



General Assembly

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Official Records

President: Ms. Espinosa Garcés. (Ecuador)

The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

Agenda item 39

Question of Palestine

Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (A/73/35)

Report of the Secretary-General (A/73/346)

Note by the Secretary-General (A/73/201)

Draft resolutions (A/73/L.31, A/73/L.32, A/73/L.33 and A/73/L.34)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the Permanent Representative of Senegal, in his capacity as Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, to introduce draft resolutions A/73/L.31, A/73/L.32, A/73/L.33 and A/73/L.34.

Mr. Niang (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, I would like to reiterate to you, Madam President, our deep gratitude for your outstanding personal participation in yesterday's special meeting in observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People (see A/AC.183/PV.393). The members of the Committee particularly appreciated the far-reaching message you sent to the international community, urging it to work to translate solidarity with the Palestinian people into concrete action.

I would also like to thank Secretary-General António Guterres, the representatives of civil society and, above all, the Member States for their exceptional efforts to mobilize on this issue, including at the level of the Permanent Representatives. In a worrying context, marked in particular by the absence of a clear political horizon, that mobilization is eloquent testimony to the international community's continued commitment to a two-State solution, with Israel and Palestine living side by side, in peace and security, within the pre-1967 borders, and with East Jerusalem as the capital of a State of Palestine.

In accordance with the mandate conferred on it by the Assembly, the Committee, for its part, will continue to work with all actors, particularly Member States, international organizations and civil society, to keep the Palestinian question on the international agenda until the Palestinian people, like the Israeli people, can fully exercise their inalienable rights, including the right to self-determination and autonomy. Of course, the peace that we all want can be achieved only with the will and involvement of the parties to the dispute — the Israelis and Palestinians — who alone, in the end, can work towards a definitive solution that guarantees security, cooperation and prosperity. In this regard, the Committee encourages the ongoing efforts to restore unity among Palestinian political actors in order to enable them to take charge of their people's aspirations to dignity and justice.

I will now proceed to introduce the four draft resolutions under agenda item 39, contained in documents A/73/L.31, A/73/L.32, A/73/L.33 and A/73/L.34. In that

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regard, I am pleased to report that the Committee has already adopted these draft resolutions by consensus, following consultations with the regional groups. The draft resolutions relate, first, to the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine; secondly, to the mandate of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People; thirdly, to the work of the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat; and fourthly, to the special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information.

With regard to the draft resolution entitled "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine", contained in document A/73/L.32, the Assembly, guided by paragraph 5 of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), urges States in paragraph 24 of the draft

"(a) [N]ot to recognize any changes to the pre-1967 borders, including with regard to Jerusalem, other than those agreed by the parties through negotiations; (b) To distinguish, in their relevant dealings, between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories occupied since 1967; (c) Not to render aid or assistance to illegal settlement activities".

In addition, taking into account the fiftieth anniversary of the Israeli occupation and the seventieth anniversary of resolution 181 (II), of 29 November 1947, the Assembly, in draft resolution A/73/L.31, requests our Committee, among other things, to ensure that the international community redoubles its efforts aimed at achieving a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine. In this respect, it is important to work towards an expanded multilateral framework with a view to relaunching the peace process, which has been stalled since 2014. In this regard, Governments and other international organizations are invited to assist the Committee in implementing its mandate.

In draft resolution A/73/L.34, the Assembly renews the mandate of the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat and requests that it continue to assist the Committee in the exercise of its mandate and in its contribution to raising international public awareness of the question of Palestine.

Finally, the draft resolution on the special information programme on the question of Palestine, contained in document A/73/L.33, calls on the Department of Public Information to continue to

involve the media in efforts to achieve peace between Palestinians and Israelis.

In view of the foregoing, the Committee, through me, urges Member States to continue to give their full support to these draft resolutions, as they have done in the past, with a view to sending a message of hope to the Palestinian people, who still continue to have faith in the work of the United Nations.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the Rapporteur of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to introduce the Committee's report.

Mr. Inguanez (Malta): It is an honour for me, in my capacity as Rapporteur of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, to present to the General Assembly the annual report of the Committee, contained in document A/73/35. The report covers developments relating to the question of Palestine and details the work of the Committee between 6 September 2017 and 4 September 2018.

The report is organized into seven chapters. Chapter I contains an introduction to the report. Chapter II consists of a review by the Committee of the political context relating to the question of Palestine during the reporting period. Chapters III and IV of the report outline the mandate entrusted to the Committee by the General Assembly and contain information on the organization of the Committee's work during the review period. Chapter V covers the action taken by the Committee, including the Chair's participation in Security Council debates and the Committee's continuing dialogue with intergovernmental and civil-society organizations. The chapter also describes the international conferences organized by the Committee, visits by the Committee's delegation, and other mandated activities carried out by the Division for Palestinian Rights. Chapter VI provides an overview of the special information programme on the question of Palestine carried out by the Department of Public Information pursuant to resolution 72/12, of 30 November 2017. Chapter VII of the report contains the Committee's conclusions and recommendations to the General Assembly.

Recalling that 2018 marks the seventieth anniversary of the displacement of Palestine refugees from their homeland in 1948, remembered as the Nakba, or "catastrophe", and the fifty-first anniversary of the Israeli occupation, the Committee urges the international community to redouble its efforts to

achieve a two-State solution based on the 1967 borders, in accordance with international law, the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid principles, the Arab Peace Initiative and the road map of the Quartet.

The Committee deems null and void unilateral decisions by Member States to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and transfer embassies in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, and calls on them to rescind those decisions. It reiterates the need to reframe the Palestinian-Israeli conflict from a territorial dispute between two equal parties to that of one State occupying, colonizing and annexing the territory of another State. It supports revising the existing model of bilateral negotiations into an expanded multilateral framework and welcomes the eight-point plan presented to the Security Council on 20 February by President Mahmoud Abbas of the State of Palestine. The Committee encourages and offers its support to all efforts to advance intra-Palestinian unity, calls on the international community to shift from a humanitarian to a political and human rights framework in addressing the plight of the Palestinian people and demands an end to the 11-year-old Israeli air, land and sea blockade of Gaza.

The Committee urges the Security Council and the General Assembly to ensure accountability and the implementation of their long-standing resolutions, including Security Council resolution 2334 (2016). The Committee underscores the responsibility of States and private entities not to contribute to grave Israeli violations of Palestinian human rights, particularly with respect to settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. It looks forward to the expedited operationalization of the database on business enterprises involved in activities connected with Israeli settlements, as mandated by Human Rights Council resolution 31/36, of 2016.

The Committee deplores the use by Israeli forces of excessive, disproportionate and indiscriminate force against Palestinian civilians, and emphasizes the need for the implementation of an international protection mechanism. In this regard, the Committee looks forward to the report of the Human Rights Council-mandated Commission of Inquiry into violations committed on the fence between Israel and the Gaza Strip during the Great March of Return protests.

Finally, the Committee emphasizes the importance of the acknowledgement by Israel of the Nakba and its

impact on the Palestinian people, and further encourages all Member States to provide the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East with sufficient and predictable funding.

In the implementation of its mandate, the Committee will continue to enhance its cooperation with the League of Arab States and the Organization for Islamic Cooperation, and calls on other international and regional organizations, especially the European Union, to take on a more politically active role in mediating an end to the conflict. The Committee will also enhance its outreach to all Member States and regional groups at the United Nations with a view to taking a more effective approach towards the achievement of a two-State solution and to expanding the Committee's membership.

The Committee will continue to expand its efforts to engage civil society, and encourages civil-society partners to work with their national Governments, parliamentarians and other institutions to promote the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and to fully recognize the State of Palestine and its independence.

The Committee notes with appreciation the work of the Division for Palestinian Rights and requests the Division to continue providing substantive Secretariat support for the Committee's mandate. The Committee requests the continuation of the Department of Public Information's special information programme on the question of Palestine, which has made an important contribution to informing the media and the public.

In conclusion, I am seeking the support of my colleagues on draft resolutions A/73/L.31, A/73/L.32, A/73/L.33 and A/73/L.34, endorsed unanimously by the Committee, for adoption by the General Assembly.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer of the Observer State of Palestine.

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): At the outset, I want to convey to you, Madam President, and through you, to the General Assembly family that has so long stood on the side of justice, our profound appreciation for the principled positions and meaningful support that the Assembly continues to extend to the Palestinian people. As we once again mark the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, we are reminded of the breadth of global support for the just cause of Palestine, and are deeply grateful.

Despite the misfortunes and continuing hardships, disappointments and crises endured by the Palestinian people, we remain firm in our conviction in the justness and dignity of our cause and steadfast in our belief that with the Assembly's collective support, this injustice will ultimately be brought to an end.

Even at this existential moment — 71 years after the Assembly's adoption of resolution 181 (II) partitioning Palestine against the will and rights of our people, more than 70 years after the Nakba and after more than 50 years of Israel's foreign occupation, and considering all that has been lost and suffered by our people and region, generation after generation, and in the face of diminishing hopes and rising challenges — we remain determined to realize the inalienable rights of our people so that they may finally live in freedom, peace and security in their homeland.

On this day of solidarity, we reiterate our ongoing appeal to the international community — to all States, international organizations and civil society — to strengthen their resolve to fulfil their obligations to make a just peace a reality. We want to recall here the historic significance of collective action in overcoming injustice and resolving conflict, as seen in the defeat of apartheid, colonialism and the scourge of world wars past.

