meaning of those words when we study the evolution of the question of Palestine since the United Nations decided in resolution 181 (II), of 29 November 1946, to endorse the plan for the partitioning of the country which had been proposed by the United Nations Special Commission on Palestine, established a few months before at a special session. From that plan Israel and the Palestinian problem were born. Paradoxical as this may be, this United Nations solution did not resolve the problem of the Jews, still less that of the Palestinians, who in the course of the years were to experience tragic developments because of Israel's policies and practices. Expelled in large numbers from their national territory, the Palestinian people who left were to know the tribulations of exile, while those who stayed were to know the tribulations of domination.

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In both cases the situation was precarious, but it was to worsen following the Israeli aggression of 1967 against the Arab territories, an aggression that sent a second wave of Palestinians into exile, while Israel was settling in those lands acquired by force in all of Palestine, including Jerusalem.

In spite of the universally recognized principle of the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force, and the relevant provisions of the Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949 on the protection of civilians, Israel seems to have settled definitively in those territories and is attempting to transform the land acquired, in spite of the protests of the Arab inhabitants and the appeals of the international community. Thus, its policy of annexation and settlement of those lands, which began with occupation, became systematic as of 1977. Innumerable restrictions on the rights of the Palestinians to freedom of expression, to circulate freely or to form associations have continually been strengthened. The so-called iron fist policy is pursued relentlessly in order to restrain the feelings of the people and to restrict opposition to occupation. In a word, Israel has established an entire political-legal arsenal whose repressive nature is the equal of that of apartheid.

Confronted by this situation, the Palestinian people, tired of waiting for the harm done to it to be redressed, has been compelled to commit itself, under the leadership of its sole and legitimate representative, the PLO, to a national liberation struggle to assert its existence as a people. In spite of the rigours of exile and the even more draconian rigours of occupation, it has been confronting with courage and determination all attempts to distort its just and heroic struggle to recover its inalienable rights to self-determination, independence and to return

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to its home. Mauritania, as always, is at one with the just struggle of that people and pays tribute to the memory of all the heroes fallen on the battlefield. It reaffirms its unswerving support for the cause of the Palestinian people and commends the profound sacrifices they have made in their heroic struggle under the leadership of the PLO.

Given the grave situation prevailing in occupied Palestine, the international community has unceasingly demanded that Israel completely withdraw from the occupied Arab territories. In different resolutions that have thus far remained a dead letter, it has invited Israel to put an end to its occupation, to its repressive policies and to all actions aimed at destroying the historic heritage and property of the Palestinians, and in particular the nature of the holy city of Al-Quds, or Jerusalem. My Government, like all Muslim countries and all who cherish peace and justice, rejects the fundamental law of 13 July 1980 through which the Israeli régime decided unilaterally to make it its capital city.

Since the establishment of Israel, the Middle East, and Palestine in particular, has become a hotbed of constant tension against the backdrop of recurring human tragedy. In 1948, out of a total of 1.3 million Palestinian Arabs who were living in the territory, 750,000 went into exile, joined 19 years later, in 1967, by a second wave of over 500,000. Today those refugees constitute approximately half the Palestinian population. Not content with having forced them into exile in tragic conditions, the State of Israel drove them out into the countries where they have now found refuge. The revolting scenes of massacre at Deir Yassin long ago and, in the more recent past, those of Sabra and Shatila, are still vivid in our minds and attest to the cruelty and inhumanity of the Fascist régime that allowed them to occur and carried them out.

For a long time the world, subjected to Israeli propaganda, only perceived the refugee aspect of the atrocities of that country. It is however reassuring to note

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that since the beginning of the 1970s the world has become increasingly aware of the real nature of that system of occupation and oppression which, like all régimes of that type, perpetuates itself only thanks to the use of force and the denial of the basic rights of peoples. Thus in December 1969 the General Assembly formally recognized that

"the problem of the Palestine Arab refugees has arisen from the denial of their inalienable rights under the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights". (resolution 2535 B (XXIV))

It went on to reaffirm in its resolution 3236 (XXIX) of 22 November 1974 the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including its right to independence and to national sovereignty, and the right of the Palestinians to return to their homes and property. It also recognized the right of that people to recover its rights "by all means in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations".

To ensure that those resolutions on Palestine would be followed up, it established on 10 November 1975 the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, which since then, under the intelligent leadership of its successive Chairmen, has unceasingly drawn the attention of the world to the seriousness of the situation prevailing in Palestine and to the need for a rapid solution.

This year again, the report (A/42/35) it has submitted to us for consideration deserves the Assembly's praise because of its seriousness, sense of reality and relevance. My country wishes to commend the dedication and lucidity with which its members and in particular its Chairman, Ambassador Massamba Sarré, of the sister

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Republic of Senegal, are fulfilling their mandate. May they accept our gratitude and our words of encouragement.

The combined work of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the General Assembly has made it possible, since the International Conference on Palestine in Geneva in 1983, to design a programme of action for the attainment of the rights of the Palestinians, the implementation of which should begin with the convening, under the auspices of the United Nations, of an international peace conference on the Middle East.

Though this idea has been accepted by the different Arab parties concerned, it has thus far not been carried out because of Israel's obstinate refusal. None the less, from the recent report of the Secretary-General (A/42/277), dated 7 May 1987, it would seem that, though there is a general will to take into consideration different possibilities for an acceptable formula for negotiations, views still differ as to the conference's form and preparations for it. My country is of the opinion that every effort should be made to bring about the prompt organization of that conference, because delay will mean increased suffering for the Palestinian people and the peoples of the region. But is Israel prepared to turn away from its policy of force and to respond positively, at last, to the efforts and the appeals of the international community?

Mr. BEIN (Israel): Mr. President, like my colleagues and myself, you too must undoubtedly feel helpless, unable to stop the endless and fruitless repetition of this "debate" year after year. You too must have a feeling of déjà vu. Is this what the United Nations General Assembly is supposed to do? Was the idea not to

(Mr. Bein, Israel)

try and bridge differences, seek agreements? This Assembly was not supposed to serve as yet another arena to which various conflicts are transferred for the sole purpose of perpetuating them. Baseless accusations are hardly the means to generate the atmosphere of goodwill and common sense so necessary for the establishment of peace in the Middle East.

(Mr. Bein, Israel)

The first question that comes to mind is, why is this agenda item called "The question of Palestine"? Why a question, why not an answer? And where is Palestine? Is it the Territory which once was British Mandated Palestine? This is the claim of the PLO. Article 2 of its covenant refers to Palestine as follows:

"Palestine with its boundaries that existed at the time of the British mandate is an indivisible territorial unit."

The PLO's concept of Palestine therefore includes not only Israel, Judea, Samaria and Gaza but the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan as well. The PLO further declares, in article 19 of its covenant:

"The partition of Palestine in 1947 and the establishment of Israel are fundamentally null and void, whatever time has elapsed..."

In other words, the PLO seeks to liquidate Israel and to subsume Jordan.

If these are the claims, it is clear why Palestine remains a question with no reasonable or practicable answer. This also suggests that the whole title of this debate is a euphemism.

In the Assembly we are used to euphemisms. During the general debate there is no debate, only statements; Permanent Representatives are all temporary; and - and this is more serious - anti-Semitic and anti-Jewish campaigns hide behind the euphemism of anti-Zionism. We hear a representative in this Hall referring to another representative's "ugly Zionist face". Can representatives believe that - "a Zionist face"? Does this not remind members of the many similar phrases used in the 1930s and 1940s, which culminated in the Holocaust and 6 million Jewish victims - or were they merely Zionist victims, those who were burned in the ovens of Auschwitz? Remember the words of the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., who told students at Harvard University in one of his last speeches before he was assassinated, in 1968:

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"When people criticize Zionism, they means Jews. You are talking anti-Semitism."

Occasionally some Arabs let their guards down and speak differently of Zionism. Take, for example, Elias Farah, the deputy of Michel Aflaq, founder of the Baath Party. Here is what he said to The New Yorker on 10 October 1987:

"We have much in common with Zionism, whose goal is a Jewish Renaissance. Ours" - meaning the Baath - "is an Arab Renaissance..."

Is this title, "The question of Palestine", yet another euphemism? I suspect that what is really wanted from this debate is to question Israel's inalienable right to exist. What they really wanted, and did not dare to do, was to entitle this debate "The question of Israel".

Let there be no doubt: Israel is not a question; it is an answer, an answer to the prayers of millions, the fulfilment of the Zionist vision and the aspirations of many generations, just as Elias Farah inadvertently admitted. Israel is here to stay, even if some delegations would like to undo that fact.