The path we have chosen to take to solve the Palestine question, the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, is a peaceful one. We are committed to diplomatic, political, legal and non-violent means to realize our rights, in the belief that respect for international law is essential to credible negotiations and is the fundamental basis of a solution. Despite blows to the credibility of the Security Council and General Assembly, we maintain our faith in their authority and capacities to uphold the law in order to reach a just, lasting and peaceful solution to a question that has vexed the United Nations since its inception. Our faith must be shared by all who still believe in the purposes and principles of the Organization, the rule of law and the true spirit of multilateralism.

If we did not believe, how could we possibly continue to engage the Assembly, and on this tragic anniversary in particular? How could we continue making our appeals, resolution after resolution, even as the situation worsens with Israel, the occupying Power, entrenching its occupation of our land, intensifying its oppression of our people, destroying

the prospects for peace and dismantling the possibility of two-State solution settlement by settlement, even as we are subjected to punitive measures — from the United States decision on Jerusalem a year ago, to its termination of funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), after decades as its largest donor, to attempts to strip Palestine refugees of their legitimate status and rights, to constant distortions of reality and the underlying issues, and the list goes on — all for refusing to capitulate to injustice and for demanding our rights and freedom?

Only a deep belief in the law and the inevitability of justice could have kept us on this path. This should be seen as remarkable, considering that Israel's violations and war crimes continue to be rewarded rather than punished by the international community, making it extraordinarily difficult to continue justifying our choice of a peaceful path and convincing our people, especially our young people, of its logic and benefits, when they experience none at all in their daily lives and see no possibility whatever of a future free of occupation, conflict and want. The dangers of the current situation cannot be overstated. The huge gap between our lofty beliefs and the abhorrent realities on the ground must be quickly remedied before it is too late — for Palestinians, Israelis and the region as a whole.

Israel is in grave breach of virtually all international legal obligations, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention. It acts with blatant contempt for the Security Council, not only violating resolution 2334 (2016) and all other relevant resolutions, but even bragging of its violations and mocking the international community's failure to hold it accountable. As Israel ignores demands to cease its illegal policies and practices in occupied Palestine, including East Jerusalem, and to reverse negative trends on the ground, the destructive toll of its colonization, dispossession, oppression and deprivation of our people continues to climb, and it is systematically destroying the possibility of a two-State solution on the basis of the pre-1967 borders.

In the past year, we saw the continuation of illegal Israeli settlement activities in the West Bank, especially in and around East Jerusalem, including the construction and expansion of settlements, the construction of the annexation wall, the transfer of settlers, the theft of Palestinian land, the demolition of Palestinian homes and properties, the forced displacement of Palestinian

civilians and attempts to forcibly transfer entire communities, such as the Bedouin village of Khan Al-Ahmar/Abu Al-Helu, and the massive exploitation of our natural resources.

The occupying Power and its extremists also persisted in provocations against holy sites, particularly in occupied East Jerusalem, including at Al-Haram Al-Sharif, thereby violating the historic status quo and stirring religious tensions. That has been accompanied by inflammatory rhetoric and incitement by the Israeli Government, military officials and settler extremists that fuel hatred, violence and terror against Palestinians, as well as lethal military raids and settler attacks that cause death and injury to our civilians, including children, and the ongoing arrest, detention, imprisonment, abuse and torture of thousands of Palestinians.

Israel has also continued its collective punishment of the Palestinian civilian population, violating every kind of human right. The most heinous of such restrictions remains Israel's 11-year blockade of Gaza, where 2 million Palestinians are being deliberately isolated and deprived in what has tragically become known as the world's only open-air prison. The dire humanitarian crisis and suffocating poverty caused by this illegal blockade are at the root of the deep despair that has fuelled the Great March of Return, to which Israel has responded with typical aggression and cruelty, killing more than 220 Palestinians, including at least 45 children, and injuring more than 24,000, further traumatizing our defenceless population, which remains in need of international protection. This situation is beyond inhumane and requires urgent redress, beginning with the lifting of the blockade.

In addition, the Israeli Government, led by extremist members of the Prime Minister's coalition and aided by the so-called justice system, continues promoting discriminatory racist laws designed to further dispossess, marginalize and dehumanize Palestinians and facilitate Israel's annexation aims. The most offensive of those laws is the recent Jewish nation-State bill, which has led many to rightly view the prevailing situation as akin to an apartheid regime. In Israel, only Jews are entitled to self-determination. The 21 per cent of the Israeli population that is Palestinian Arab is denied that right. If discrimination on the basis of religious affiliation does not constitute discrimination par excellence, I want the General Assembly to tell me what discrimination is.

Israel's occupation of Palestinian and Arab lands long ago crossed the threshold of illegality and cannot be defended or justified in any way. Not only is it the root cause of grave human suffering, insecurity and instability in our region, its protraction has eroded the rule of law and the perception of justice in the Middle East and beyond, feeding a culture of impunity that threatens the international system's viability.

We therefore once again call for urgent action. The international community cannot continue to decry the violations of Palestinian rights and the destruction of the two-State solution without acting to end this unlawful situation. Measures of accountability and proactive and collective peace efforts are imperative. We therefore appeal to all States to do the following.

First, States must uphold international law regarding the Palestine question, including through support for relevant resolutions and mobilization of the political will to implement those resolutions in order to help resolve the conflict and establish a just and lasting peace.

Secondly, States must affirm support for the Palestinian people and their inalienable rights by upholding international law, recognizing the State of Palestine on the basis of the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and providing humanitarian and development support, including to Palestine refugees through UNRWA, pending a just solution to their plight pursuant to resolution 194 (III).

Thirdly, States must ensure they are not complicit with Israel's illegal actions, including by not recognizing as legitimate the unlawful situation created by Israel's policies and measures in occupied Palestine, including East Jerusalem, or as a result of its settlement activities, by not rendering aid to maintain that unlawful situation, and by making a clear distinction in all of their relevant dealings between the territory of the occupying Power and the territory occupied since 1967, as called for by Security Council resolution 2334 (2016).

Fourthly, they must ensure accountability, including through practical measures, in order to ensure respect for the Charter of the United Nations and implement United Nations resolutions, uphold international humanitarian law obligations as high contracting parties to the Geneva Conventions, support the activation of international accountability mechanisms and pursue measures to hold the Israeli Government, organizations

and individuals accountable for their illegal actions at the political, diplomatic, legal and economic levels.

It is a stark equation. As long as the benefits outweigh the costs, Israel will continue to impose its illegal occupation and trample on the Charter and United Nations resolutions. Accountability is key to ending impunity. States must act on their commitments and end the double standard of rewarding Israel for its illegal behaviour rather than punishing it.

In this context, we cannot allow the efforts of the United Nations and its Member States to contribute to a just solution to be mocked as biased or one-sided, as falsely claimed by Israel and those who try to absolve it of its crimes. Nor can we accept accusations that United Nations resolutions are anti-Israel. They are not. They are founded entirely on international law and the global consensus on the parameters of a solution in conformity with the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid principles, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet road map, at the heart of which is a two-State solution for Palestine and Israel.

We urge all members to reject the exploitation of the General Assembly for punitive purposes that have no legal basis, deflect attention from the root causes of the conflict and undermine our collective efforts for a just peace. We appeal to the Assembly to stand firmly in support of the rights of the Palestinian people and the two-State solution and in defence of international law and true multilateralism in the face of the serious challenges to all of them.

In conclusion, we reiterate our gratitude to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for its support and constant efforts aimed at achieving a just, lasting, comprehensive peace, whereby the State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, can live side by side with Israel based on the pre-1967 borders, in peace and security. We urge all Member States to cooperate with and support the Committee, in line with the relevant resolutions and the Organization's permanent responsibility with respect to the Palestine question.

We thank Senegal, Chair of the Committee, for assuming this important role over the years. We also thank all the other Bureau members — the Vice-Chairs Afghanistan, Cuba, Indonesia, Namibia and Nicaragua, and the Rapporteur, Malta — and all Committee members and observers for their principled support. We thank the Division for Palestinian Rights and the

Department of Public Information's special information programme on the question of Palestine for their efforts.

Today we also want to reiterate our appreciation to Secretary-General António Guterres for his relevant reports and his leadership of the Organization's efforts on the question of Palestine, including the work of his Personal Representative and Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, and the tireless efforts of the many United Nations agencies assisting the Palestinian people, with UNRWA at their forefront, and with the generous support of States, organizations and partners from around the world. This vital support must continue, and we urge the international community to intensify efforts to fulfil its political, legal and moral obligations to resolve this grave injustice and achieve a just and lasting peace.

Mr. Danon (Israel): Every year the United Nations adopts at least 20 resolutions aimed specifically at condemning Israel. Not a single one of those resolutions, or any General Assembly resolution, has ever included Hamas. These resolutions make a mockery of the Palestinians, the very people the United Nations claims to defend. Rather than leading Palestinians forward to the future, they keep them locked in the past.

The annual draft resolutions set forth today will likely be adopted once more, which is not surprising. But the international community has had an opportunity to take a moral stance and finally condemn Hamas, which is internationally recognized as a terrorist organization that is guilty of launching thousands of rockets into Israel, endangering Israeli civilians and torching our land; stealing aid funding from civilians in Gaza to construct military infrastructure, including terror tunnels; using the people of Gaza as human shields; and holding hostage the bodies of Oron Shaul and Hadar Goldin, who were abducted and murdered by Hamas in 2014, as well as Avera Mengistu and Hisham Al-Sayed, two Israeli civilians. If the international community does not condemn Hamas, it is enabling a terrorist organization.