The truth is that for some delegations the problem is not the absence of yet another Arab State from the Middle East. Their problem, rather, is the presence, the very existence, of Israel. Listening to some of the statements in the Assembly one might conclude that Arab countries and the Palestinian Arabs were presumably all victims of Israeli aggression. But repetition of blatant lies and distortions does not turn them into truths. Facts cannot be rubbed off the pages of history and the facts are that Israel and the Palestinians are both victims of the continuous aggression of certain Arab countries. Further, this issue, or problem, or question, as it is called here, did not start in 1967. History did not begin with the Six-Day War.

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In the wake of the First World War the League of Nations reaffirmed the rights of the Jewish people in their land of origin. Following the Second World War, the General Assembly, on 29 November 1947, confirmed the inalienable right of the Jewish people to their State in what until then had been British Mandated Palestine. The General Assembly envisaged peace between Israel and the Palestinians, but the Arab States rejected that proposal. On 15 May 1948, the day Israel gained its independence, five Arab armies attacked, openly declaring their intention to be the destruction of the Jewish State.

This was absolutely clear to the entire world. Let us listen to the description given by the Foreign Minister of the Soviet Union. At the 299th meeting of the Security Council, on the morning of 21 May 1948, Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko said the following:

"The USSR delegation cannot but express surprise at the position adopted by the Arab States in the Palestine question, and particularly at the fact that those States - or some of them, at least - have resorted to such action as sending their troops into Palestine and carrying out military operations aimed at the suppression of the national liberation movement in Palestine."
(Official Records of the Security Council, 299th meeting, p. 7)

The national liberation movement which Mr. Gromyko says the Arabs wanted to suppress was, of course, Zionism, the Jewish national liberation movement and that of Israel. Mr. Gromyko further said:

"We do not know of a single case of invasion of the territory of another State by the armed forces of Israel, except in self-defence, where they had to beat off attacks by the armed forces of other States on Israeli territory. That was self-defence in the full sense of the word."

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At the 302nd meeting of the Security Council, on the following day, Saturday, 22 May 1948, in the afternoon, the American representative, Mr. Warren Austin, told the Council:

"I think we cannot ignore the international character of this breach of the peace. Probably the most important and the best evidence we have on that subject is contained in the admissions of the countries whose five armies have invaded Palestine that they are carrying on a war.

...

Therefore, here we have the highest type of evidence of the international violation of the law: the admission by those who are committing this violation." (Official Records of the Security Council, 302nd meeting, pp. 41, 43)

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At the time, the Arabs did not disclaim responsibility for their aggression. On the contrary, they claimed credit for it. Mr. Jamal al-Husseini, representing the Arab Higher Committee, then taken as representing the Palestinian Arabs, told the Security Council at its 283rd meeting, on the evening of Friday, 16 April 1948:

"The representative of the Jewish Agency told us yesterday that they were not the attackers, that the Arabs had begun the fighting. We did not deny this. We told the whole world that we were going to fight."

And on 15 May 1948 - the day five Arab armies invaded the newly-born State of Israel, the Secretary-General of the Arab League, General Azzam Pasha, said:

"This will be a war of extermination and a momentous massacre, which will be spoken of like the Mongolian massacres and the Crusades."

But no one expressed it better than Haj Amin al-Husseini, the Mufti of Jerusalem. Husseini did not content himself with a congratulatory telegram to Adolf Hitler when the Nazis introduced the Nuremberg racial laws in 1935. Nor was he satisfied with a personal letter to Hitler in 1939 congratulating him on his "great political and military triumphs". It is this Mufti of Jerusalem who met Hitler in Berlin on 28 November 1941 and collaborated with him in the "final solution", as they called it, by recruiting a Moslem SS brigade.

Incidentally, members will recall that it was not an Arab but a Zionist brigade which fought alongside the Allies in Europe to liquidate nazism, fascism and racism in all its forms and manifestations.

It was this same Haj Amin al-Husseini who called on the Arab countries in 1948 in these words:

"I declare a holy war, my Moslem brothers! Murder the Jews! Murder them all!"
This was the Mufti of Jerusalem.

That effort to exterminate the Jewish State and its inhabitants failed. But the aggression against my country continued.

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In 1956, irregular inroads into Israel were organized. Terrorist attacks and incursions of regular armies caused hundreds of casualties and disrupted normal life and the safe movement of traffic throughout the southern half of the country.