Israel's first Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion, once said that in order to be a realist in Israel, one must believe in miracles. The historic homeland of the Jewish people, the land of Israel, was conquered, destroyed, rebuilt and demolished again. For centuries, it remained a barren desert as it passed from empire to empire, from the Canaanites to the ancient Egyptians to the Babylonians to the Ottoman Turks and the

British, with countless other Powers in between. Our people were exiled from our land but continued to dream of it every holiday, three times a day in prayer and throughout the never-ending anti-Semitism that we could not escape. But on this day 71 years ago, our age-old dream became a real-life miracle. In this Hall, 33 Member States voted in favour of a plan that would designate what was only a small portion of the land of Israel towards the most liberating end possible, the self-determination of the Jewish people (see A/PV.128).

Immediately we said yes. We were grateful to get even a piece of our homeland. But from that dream-come-true moment, the Jewish State of Israel has never experienced true peace. We have faced wars, terrorism, threats, isolation, double standards and anti-Semitism, but we have never let that stop us from building something miraculous — creating an oasis in the desert with drip irrigation, forming the most successful knowledge-based economy in the world and installing the one and only democracy for hundreds of miles. One need only look at the map. Nothing has stood in our way.

The adoption of resolution 181 (II) on 29 November 1947 did not give us everything that we wanted, but we accepted what we were given with gratitude and turned it into something extraordinary. However, our Palestinian neighbours did not share this mindset. Rather than accepting reality and making something of it, they rejected it entirely. They did not say “but” or “maybe”, they said “no”. As soon as the partition resolution was adopted, 71 years ago, the Palestinians began teaching their children to hate ours. They cemented their hopes in an unrealistic past and refused to move forward, and they have stayed there ever since. It is about time that the Palestinians hit the reset button. They must recalculate their route so that partnerships, prosperity and peace can be possible.

Israel represents seven decades of miracles, and a beacon of democratic freedoms and human rights, that even our adversaries in this Hall cannot deny. Israeli elections are free and fair. Israelis enjoy full freedom of speech. Israeli media outlets are entirely free to criticize their Government, while such blatant criticism would be unheard of in any other country in the Middle East. Israel champions equal rights for all of its people. Women make up 28 per cent of the Knesset, our Parliament, and our current Ministers of Justice, Social Equality and Culture are women. An entire sector of start-up ecosystems is dedicated to improving

the lives of people with disabilities. One company, which has expanded all over the world, has invented an exoskeleton system that actually enables people with spinal-cord damage to walk again.

Our freedom allows us to develop great ideas and send them around the entire world, from agricultural innovations that use satellite technology to track environmental trends, to health-care breakthroughs that can detect early-stage cancer tumours without resort to biopsies, or to counter-terrorism technologies keeping all of us safe by using facial-recognition technologies. We are eager to share our knowledge, expertise and capabilities with our friends around the globe. Israel believes in an ever-changing world. Even when we had nothing we still built something remarkable. It is our part of our DNA.

But the Palestinians have shown no interest in improvement. Since the moment of the voting on resolution 181 (II), the Palestinians have wasted decades spreading hatred and sponsoring terrorism. Instead of inventions they choose incitement. Instead of ventures they choose violence, and in lieu of progress they choose the past.

Since the moment that the United Nations voted to recognize a Jewish State and an Arab State, all we have heard is “no”: no to peace, no to negotiations, no to dialogue. Every time we reach out with an open hand, we are met not just with a clenched fist but with an armed one. We face a Palestinian leadership that is so problematic that only 29 per cent of Palestinians trust it to be able to hold free and fair elections. Mahmoud Abbas was elected in 2005. Those were the last Palestinian Authority elections ever held. Abbas is in the thirteenth year of his four-year term. We see a Palestinian media industry whose members are more often found in prison or dead than reporting on the ground. In the words of one journalist detained by the Palestinian Authority, “I live in a country where it is forbidden to express my opinion”. We have watched, disturbed, as nearly 50 per cent of married Palestinian women in Gaza have experienced domestic violence.

It is no secret that the Palestinian leadership sponsors terrorism. This past year, Mahmoud Abbas allocated \$355 million to terrorist salaries. I repeat: \$355 million. That number is more than 45 per cent of the foreign aid that the Palestinians will receive this year from all of the Member States here. The current Palestinian leadership is not capable of leading. It is not

interested in the responsibilities of governing, making hard choices, delivering on promises to its people or investing in its own institutions. The Palestinians could surge ahead into the future, but instead they have chosen to incite violence and terrorism and to deny the connection of the Jewish people to the land of Israel. If they were truly interested in creating a better life for their people, they would devote their energy to making peace.

Israel is sprinting into the future. We want the Palestinian people to sprint with us, to build their economy and make progress towards peace, but the Palestinians have shown no interest in accepting reality and making something of it. For example, in 2005 Israel completely pulled out of the Gaza Strip. We have absolutely no presence there. We removed all of the Jewish communities. We sent our soldiers home. We even uprooted our cemeteries. One cannot find a single Jew in Gaza today. The Palestinians had the opportunity to transform Gaza into the new pearl of the Mediterranean, but instead they elected Hamas, and Gaza became a terminal for terror. There is high potential for a successful Palestinian economy, especially one centred on high-tech and start-up culture, but the roadblock to its success is a corrupt Palestinian leadership.

With 65 per cent of Palestinians pessimistic about their future, it is high time that the Palestinians took three drastic measures for change. I would like to share those measure with the Palestinians.

First, they must reject their rejectionism. Israel is here to stay. The idea that if they ignore us we will go away is false and a waste of energy. Instead, Palestinians should focus on building a better future for their children and leave hatred behind. Secondly, they must stop teaching hatred and paying terrorists. They should teach tolerance and pay teachers instead. Thirdly, if they are frustrated with the status quo, they should change it, replace their current corrupt leadership and elect a leader who cares about them. Only when these three measures are taken will peace be possible.

The world cannot expect different results using the same equation. If it expects to see change for Palestinians and Israelis, it must change the equation. It should not cooperate with the Palestinians as they bring empty draft resolutions and symbolic gestures to the United Nations. It should not fuel the fire of delusion.

Instead, it should take responsibility for ensuring that the Palestinians recognize Israel as a Jewish State. The Palestinians should end the campaign of incitement and, finally, elect responsible leadership.

What the world has seen from Israel over the past 71 years is only the beginning. We are committed to infinite prosperity in partnership with our neighbours, but if the Palestinians choose not to join us, we will not let their hostility hold us back. The Jewish people will continue to flourish regardless of the obstacles that come their way. We will continue to be courageous in our aspirations, prosperity and quest for peace. As it is written in chapter 29, verse 11, of the Book of Psalms of the Holy Bible, "May God give strength to his people; may God bless his people with peace".

Ms. Bahous (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank you, Madam President, for your able stewardship of today's meeting.

On this International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, we are pleased to convey our sincere thanks and appreciation to the Chair and members of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for their tireless efforts aimed at defending the rights of our brother Palestinian people, mobilizing international support for them and their just cause, and standing up to all attempts to undermine and deny their rights. These efforts have been very effective in keeping the issue of the rights of Palestinian people at the centre of the international community's priorities and concerns, and in keeping Governments, intergovernmental organizations, civil-society organizations and the media focused on the urgent need to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and fulfil the aspirations of the Palestinians to establish their independent State on their national territory.

Yesterday His Majesty King Abdullah II Ibn Al-Hussein of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan sent a message to the Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. In his letter, King Abdullah asserted that the Palestinian question is key to achieving peace and stability in the Middle East and that all final status issues, including those of Jerusalem and refugees' right of return and right to compensation, must be resolved through serious negotiations and a comprehensive settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in accordance with the relevant international

resolutions. The King stressed that there is no alternative to a two-State solution or to establishing a sovereign and viable independent Palestinian State within the 4 June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. The Palestinian question remains a central issue in the Middle East, and comprehensive and lasting peace is the strategic option of choice among Arabs, embodied by the Arab Peace Initiative adopted by all Arab States and supported by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

Jordan enjoys excellent relations with Palestine and its brotherly people. We are organically linked by historical, civilizational, cultural, humanitarian and geographical ties. Since the Palestinian question first arose, Jordan's political and diplomatic efforts have focused on guaranteeing the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people under international law, based on the principles on which the United Nations was founded, including settling disputes by peaceful means, refraining from the use of force and rejecting violence, and striving to cooperate with all States and international actors to achieve those ends. Our values and principles guide us to address, to the best of our ability, the human suffering of the Palestinian people who have been denied their most basic and recognized international rights to freedom, self-determination and the establishment of an independent State on their own national territory.

The harsh living conditions and worsening human plight faced by the Palestinian people, particularly in the Gaza Strip, have increased poverty, frustration and despair, and call for immediate and serious action. The blockade on Gaza must be lifted and the humanitarian disaster there ended. In Jordan, we will continue to provide every form of support to our Palestinian brothers and work in all international forums to focus the world's attention on the terrible suffering of our brothers and sisters and on their just cause.