This brought on the Sinai campaign, in which Israel destroyed the fedayeen bases in the Sinai. But again the aggressors merely licked their wounds and prepared for the next assault. By 1967 they were ready.

In May of 1967, the Straits of Tiran were closed to Israeli shipping, United Nations forces were ordered out of the Sinai, and Arab armies were moved into that peninsula with the express and declared purpose of attacking Israel. This brought on the Six Day War. Israel pleaded with its neighbour to the east not to join this war - but it did not heed the plea and attacked Jerusalem. Six days later, when the Arab attack was rolled back, Israel found itself in control of Judea, Samaria, Gaza and the Sinai - the killing ground from which Arab armies had launched their attack against Israel.

But again, in October 1973, on Yom Kippur, the holiest day in the Jewish calendar, two Arab armies launched a surprise attack on Israel. Even in these circumstances, Israel was eventually able to throw back the invaders.

If there was any aggression, it was not by Israel. It was aggression directed against Israel. From the day of its birth, Israel has been constantly on the defensive against the onslaught of its neighbours.

I come now to the matter of refugees. The war of aggression unleashed by Arab countries against Israel in 1948 caused a movement of Arabs out of Israel. The reason for this movement is to be found in the memoirs of Haled el-Azm, Prime Minister of Syria from 1948 to 1949, published in Beirut in 1973, which states, in Part 1:

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"Since 1948 we have been demanding the return of the refugees to their homes. But we ourselves" - meaning the Arabs - "are the ones who encouraged them to leave. We have brought destruction upon a million Arab refugees, by calling upon them and pleading with them to leave their land, their homes, their work and their business, and we have caused them to be barren and unemployed, though each one of them had been working and qualified in a trade from which he could make a living."

The same war also brought about an exodus of Jews from Arab lands. The number of Jewish refugees was roughly equal to that of the Arab refugees. This is firmly established by United Nations document ST/ESA/SER.A/64 entitled Trends and Characteristics of International Migration since 1950: Refugee Movements and Population Transfers - Demographic Study No. 64, prepared by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat. The Jewish refugees from Arab countries had to leave places where their families had lived for centuries. They were obliged to abandon considerable private and communal property. We in Israel received them with open arms and within a relatively short time they became productive, self-supporting citizens.

One million Jews fled the Arab countries; the majority, about 800,000, settled in Israel. About 600,000 Arabs left Israel. In effect, an exchange of population took place between Israel and the Arab countries. There is some similarity between this Jewish-Arab exchange of population and the exchanges which took place between Greece and Turkey in the 1920s, and between India and Pakistan in the late 1940s. The latter exchanges, in fact, involved movements of people on a much larger scale - but the principle remains the same.

If we are to pursue the search for a possible settlement, we cannot think in terms of reversing these parallel movements of masses of people, Jews and Arabs.

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We must be guided, instead, by the successful experience acquired in other parts of the world in integrating refugees in new lands.

The Arabs who left Israel found refuge in the midst of their own kin. The great majority never left the area of the former British mandate of Palestine; they simply moved from Jewish-controlled areas to those under Arab control. Their transition from one side of the armistice line to the other constituted a much less radical change than the movement of Jews from Arab lands to Israel.

Yet only Arab refugees became wards of the United Nations. There were no deliberations in the United Nations about the plight of the Jewish refugees. No relief agencies were established by the Organization to help in their rehabilitation. Israel was left to do this by itself. And we did - without vast stretches of land or billions of dollars of oil wealth.

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Jewish refugees from Arab lands were fully integrated in our society, while the Palestinian Arab refugees were rejected by most of their Arab kinsmen. Most Arab Governments denied them citizenship and even normal residence, and have kept them in refugee camps from 1948 to this very day.

Only one Arab country, Jordan, behaved differently. It afforded the Palestinian refugees equal citizenship rights. In a speech in Amman on 15 June 1966, King Hussein defined his position as follows:

"We always rejected the false logic and the preposterous policy which held that the refugees should be kept within the boundaries of their camps and barbed wire so as to transform the problem into an international one, into a problem of assistance and help alone, whose success or failure is measured by the amount of money forthcoming each year, a problem perpetuated in order that the suffering and the hardship could be given expression in the traditional speeches given annually at the United Nations with a view to collecting donations. Within the means of our responsibility, we opposed the policy of suppressing a whole people, of suppressing its morale and throwing it upon the mercy of the Almighty through ration cards. This is an affront to the dignity of a people such as ours."