As Jordan is Palestine's next-door neighbour, our people, particularly those living in Jerusalem, are keenly aware of the daily suffering of the Palestinian people. The Hashemite custodianship of the Islamic and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem is a historic responsibility that Jordan has been honoured to assume on behalf of the Arab and Islamic nations. We will continue to fulfil our role in opposing any attempt to change the current historical and legal status of those sites, and to counter any efforts to partition Al-Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram Al-Quds Al-Sharif, temporally or

spatially. We must work together to defend Jerusalem and address any attempts to impose a new reality on the city, which would have disastrous repercussions on the future stability of the region.

Any rollback in services provided by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), and any attempt to undermine the Agency's role as set forth in its United Nations mandate, would trigger grave consequences, particularly at a time when there are no prospects for an end to the occupation or for a resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict on the basis of a two-State solution. We will therefore continue to spare no effort to mobilize international political and financial support for UNRWA so that it can continue to do its work pursuant to its United Nations mandate, for the benefit of the more than 5 million Palestinian refugees. Safeguarding UNRWA means respecting the right of refugees to live in dignity, the right of more than 500,000 students to attend school and the right of Palestinian refugees to receive health care and basic living necessities. It also means asserting the right of refugees to return and get compensation under the relevant international resolutions. Jordan will play a pivotal role in resolving this issue within the framework of the comprehensive final status solution involving refugees in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions.

Given the tragic and deteriorating situation of the Palestinian people that has resulted from the ongoing arbitrary Israeli occupation and Israel's illegal and illegitimate settlement activities, arbitrary detentions and assassinations, we must work hand in hand with all those who advocate peace, righteousness and justice and who believe in international legitimacy as the means to end those practices. Continuing this conflict will lead to further violence, terrorism and hatred throughout the world. We must work together to achieve a comprehensive and just peace between Palestinians and Israelis, a peace that ends the injustice being done to the Palestinian people and their suffering, and one that ensures freedom, progress and prosperity for them in their independent and sovereign State, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Mr. Elmajerbi (Libya) (*spoke in Arabic*): Today the General Assembly is taking up the long-standing issue of the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian and other Arab territories in the light of the reports of the Secretary-General entitled "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine" (A/73/346) and "The situation

in the Middle East” (A/73/322), and the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (A/73/35).

What continues to boggle the mind is that these reports unequivocally demonstrate the just cause of the Palestinian people and other States whose territories have been occupied by oppressive force. In this regard, we feel compelled to cite the note verbale dated 13 July from the Permanent Observer Mission of the State of Palestine to the United Nations, included in the report of the Secretary-General on the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine:

“Regrettably, in contrast to the global welcome and importance accorded to resolution 2334 (2016), we continue to witness the extremely hostile reaction of Israel, the occupying Power, to the Security Council’s action, and indeed to any General Assembly action in this regard, including the adoption of resolution 72/14. Despite the fact that the resolution was adopted in full conformity and consistency with the Charter of the United Nations, international law, the relevant resolutions and the long-standing consensus on this matter, the Israeli Government has vehemently rejected it, aggressively pursuing its illegal policies and measures in Occupied Palestine, including East Jerusalem, in blatant contempt of resolutions 2334 (2016), 72/14 and other core resolutions, in grave violation of its legal obligations, including under Article 25 of the Charter, and in total contradiction of the two-State solution, which is dependent on the full, immediate cessation and reversal of such illegal activities.” (A/73/346, p. 3)

In that regard, the question is why 70 years had to elapse before the General Assembly adopted resolution 72/14, to which the Secretary-General refers throughout his report in document A/73/346, and why the Assembly has to continue to discuss the issue. In his report, the Secretary-General, whom we as Member States elected to his post and who is a member neither of Fatah nor Hamas, confirms the aggressiveness with which Israel has met all General Assembly resolutions, its blatant contempt for the Security Council’s resolutions and its gross violations of the Charter. Why do we continue to consider this issue if only one entity believes that more than 150 Member States are wrong, biased and opposed to its existence and security? Why does that entity insist on being a Member of the United Nations if it believes that the Organization is biased and that

its resolutions are hostile to its existence? The greatest irony is that the United Nations, which is the institution that the entity does not like, is the very institution that was responsible for establishing and recognizing it.

When we say that the occupying Power is being provocative, we are not distorting the truth. After the Israeli Prime Minister’s Cabinet took a decision to allow members of the so-called Israeli Knesset to visit Al-Quds Al-Sharif, Knesset members took pictures during their visit to Al-Aqsa Mosque in violation of the media ban on photography. Is that not proof that the occupying Power seeks to provoke the Palestinian people and transform the political conflict into a religious one?

The oppressive occupying Power has enacted a Jewish nation-State law that provides that the State considers the expanded Jewish settlements, described as “Jewish settlements”, to be of national value, and that it will encourage and promote their establishment. The law is applicable in the area known as Israel, as well as areas that have been annexed since 1967, including East Jerusalem. Following the law’s adoption, how can we believe that the entity is serious in pursuing peace or that it could be a genuine partner in a peace process? How can we trust that it will respect any borders other than those that come down to us from old myths? What is surprising is that even after enacting the law, we repeatedly hear that the entity is the only democracy in the region. Perhaps its democracy is a privilege that other nations are not allowed to enjoy.

The oppressive occupying Power’s use of the tools of democracy to entrench its occupation became eminently clear when it imposed municipal elections on the occupied Syrian Golan with the sole purpose of stripping the Syrian people of their Syrian Arab identity, after a long period of marginalizing them and depriving them of their most basic rights, including potable water and contact with their families and relatives in their motherland of Syria. In that context, we emphasize that the occupied Golan is part and parcel of the Syrian Arab Republic, which continues to have sovereignty over it.

In conclusion, today the international community should address the Palestinian question with a sense of responsibility, not neutrality, because, as members of the United Nations, we have all historically contributed to the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories and left the Palestinians to face the entity by themselves. In 70 years of occupation, we have

offered the Palestinians nothing but resolutions and reports. We firmly believe that today the international community can choose between two alternatives in this context. Either it will work seriously at all levels to achieve a just and comprehensive peace for both sides through the strict implementation of the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, the Arab Peace Initiative and the relevant agreements, or we publicly tell the Palestinian people, who now lack any hope, that the United Nations is incapable of providing them with any kind of support or help to achieve their natural and historical right to establish a full sovereign State on even a part of their historical territories, some of which they once gave up for the sake of peace and stability. In that regard, the oppressive occupying Power intends to use its death-and-destruction machine to demolish whatever is left of the great Palestinian people and move to control the remainder of the Palestinian territories in order to realize its dream of establishing the Zionist project of a Greater Israel, whose borders and shape are yet unknown. Nevertheless, we want it to be known that Palestine and its people are here to stay.

Ms. Fareena (Maldives): My delegation would like to express its appreciation for the convening of this important meeting on the question of Palestine, and to reiterate and renew our full support for and solidarity with Palestine and the Palestinian people.

It is now 71 years to the day since the General Assembly adopted its historic resolution 181 (II), which set out the framework for establishing a sovereign and independent State of Palestine. The resolution remains historic because of its failure to realize its own promise of creating two separate, independent States, living side by side in peace and harmony. It is historic, too, because of its failure to protect the fundamental rights of Palestinians to live in their homes with dignity and respect. The result of that historic failure is there for all to see in its entirety — decades of oppression, illegal occupation and the denial of basic human rights and fundamental freedoms to the Palestinian people.

The International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, which is taking place today, is an opportunity for the international community to focus its attention on the fact that the question of Palestine is still unresolved and that the Palestinian people have not attained their inalienable rights, as defined by the General Assembly — the right to self-determination without external interference, the right to national

independence and sovereignty and the right of Palestinians to return to the homes and property from which they were expelled. We urge the international community to make every effort to protect those rights.

The Maldives condemns the continued violations of human rights and disregard for international law in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem. The Secretary-General notes in his report (A/73/346) the demolition of homes and the forced eviction of Palestinian families, punitive arrests, unfair trials, the torture of detainees and the use of excessive or lethal force against non-violent demonstrations.

The Government of the Maldives therefore urges Israel to return to the right side of international law, restart negotiations with the leadership of the State of Palestine in good faith and end its seven decades of occupation. We appeal to Israel to create the conditions necessary for the establishment of an independent and sovereign State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, on the Palestinian lands within the pre-1967 borders, living side by side with Israel. That is the solution that the resolutions of the Security Council have advanced, and it is the only viable one.

The international community has a special responsibility to ensure that the decisions it makes, the resolutions we adopt in the Assembly, are implemented in full and in good faith. Obstacles to implementing such resolutions have to be identified and the necessary instruments deployed to ensure that the decisions of the United Nations are fully respected by all.

We have a shared responsibility to sustain peace and promote fundamental human rights. If we are to be able to meet it, we must create an environment of respect for the human rights of the Palestinian people, where there are no incitements or provocations and where fundamental freedoms and the people are suppressed and oppressed by no one. We can all take the very first step of fulfilling that responsibility by granting full membership of the United Nations to the State of Palestine. The Maldives and its people will always be with Palestine.

Mr. Almunayekh (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): Seventy years have passed since the General Assembly adopted resolution 181 (II), concerning the Palestinian question. However, the brotherly Palestinian people continue to suffer from the Israeli occupation of their territories, not to mention the egregious and grave violations of international humanitarian

law and international human rights law that have stripped the Palestinian people of their freedom and a dignified livelihood.

For years, numerous international and United Nations resolutions have been adopted with a view to supporting the Palestinian people and their aspirations. Unfortunately, most of them are dead letters. Israel has been intransigent in its refusal to implement the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions and shoulder its responsibilities under the Fourth Geneva Convention since the beginning of its occupation in 1967, nearly 50 years ago. Israel continues to engage in practices that undermine all United Nations humanitarian and ethical criteria. It is trying to alter the demographic composition of the Palestinian territories by way of forced evictions, confiscations of land and property and the expansion and building of settlements; it is also seeking to change Palestine's current, historical status and prevent Muslims from practicing their legitimate rights and religious rituals.

Since the Great March of Return in March, the Palestinian people have been facing the most heinous forms of human rights violations as Israel targets civilians with live ammunition, claiming the lives of hundreds of innocent martyrs, scores of whom are children. Thousands are suffering permanent disability and enduring rigid restrictions on the mobility of persons and goods that are designed only to tighten the grip that Israel has had on the Gaza Strip since 2007 and undermine any prospects for a two-State solution. In that regard, we stress the importance of the implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), which condemns all Israeli practices of expanding and building settlements, seizing lands, demolishing homes and displacing Palestinians.

My country is steadfast in its defence of the rights of the Palestinian people, a position that is a mainstay of the external policy of the State of Kuwait. We support all international efforts to reach a just and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian question based on the Arab Peace Initiative, international law and resolutions of international legitimacy. We welcome the French initiative to convene an international peace conference leading to the establishment of a multilateral international mechanism that would pave the way to ending all illegitimate settlement activities and eventually terminate the Israeli occupation of the State of Palestine once and for all, according to specific criteria that would guarantee the right of the Palestinian

people to self-determination and the establishment of their independent State based on the 4 June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Through our membership in the Security Council, we will continue to defend the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, work to enable the Council to shoulder its responsibility to champion the Palestinian people, support their just cause, compel Israel to end its gross violations of international humanitarian law in the occupied Palestinian territories and to implement relevant Security Council resolutions, and achieve a just and lasting peace leading to a two-State solution.

We celebrate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, a disarmed people who still suffer from occupation and remain deprived of their fundamental right to a dignified life. I would like to conclude with the following thoughts.

First, we hail the determination and struggle of the Palestinian people. We assert our steadfast commitment to supporting them in order to attain all their legitimate political rights and establish their independent State on their land, with East Jerusalem as its capital, as well as to setting a time frame to end the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories in accordance with international regulations and laws.

Secondly, we continue to denounce the ongoing illegal and inhumane blockade of Gaza, which is yet another violation by Israel of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) and the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. We call for that blockade to be ended immediately.

Thirdly, we call on the international community, through the organs of the United Nations and the Security Council in particular, to provide the disarmed Palestinian people with international protection against the Israeli military machine and to end the occupation as soon as possible. We also urge the international community to extend its essential support to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, given its important role in mitigating the suffering of the brotherly Palestinian people.

Fourthly, we reiterate our call to all parties, especially those that sponsor the peace process in the Middle East, to intensify their efforts and exert pressure on Israel to accept and uphold the resolutions of the United Nations. In that regard, we call on the United Nations and all its entities to take on their responsibilities regarding the Palestinian question until

a just, comprehensive and lasting solution is reached on all the relevant issues, including that of refugees.

Mr. García Moritán (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Argentina would like to make a statement with regard to the situation in the Middle East and the question of Palestine, agenda items 38 and 39, respectively, which my country has been following with concern. Argentina reaffirms its support for a peaceful, lasting and comprehensive solution to the question of Palestine, based on a two-State solution within the 1967 borders, in addition to whatever else the parties may decide during the peace negotiation process.

Twenty-five years after the signing of the Oslo Accords, the Palestinian-Israeli peace process is encountering its most difficult moment ever. At this particular juncture, Argentina reaffirms its support for all efforts to achieve peace and stability in the region. We encourage regional actors and partner countries of Israel and Palestine to work constructively to help the parties advance towards a peaceful settlement of their differences with a view to resuming negotiations on all final status issues identified in the Oslo Accords — Jerusalem, refugees, settlements, borders and security measures.

The seriousness of the situation on the ground calls for a collective effort if the prospect of a two-State solution is to be kept alive, as established in the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council, the Quartet road map for peace and the Arab Peace Initiative. Argentina reaffirms its support for the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to establish an independent and viable State that is recognized by all nations, as well as for Israel's right to live in peace alongside its neighbours and within safe and internationally recognized borders.

Argentina also reiterates its concern about the persistent and continuing growth of illegal Israeli settlements in occupied Palestinian territory and calls for that expansion to cease. As has been pointed out many times in the General Assembly, settlements are contrary to international law and an obstacle to peace. They weaken the prospects for both States to live in peace and security and therefore promote the perpetuation of an unsustainable status quo. The gravity of the situation has been recognized by the Security Council in its resolution 2334 (2016), whose terms we fully affirm.

At the same time, attacks on Israeli citizens are totally unacceptable and must stop immediately. My country condemns all terrorist acts in the strongest possible terms, as well as the hostile actions of Hamas and other Palestinian organizations, including the launching of missiles from the Gaza Strip into Israeli territory. In that context, we recognize the right of Israel to exercise its legitimate right to self-defence. However, we also want to assert that all actions taken by Israel in accordance with that right should be compatible with international humanitarian law, keeping in mind the principles of distinction between civilians and combatants, proportionality and the military necessity for the use of force, among other things.

We call on Palestinian organizations that have yet to recognize Israel to renounce the use of violence and respect the existing agreements. We acknowledge the positive role played by Egypt and the United Nations in the ceasefire agreement of 13 November, and we encourage all actors involved in Gaza to refrain from taking steps that could jeopardize the sustainability of that agreement.

In the light of the financial difficulties being experienced by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, Argentina reaffirms its full support for the Agency's work and recognizes the need for the international community to come up with an appropriate response to ensure the provision of the funds needed to avoid the interruption of its services.

With regard to the situation in East Jerusalem, Argentina reaffirms the special status of Jerusalem, based on the relevant United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolution 478 (1980), and in that regard rejects any unilateral attempt to modify it, particularly with regard to the Old City of Jerusalem, which has a special significance for the three major monotheistic religions. We believe that the Holy City should be a place of coming together and peace, and that free access to the holy sites must be guaranteed for Jews, Muslims and Christians alike. Any attempt to deny or relativize the historical connection and profound meaning of those places to the three monotheistic religions is completely unacceptable, does not contribute to the goal of finding a peaceful solution to the conflict and reinforces prejudices and mistrust between the parties. Argentina believes that Jerusalem is one of the final status issues that must be agreed on by the parties through bilateral negotiations.

With regard to the Syrian Golan, Argentina maintains a principled position on the illegal acquisition of territories by force and respect for the territorial integrity of States. We firmly believe in the principle of the peaceful settlement of disputes and therefore consider it important to seek a negotiated solution to the conflict between Syria and Israel with a view to putting an end to the occupation of the Golan Heights as soon as possible, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the principle of land for peace.

In conclusion, Argentina once again urges the Palestinians and Israelis to resume peace talks and act in good faith, with flexibility and in accordance with international law, in seeking to reach an agreement on the outstanding issues concerning the final status of Palestine in all of its aspects.

Mr. Alshamsi (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I am pleased to be able to thank you, Madam President, for presiding over this meeting and to express my country's appreciation for the important activities of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

I want to reaffirm that the Palestinian question and the Middle East peace process remain important and central issues for my country, the region and the world. That is in line with a letter sent by His Highness Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates, to the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People in observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. To that end, the United Arab Emirates would like to express its continued support for international efforts aimed at enabling the Palestinian people to enjoy their legitimate and inalienable right to end the occupation and establish an independent Palestinian State within the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the relevant international resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative, which is considered an important point of reference for a solution to the Palestinian question.

The United Arab Emirates therefore calls on the international community to shoulder its responsibilities, in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations, to put an end to the suffering of the Palestinian people and to take all necessary measures to end the Israeli occupation of all Palestinian and Arab

territories. In that regard, we stress the importance of not allowing any party to undermine the serious collective efforts made to achieve peace and stability. If we allow that to happen, we will be managing crises rather than resolving them. We commend regional and international initiatives aimed at advancing the Middle East peace process, including the efforts of the Arab Republic of Egypt to achieve inter-Palestinian reconciliation and restore calm.

The United Arab Emirates condemns Israel's ongoing aggressive actions against the Palestinian people. We demand that it end all actions that violate United Nations resolutions and international law. Israel's continued illegitimate practices, notably its promulgation of a Jewish nation-State law and its construction and expansion of settlements on Palestinian territories, will undoubtedly undermine the political efforts to reach a two-State solution and constitute a major obstacle to efforts to achieve peace.

As we work to achieve a just and lasting peace for the Palestinian people, we cannot ignore the exacerbated and deteriorating humanitarian and economic situation in the Palestinian territories, which are in dire need of enhanced humanitarian and development assistance. We therefore once again call on the international community and donors to increase their contributions to the Palestinian people in order to enable them to confront their crisis and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, like all other nations.

Given my country's historical commitment to supporting our brotherly Palestinian people in the development, humanitarian, education and social sectors, the United Arab Emirates contributed approximately \$173 million to the Palestinian people in 2017 and 2018. Moreover, with regard to the United Arab Emirates' foreign aid policies and priorities, including the right of children to an education and the empowerment of women and teacher training, we have directed more than \$65 million of that amount to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East in order to support its educational programmes and the other vital services that it provides in the health and food sectors.