Some Arab countries claim today that their campaign against Israel is waged on behalf of the Palestinian Arabs. But it is the Palestinians who have actually been the victims of this aggression by our neighbouring Arab countries. Let us hear what Abu Mazen, member of the Executive Committee of the PLO, has to say about this. His words were published in Falastin al-Tawra in March 1976:

"The Arab armies entered Palestine to protect the Palestinians ... but instead they abandoned them, forced them to emigrate and to leave their homeland, imposed upon them a political and ideological blockade and threw them into prisons ...".

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But Arab régimes did not merely create the Arab refugee problem; they took pains to perpetuate it. Let me quote an authority on the subject, Mr. Ralph Galloway, a former head of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in Jordan, speaking in August 1958:

"The Arab States do not want to solve the refugee problem. They want to keep it as an open sore, as an affront to the United Nations and as a weapon against Israel. Arab leaders don't give a damn whether the refugees live or die".

To demonstrate the cynical way the plight of the refugees was used by some Arab countries, let me quote a resolution adopted by the so-called refugee conference held at Homs, Syria, on 15 July 1957 and endlessly repeated since then:

"Any discussion aimed at the solution of the Palestinian problem which will not be based on ensuring the refugees' right to annihilate Israel will be regarded as a desecration of the Arab people and an act of treason".

That stands in sharp contrast to the policy my country adopted from the day of its inception. Israel's founding document, its Declaration of Independence, declared in May 1948:

"We appeal - in the very midst of the onslaught launched against us now for months - to the Arab inhabitants of the State of Israel to preserve peace and participate in the upbuilding of the State on the basis of full and equal citizenship and due representation in all its provisional and permanent institutions.

"We extend our hand to all neighbouring States and their peoples in an offer of peace and good-neighbourliness, and appeal to them to establish bonds of co-operation and mutual help with the sovereign Jewish people settled in its own land. The State of Israel is prepared to do its share in a common effort for the advancement of the entire Middle East."

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Not only did Israel absorb 800,000 Jewish refugees from Arab lands; we took important steps to assist Arab refugees as well. We did this despite clear security risks and despite the absence of peace. By the early 1950s 50,000 Arab refugees had returned to Israel under a family reunion scheme. Another 50,000 displaced Arabs within Israel were also resettled. And Israel has offered to participate in any programme to assist the resettlement of refugees in the Arab world.

In addition, Israel has been permitting the return of persons displaced as a result of the Six-Day War. The total number of such permits since 1967 is 72,000. These permits have been granted despite the fact that the PLO often exploits this traffic in people for its own terrorist purposes.

It is well known that the income of Arab oil-producing countries is in the hundreds of billions of dollars. Incidentally, \$2 billion a year is derived from the export of oil to South Africa. What part of that enormous revenue do they use for the benefit of the Palestinian Arabs? I am not referring, of course, to the protection money given each year to the PLO, which is used to build up its world-wide terrorist network. I am referring to the billions that could have been applied to productive use. With one week's income from oil revenues, the Palestinian problem in all its facets could have been easily solved, but it seems that such a humane solution - or, for that matter, any solution - is not high among the priorities of most of the Arab countries.

Let me illustrate this with an example taken from the United Nations. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has approved several projects for Judea, Samaria and Gaza to assist the Palestinian Arabs. The total cost of these

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projects is set at \$56 million. So far, the UNDP has received for these projects \$8 million in contributions from Member States, but only \$2 million has come from Arab sources.

The \$2 million the Arab States have contributed amounts to less than one part in 222,000 - I repeat: one part in 222,000 - of the identified financial reserves of the Arab oil-exporting countries, which this year amounted to \$444 billion.

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Instead of genuinely trying to assist their Palestinian brethren, Arab countries initiate the establishment of new organs through which money is wasted under the slogan of "The Cause of the Palestinians". All these committees, divisions, reports and seminars, however, do not benefit the Palestinian Arabs. On the contrary, they only fan the embers of conflict. They hinder moderation, negotiations and peace.

I ask representatives to look at the \$4,470,000 allocated by the Programme budget of the United Nations for the biennium 1988-1989 (A/42/6). The money is divided as follows: for the so-called Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, for the Division for Palestinian Rights, for programmes of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), for a report of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) on the living conditions of the Palestinian people, for the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices, and for the so-called special public information activities.