In conclusion, we reaffirm that achieving security and stability in the region requires finding political solutions to prolonged crises. That also means redoubling our efforts to combat extremism and terrorism all over the world, particularly given that

extremist and terrorist groups take advantage of crises to further spread violence, chaos and destruction while getting support and funds from certain regional parties.

Mr. Moncada (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Today the States Members of the United Nations celebrate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, which provides an opportunity to continue our efforts to raise awareness within the international community with a view to achieving a just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the question of Palestine.

More than 70 years after the Nakba, and after 50 years of occupation and 25 years after the signing of the Oslo Accords, we continue to support the Palestinian people's inalienable rights, including their right to self-determination, through the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital. That is why we call for a just solution to the plight of the Palestinian refugees, in accordance with resolution 194 (III).

We denounce the ongoing violations being perpetrated by Israel, the occupying Power, in occupied Palestinian territory, including attempts to alter the nature, status and demographic composition of the city of Jerusalem, particularly through the recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. In that regard, we reject any measure seeking to alter the city's status as a *corpus separatum*, which is a violation of international law, including the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly.

We regret the upsurge in violence and insecurity in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories, and we call for an end to the illegal policies of settlement, demolition, displacement, arbitrary detention and restriction of the freedom of movement within the territories. We call on Israel to end its policy of military incursion, which affects the civilian population and continues to have many victims.

We recognize the efforts of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to improve its effectiveness and the quality of its services in a context of financial deprivation, with a view to continuing to promote the human rights of Palestinian refugees. The United Nations must guarantee a budget adequate to the proper functioning of UNRWA so as to enable it to continue to carry out its humanitarian mission.

At the same time, we appreciate the work of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and support it in the fulfilment of its mission. We urge the Department of Public Information to do a more effective job of providing information on the Palestinian question, and we commend the efforts of United Nations officials to carry out their humanitarian work during the conflict.

Venezuela supports the request by the Government of the State of Palestine for the establishment of a system of international protection for the Palestinian population in the occupied territory, in accordance with the Fourth Geneva Convention and resolution 904 (1994), in the light of the ongoing acts of aggression in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem and Gaza, by the occupying Power, which remains unwilling to meet its responsibility to ensure the protection of Palestinians, in accordance with the Fourth Geneva Convention.

Finally, we reiterate our support for a just, lasting and peaceful solution to the Palestinian question, based on a two-State solution along the pre-1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as capital of an independent State of Palestine, with full United Nations membership and in peaceful coexistence with Israel within defined and recognized borders, in accordance with all the relevant United Nations resolutions.

Ms. Lodhi (Pakistan): At the outset, I would like to express my delegation's gratitude to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for its important work and comprehensive report (A/73/35).

Seventy-one years ago today, the General Assembly adopted resolution 181 (II), which envisaged a two-State arrangement. Since then, the tragedy of Palestine has only intensified, and it remains an unremitting tale of broken promises and unfulfilled rights. As the dark shadows of occupation and oppression have lengthened over time, they have not only betrayed the hopes and aspirations of generations of Palestinians, they have also sown the seeds of endless hostility and discord in the Middle East.

Today many warn that the entire region could plunge into a fresh vortex of violence. That is a sobering assessment that portends fresh pain and suffering for the people of Palestine. After all, a conflict that pits an occupying Power against an occupied people and in which one side is armed with guns and modern weaponry and the other with only an abiding conviction

in the rightness of its cause, is by its very nature a travesty of justice and all norms of international law, for it seeks to legitimize the strength of might over the power of right.

The question of Palestine is a test of our commitment to the abiding principles of the Charter of the United Nations, based on the inherent dignity of the individual and on respect for the fundamental human rights of all human beings, including their right to self-determination. The tragedy of Palestine is our collective failure to uphold those fundamental ideals as members of the international community.

This year, as we mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Oslo Accords, the fundamental principles of a two-State solution continue to be systematically eroded and dismantled. Unfortunately, the world seems to have grown so accustomed to the disastrous events in the occupied territories that failure to reach a peace deal has become the new normal. But I want to remind this parliament of the world that there is nothing normal about the hardship, pain and suffering that the people of Palestine face every day. These are people who are fast losing the few lingering remnants of hope that they may have. That sense of frustration and despondency has worsened because of an unfortunate succession of events, a few of which I shall point to now.

First and most obviously, long-standing resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly on the status of Jerusalem are being flouted with contempt. The decision of some countries to relocate their embassies to Jerusalem, despite the Assembly's almost unanimous decision disallowing it, has further inflamed the volatile situation. Secondly, the illegal expansion of Israeli settlements into the occupied territory continues unabated. Thirdly, in Gaza the illegal blockade suffocating the life of a once-thriving community continues into its eleventh year. Fourthly, plans to demolish the Bedouin community of Khan Al-Ahmar have yet again exposed Israel's longstanding policy of forcibly displacing Palestinians from their lands. They strike at the heart of Palestinians' identity and their very existence as a people. Fifthly, the decision of a major donor to cease all financial support to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East undermines the long-term sustainability of the Agency's activities, which support more than 5 million Palestinian refugees. Finally, we are now witnessing attempts to deflect the attention of the international community by bringing a draft

resolution to the General Assembly that does nothing to pave the way for peace. We join other Member States in categorically rejecting this move and by extension the draft resolution.

We all know what the contours of a resolution of this long-standing conflict would look like. They are a comprehensive and peaceful settlement, ending the occupation, the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including to self-determination and independence, and the achievement of a two-State solution. A viable, independent and contiguous State of Palestine, on the basis of the internationally agreed parameters of the pre-1967 borders, and with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, is the only sustainable guarantee of enduring peace in the Middle East. There is no alternative. The role of the Security Council remains critical to that end. The Council will only enhance its own credibility by ensuring the full and comprehensive implementation of its long-standing resolutions.

The Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan represents another critical dimension of the Middle East conflict. Israel's policy of exercising illegal control over resources and altering the demographic composition and legal status of the occupied Syrian Golan blatantly disregards various General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. The withdrawal of occupation forces from all Arab lands, including from Lebanon and the Syrian Golan, is vital to durable peace and security.

In conclusion, as we all know, the suffering of the people of Palestine is as old as the United Nations itself. It is time to bring an end to this tragedy. It is time to reinvigorate hopes of peace and mutual coexistence for the entire region. While the Palestinians continue to suffer and their homeland vanishes before our eyes, the international community should not remain silent any longer. For its part, Pakistan remains unstinting and steadfast in its commitment to the cause of Palestine.

Mr. Alrowaiei (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): We thank the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, His Excellency Mr. Cheikh Niang, Permanent Representative of Senegal, and the members of the Committee for their report, contained in document A/73/35, and for their efforts to enable the Palestinian people to enjoy their inalienable rights, like other peoples of the world.

The Palestinian question remains unresolved after 70 years, despite the adoption of many Security Council and General Assembly resolutions on the issue. Peace in the Middle East is still basically dependent on the establishment of an independent Palestinian State and the return of Palestinian refugees. In that context, we note that the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People calls on the occupying Power to protect civilians who are under its control, in accordance with international law, and for an end to the illegal blockade of the Gaza Strip.

In a letter addressed to the Committee on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, Shaikh Khalid Bin Ahmed Al Khalifa, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Bahrain, reaffirmed Bahrain's steadfast position with regard to the Palestinian question. In that letter, he stated that

“the Kingdom of Bahrain headed by His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa reiterates the inalienable and historic rights of the Palestinian people, most notably their right to establish their independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital along the borders of 4 June 1967. This must be in line with the two-State solution and the relevant international resolutions, as well as the Arab Peace Initiative.”

We want to once again recall our collective responsibility as an international community to the Palestinian people, and our responsibility to ensure that their just cause is resolved, especially in the light of the unprecedented scale of their long-standing suffering, which requires us to stand by them. If it continues, it will seriously threaten peace and stability not only in the Middle East but also throughout the entire world.

The deterioration of the situation in the occupied territories and Israel's rejected policies — including forced displacement, the unjustified, excessive use of force, land confiscation, illegal settlement construction and other dangerous practices — constitute gross violations of the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 1949 Geneva Conventions. The international community must therefore put pressure on Israel to end those practices immediately and implement international resolutions.

I commend the efforts of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which provides education

and basic services and has always contributed to the improvement of the living conditions of Palestinian refugees. We reaffirm the importance of providing support to UNRWA so that it can perform its duties to the best of its abilities.

In conclusion, any settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict requires basic solutions such as those contained in the Arab Peace Initiative. The Kingdom of Bahrain calls on the international community to step up its efforts to ensure that the Palestinian people can exercise their inalienable rights, the Palestinian refugees can return home, and a lasting and just peace can be achieved in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions, including those of the Security Council on a two-State solution, which would enable all the peoples of the region to live in peace and stability.

Ms. Mudallali (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): First and foremost, I would like to thank the Ambassador of Senegal, Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, for his efforts. I also want to thank all the members of the Committee for their support to the Palestinian people.

As we do every year, we are meeting today to consider the Palestinian question and reaffirm the fact that the Palestinian people have inalienable and lasting rights, including the right to exist, to live and to build a State on their own territory. We must therefore fulfil our responsibilities regarding this matter, which dates back more than seven decades and is now an issue for the entire international community. The Palestinian people have the right to restore peace to the city of peace.

Decades have passed and Palestine is still on our agenda, without a solution or prospect for a solution despite dozens of international resolutions, initiatives and negotiations.

Lebanon values the efforts of the United Nations to realize the rights of the Palestinian people. We agree with you, Madam President, that there is a need today more than ever to express our solidarity with the Palestinian people. Lebanon underscores its commitment to supporting and assisting the Palestinian people in enjoying their right to freedom and self-determination, because the current phase of the Palestinian question is the most dangerous since the start of the conflict.

Everyone is aware that the situation in the Middle East, and particularly in Palestine, is deplorable. Peace remains out of reach, while an entire people are

suffering daily under the yoke of occupation and as a result of international variables that reinforce dangerous trends. Both the Palestinian and the Arab sides see that the foundations of peace are being systematically undermined. Those foundations have been unanimously and internationally recognized in this Hall since the adoption of resolution 181 (II), which called for the creation of a Palestinian State, and of resolution 3236 (XXIX), which called for self-determination for the Palestinian people, as well as dozens of resolutions calling on Israel to withdraw from the occupied Arab territories to the line of 4 June 1967, including Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which also called for an end to the construction of settlements, which runs counter to international legitimacy and international law.

All those resolutions constitute the legal and legitimate basis of a political solution to the conflict. They provide the grounds for a just, comprehensive and lasting solution that can guarantee peace for all the peoples of the region. They are currently dealt with as dead letters. Those resolutions have been effectively erased through denial and failure to recognize people's legitimate rights, as well as by attempts to abrogate them completely, which increase the sense of frustration and despair. This is all happening while the situation on the ground is deteriorating and unilateral measures and policies are being adopted in an attempt to nullify the final status issues that clearly contravenes international legitimacy. Certain States have recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and moved their embassies to Jerusalem, which threatens any remaining hopes for peace, since Jerusalem is one of the most important final status issues.

Attempts to end assistance to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and its funding are cruel moves that jeopardize the lives and future of the refugees. What is needed is the provision of support to an agency that ensures humanitarian, educational and medical services to millions of Palestinian refugees. The settlements, which are considered illegal under dozens of international resolutions and constitute an obstacle to achieving peace, are growing faster than ever. They continue to cut off the occupied Palestinian territories and threaten the dream of the Palestinian people to achieve an independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Gaza, an enormous prison for nearly 2 million people, has endured dire humanitarian conditions during 12 years of siege. The situation there threatens to explode at any time. Ninety-five per cent of the water in Gaza is undrinkable, the unemployment rate is the highest in the world, and the inhabitants of Gaza are being attacked and shot with live Israeli ammunition, leaving hundreds killed and thousands of civilian demonstrators injured. All of that makes it more than ever incumbent on us to return to the path of peace and the Arab Peace Initiative and to implement the relevant United Nations resolutions.

The Arab countries expressed their position at the Arab Summit Conference in Beirut in 2002. They chose a path of peace for all peoples of the region as a strategic choice. They called on Israel to declare that peace is its strategic choice as well. The Arab Peace Initiative provided a simple and fair equation. It calls for a complete withdrawal of Israel from the occupied Arab territories to the line of 4 June 1967, the establishment of a Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital, an agreed, just solution to the issue of refugees in order to put an end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the achievement of a peace agreement with Israel while ensuring peace for all peoples of the region, and the establishment of normal relations with Israel as part of a comprehensive peace.

Sixteen years have passed since the adoption of the Arab Peace Initiative and Israel has not made a strategic choice for peace. It is still using force as if that will achieve peace and security. Let us address the root causes of that conflict rather than wasting time simply on new means of avoiding the truth that the current situation cannot continue and is not viable. As Martin Luther King said, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere".

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Palestinian question lies at the root of the situation in the Middle East and affects the long-term stability, prosperity and development of the countries of the region. Finding a comprehensive and just solution to the Palestinian question as soon as possible is an aspiration we all share that is in the interests of the Palestinian people and the peoples of the region and will contribute to world peace and stability.

At present, relations between Palestine and Israel remains tense and fragile, and developments in the situation are worrisome. Settlement construction and the

demolition of Palestinian homes continue unabated and pose a threat to the realization of a two-State solution. The precarious humanitarian and security situation in the Gaza Strip, including many civilian casualties, is detrimental to regional peace and the peace process. Violence cannot be eradicated with more violence. The relevant parties should exercise restraint in order to avoid further escalation.

The General Assembly resolutions on the protection of Palestinian civilians should be fully implemented. The parties concerned should lift the blockade on Gaza as soon as possible. The international community should redouble its support to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, take a long-term perspective and jointly bring the Palestinian question back to the quest for a negotiated solution.

First, a two-State solution is the only way to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The international community should remain committed to working on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions, the principle of land for peace and the Arab Peace Initiative, and to finding a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Palestinian question through negotiation. All the relevant parties should fully implement Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), immediately cease all settlement activities in the occupied territories and take measures to prevent violence against civilians.

Secondly, the international community should remain united, bring a heightened sense of urgency and responsibility to the issue and launch a new round of peace efforts. All sides should work towards the same goal, refrain from any action or rhetoric that could aggravate the situation and avoid taking any unilateral measures that undermine trust in order to create the conditions necessary for a resumption of dialogue. Parties that have major influence in the Middle East should play a constructive role, explore new mechanisms for mediation and break the current impasse in the Palestinian-Israeli peace talks.

Thirdly, the final status of Jerusalem is key to advancing the Middle East peace process. This issue is complex and sensitive and bears on the future of a two-State solution, as well as on regional peace and tranquillity. All parties should exercise caution when dealing with related issues, avoid imposing solutions that could trigger new confrontations and strive to reach a balanced solution through negotiations based

on the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions and international consensus.

At present, the hot-spot issues in the Middle East are complicated and intertwined. Conflict and confrontation continue and developments on the ground are worrying. We should focus on peace, impartiality, constructiveness and inclusiveness as the way to deal with hot-spot issues in the Middle East.

First, we should keep searching for a political solution, promote dialogue and negotiation and avoid a vicious cycle of violence. Secondly, we must adhere to the principle of fairness and not extract compromise by coercion, turning stability into lasting peace rather than a mere break in the turbulence. Thirdly, we must bring the situation under constructive control, take its history and reality into account and gradually foster a general atmosphere in which chaos is contained. Fourthly, we should accommodate the legitimate rights and interests of all parties, avoid engaging in exclusive arrangements and instead build an open and stable regional framework for peace.

China is a good friend and partner of the Palestinian people and a staunch backer of peace between Palestine and Israel. We firmly support and promote the Middle East peace process and the just cause of the Palestinian people in restoring their legitimate national rights by establishing an independent Palestinian State, with full sovereignty, based on the 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital. We also support the integration of the State of Palestine into the international community.

Yesterday President Xi Jinping of China sent a special congratulatory message to commemorate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People and to express his support for Palestine. China will follow President Xi's four-point proposal to promote a political settlement of the Palestinian issue and will continue to work with the international community to play a positive and constructive role in achieving peace in the Middle East.

Mr. Hattrem (Norway): Norway has been a consistent partner in the promotion of peace and security in the Middle East for decades. Our commitment to helping to achieve a negotiated two-State solution is firm. A comprehensive resolution that addresses the final status issues and the aspirations of both peoples is long overdue. Only a two-State solution can provide durable peace and security for both parties.

We are deeply concerned about the fragile situation in and around Gaza. The period from 11 to 13 November saw one of the fiercest exchanges of fire in Gaza since the 2014 conflict. All parties must work to prevent a further escalation of violence and make a serious effort to stabilize the situation.

In New York on 27 September, Norway chaired a ministerial meeting of the international donor group to Palestine, the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians. The participants welcomed the United Nations humanitarian package for Gaza and called for its implementation as a matter of urgency, in coordination with the Palestinian Authority. Norway supports these efforts and is providing additional assistance to the United Nations.

Ms. Bassols Delgado (Spain), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The Ad Hoc Liaison Committee meeting also called for urgent action to mitigate the damage to the Palestinian economy. A combination of major reductions in donor contributions, significant revenue losses due to fiscal leakages and continued restrictions on Palestinian access and movement has led to a serious decline in the Palestinian economy in 2018. There is a risk of further deterioration next year unless the outstanding fiscal issues between the parties are addressed.

Gaza is facing severe economic, humanitarian and social challenges. Ensuring the unimpeded provision of humanitarian assistance is important for its population and for regional stability. There is an urgent need for improved access to clean water and energy, job creation and increased movement of people and goods in and out of Gaza. We welcome the resumption of the delivery of fuel to Gaza's power plant since October, which has significantly increased the electricity available to the population.

Hamas bears a major share of the responsibility for the dire situation in Gaza. It is the Palestinian Authority and the international community, not Hamas, that are providing assistance to the people of Gaza. We support the Egyptian commitment to facilitating Palestinian reconciliation, as well as the Palestinian Authority's efforts to restore its governance in Gaza and reunite Palestine under one legitimate authority. But regardless of that, it is counterproductive to stop supporting Gaza financially, which would further impoverish the population. For its part, Israel must lift its extensive

restrictions on the movement of people and goods in and out of Gaza.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) remains indispensable to the most vulnerable Palestinian refugees, providing essential services and contributing to regional stability. Donors must remain committed to supporting UNRWA, especially when the organization is facing a very challenging period financially.