Close to \$5 million is wasted. The money does not advance real solutions in the slightest way. The Palestinian Arabs do not benefit from these Committees and reports, which are put forward by those who reject peace, but are paid for by representatives' Governments. Those Governments do not share the goal of extremism, but accept uncritically the annual resurrection of these sterile and harmful allocations. The Palestinian Arabs will not thank them - because all these Committees, Divisions, programmes and reports do not help them at all.

Ten years ago we witnessed a meaningful step by a courageous leader - the visit of President Sadat to Jerusalem. That historic visit brought about the Camp David accords and paved the way for the peace agreement between Egypt and Israel, based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). The Camp David accords state:

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"Egypt, Israel, Jordan and the representatives of the Palestinian people should participate in negotiations on the resolution of the Palestinian problem in all its aspects. To achieve that objective negotiations relating to the West Bank and Gaza should proceed ..."

From this rostrum last year Israel's Vice-Premier and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Yitzhak Shamir, our Prime Minister today, referred to the Camp David accords as follows:

"They have proved decisively that there is a way out of the cycle of belligerency, and they have demonstrated unequivocally that there is no alternative to direct negotiations. To this very day they remain the one and only blueprint for accommodation and peace between Israel and its Arab neighbours." (A/41/PV.16, p. 67)

And during this forty-second session of the General Assembly our current Vice-Premier and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Shimon Peres, stated:

"we stand at the gates of a new promise to our children and to the children of our neighbours: to live in understanding despite the differences; to determine their own fate without interference by armed forces triggered by hate." (A/42/PV.17, p. 22)

And further:

"We have all matured politically with the repeated failure of attempts to produce peace plans for our region. We have realized that none can be acceptable as a pre-condition of negotiation, for it is the object of negotiation to produce solutions that are otherwise unattainable. Hence, over the past three years efforts have focused on the most promising plan: to begin negotiations without pre-planning their outcome." (A/42/PV.17, p. 26)

The time has come for Arab Governments to be ready and willing to begin negotiations without pre-conditions. The time has come to stop exploiting and

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distorting the issue of the Palestinian Arabs in order to drum up hatred against Israel. The time has come to stop the campaign of vilification against the Jewish people, its national liberation movement - Zionism - and the Jewish State of Israel.

These debates inside the United Nations appear to be considerably detached from the changing reality in the Middle East itself. The Arab Summit in Amman, barely two weeks ago, offered the beginning of some hope of greater realism.

For the first time the Palestinian issue has begun to assume its real proportions. It appeared alongside - actually, behind - the terrible Gulf war, which is consuming so many lives today. This was the first reflection of the larger reality of internal conflicts between Arab régimes in the Middle East, from Iraq and Iran in the east to Libya's aggression against Chad or the Sahara conflict farther west. In other words, "The question of Palestine", as it is called here, is not the core, not the central conflict in the Middle East. The Arab leaders themselves claimed that the focus of danger came from the Gulf, from the on-going bloody war there, and from the fundamentalist ideology which teaches that the ends justify the means even when those means include violence, terrorism and murder of the innocent. Countries in and beyond the Middle East are threatened by this aggressive fundamentalist ideology.

Equally important - was the message from Amman - Arab countries no longer automatically ostracize Egypt. Peace agreements, it is hoped, no longer automatically make one a pariah, an outcast.

We in Israel hope that further progress can now be made in the quest for peace and that the courageous path taken by Egypt will be followed by others, especially by our other neighbours. Israel, for its part, will continue to place peace at the head of its national priorities.

To the radicals in the Middle East we say: "It is easy to spread terrorism. It does not take courage to wage war. It takes courage to make peace."

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Of primary and urgent importance is an evolving change in the attitude of Arab leaders and Governments. Instead of using their Palestinian brethren as an instrument of politics and hostility, they should have the courage to break with the past. They should look upon the Palestinian issue as a question to be solved in direct peace negotiations, on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), with or without the assistance of others, based on mutual respect for the rights of Israelis and Arabs alike. This, we believe, is also the interest of the international community.

Within the framework of these peace negotiations, the Palestinian issue can find its proper and agreed solution. The peoples of our region have now within their grasp the levers by which they can transport themselves into a new era of confidence and peace. To this goal we pledge ourselves, and we call upon all our neighbours to do the same.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.