Recent developments in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, including the decision to demolish the village of Khan Al-Ahmar, are of great concern. We welcome the announcement by Israel on 21 October that it will delay the demolition of Khan Al-Ahmar. Its location is strategically important to preserving the contiguity of a future Palestinian State.

Mr. Bahr Aluloom (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the President for guiding this meeting, and to express my gratitude to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, represented by its Chair and members, for its report (A/73/35) and their tireless efforts to defend the rights of our brother Palestinian people.

On this International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, His Excellency the President of the Republic of Iraq, Mr. Barham Salih, has sent a letter to the Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, which I will now read out.

“I greet the General Assembly, on behalf of Iraq, on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, that steadfast and adamant people who have great hopes for peace and the future despite the oppression and injustice they have faced, including the deprivation of their most basic rights, and in particular their legitimate right to live in dignity and peace in an independent State on their land, a State that expresses their national identity and their political and human aspirations.

“On behalf of the Iraqi people, we reiterate our solidarity with this fraternal people. We also underscore our steadfast determination to ensure that the world recognizes the historical importance of this annual celebration, which coincides with the General Assembly's adoption in 1947 of resolution 181 (II). That resolution, on the partition of Palestine,

recognizes the responsibility of the United Nations for the oppression and damage that have now been sustained by the Palestinian people for nearly 71 years. It also constitutes legal recognition of the just cause of the Palestinian people and the commitment of the international community to the necessary restoration of their legitimate rights, in accordance with the resolutions of the General Assembly and as the culmination of their just struggle to pursue self-determination and end the Israeli occupation of their territory and homeland.

“On this occasion, the Republic of Iraq, which has always supported the cause of the Palestinian people and their just struggle to restore their legitimate rights, is alarmed by the humanitarian suffering sustained by the Palestinian people. The Israeli Government persists in its disregard for international resolutions and continues its indiscriminate shelling, demolition of houses and confiscation of land in the occupied West Bank and in Gaza. It also sometimes violates holy sites and schools, and imposes administrative detention measures. Israel is pursuing its expansionist settlement policies, building deep into Palestinian cities and villages in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Other measures aim to undermine the prospects for peace and abort the international community’s efforts to enable the Palestinian people to establish their independent State on a par with the rest of the nations of the world.

“On this International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the Republic of Iraq reiterates its firm position that a just and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian question is possible only through the establishment of a full-fledged independent Palestinian State within the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the Arab Peace Initiative and the resolutions of international legitimacy. We urge action to be taken to implement the provisions of international agreements, the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international humanitarian law, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention. We also reject any step that runs counter to international law in relation to Jerusalem. We call on the States of the world that have not yet recognized the State of Palestine, notably certain European States, to do so as soon as possible, as the Kingdom of Sweden

did in 2014. We call for support for the aspirations of our brother Palestinian people to exercise their legitimate rights, which would greatly enhance and consolidate security, stability and peace in the Middle East.

“The Republic of Iraq expresses its strong condemnation of all Israeli aggressions against the Palestinian territories and its support for the Palestinian National Authority and solidarity with the Palestinian people. We also call on Arab States and the international community to support the efforts of the Palestinian National Authority in the face of the negative effects of the Israeli occupation on socioeconomic development efforts in the occupied territories and East Jerusalem, which result in heavy annual losses. Full support should be provided to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, given its role in assisting Palestinian refugees.

“We also call on all our Palestinian brethren to pursue efforts for democratic dialogue and consensus in order to achieve constructive reconciliation and consolidate Palestinian national unity as a shield for defending their legitimate rights.”

Mr. Bermúdez Álvarez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): As we commemorate another anniversary of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, we join other members of the Organization in expressing the hope that we will soon witness a much-desired peace in the Middle East, enabling its population to exercise its legitimate right to be part of a sovereign and independent Palestinian State.

Today is the seventy-first anniversary of the General Assembly’s adoption of resolution 181 (II), which determined the partition of Palestine and the creation of two States, one Arab and one Jewish. Thanks to the impetus provided by that international legal act initiated by the Organization, Israel and Palestine were able to consolidate their identities, rights and obligations as States and legal entities recognized by the international community. Regrettably, this idea was soon drowned out by the drums of war, and the partition of Palestine could not be realized in line with the original plan, with consequences of which we are all aware.

From that moment on, Uruguay has always staunchly and unwaveringly supported this solution in the belief that it will enable Israel and Palestine to live together in peace within secure borders. Today

Uruguay wants to once again affirm its support for the right of Israel and of Palestine to live in peace within secure and recognized borders, in a spirit of renewed cooperation and free from any threat or action that breaches that peace. Likewise, Uruguay reiterates its support for a solution based on two independent States, as we believe it is the only option that can enable Israel and Palestine to coexist in peace. There is no plan B, and there never will be.

Uruguay maintains ties of deep friendship with the State of Israel and the Palestinian State, whose full incorporation into the Organization, exercising the right to self-determination of its people, is the logical outcome of the entire process it has undertaken on its path to affirmation as a full-fledged State. And not just a full-fledged State but a responsible State, capable of completely eradicating terrorism on its territory and eliminating its incitement and glorification, and of living in peace with the State of Israel and other States of the region.

Uruguay was one of the first countries to recognize the State of Israel and later, when we realized that this unfinished process could no longer be delayed, we recognized the State of Palestine. It is essential that the international community step up its efforts to support this process and encourage the parties to return to the negotiating table with a view to reaching a peaceful, just, negotiated and lasting solution, in accordance with international law, that takes the interests of both parties into consideration. In order to achieve that, the parties must comply with their obligations under international law and refrain from taking unilateral decisions that obstruct dialogue. Clear political signals are needed to break the vicious cycle of disagreement and violence.

Unfortunately, despite the many multilateral, regional and unilateral initiatives that have been taken to end the conflict, we are still far from seeing a peaceful and mutually acceptable solution. For that reason, although a resumption of direct negotiations may take time, we encourage the parties to do so in order to avoid the continued paralysis and stalemate that we have witnessed for too many years.

Uruguay remains concerned about the ongoing determination of the Israeli authorities to build settlement housing in the occupied territories, seize land and demolish Palestinian homes. We urge Israel to end such practices. Settlements are illegal under international law and run counter to the

recommendations of the Middle East Quartet and the relevant Security Council resolutions. We are concerned that if the current trend continues, a two-State solution will be virtually unworkable. Any gain of territory or exercise of a misconceived sovereignty is nullified if the price is peace and the dismay and suffering of the people of the region are prolonged.

Uruguay reaffirms its readiness to continue working to reactivate the peace process through all existing initiatives in order to break the prevailing status quo and thereby achieve progress in the peace negotiations. It is time to begin to overcome the hatred, incitement, disillusionment, despondency and frustration that afflict the Governments and peoples of Palestine and Israel.

Today, as was the case more than 70 years ago, the international community, which understood and favoured this solution, continues to wait with bated breath. We are discouraged by the fact that the leaders ignore the path that has been marked out for them in good faith as the most viable towards a mutually acceptable solution that can end this long, complex and historic conflict. We once again urge them to return to dialogue.

Ms. Krisnamurthi (Indonesia): Following yesterday's observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the delegation of Indonesia would like to express its appreciation to the General Assembly for its continued efforts to support the inalienable rights of Palestinians.

Each year we gather here on this occasion to once again express a message of solidarity to our Palestinian brothers and sisters, returning year after year to do the same thing. We have settled into a routine that now sadly appears to be aimed more at keeping the hopes of the Palestinian population alive than at seeking a solution to the problem, and all the more so given the consistent and continuing violations of international law by the occupying Power, while the Security Council, which is charged with the maintenance of international peace and security, appears increasingly helpless.

That situation reminds me of the words of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, who characterized the situation as something of a permanent occupation or annexation. All the State organs of the occupying Power, whether the Parliament, the judiciary or its security agencies, deploy various negative

tactics and breach international law and resolutions of the United Nations as they please. The occupying Power's settlement policy, along with the continuing construction of the separation wall, the displacement of Palestinians and the use of violence, among other things, speak eloquently of its ambitions, but not of any interest in peace and resolution.

It is the view of Indonesia that the occupying Power must understand that those policies, as well as its efforts to alter the demographic composition, legal status and character of the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, can yield neither peace nor security. We again want to express our regret over the failure of the United Nations to stop such unlawful acts directed against the Palestinian people and to protect the innocent civilians who are exposed to Israel's brutality and insensitivity.

We reiterate that peace can be achieved only if countries respect their commitments under international law and their obligations under the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, and commit to a multilateral process aimed at implementing a two-State vision. If we base our judgments on the rule of law and justice, they will be as clear as day in determining something that is legal, let alone supported by several Security Council resolutions and the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice.

In that connection, we call on Member States that have yet to do so to recognize the State of Palestine and support the efforts to end the occupation and restore the basic rights of the Palestinian people. We cannot come up with a just solution without both parties standing on an equal footing. The sad reality that we are witnessing now is a one-State solution, as the performance of the Security Council lags far behind the cause of justice and the world's expectation. We urge all States to recognize the danger of delaying the realization of a two-State solution. We urge Israel to lift the illegal and dehumanizing blockade on the Gaza Strip, where all aspects of life have deteriorated into a humanitarian catastrophe.

Indonesia condemns all acts of violence against civilians, and warns that what the occupying Power is doing to the people of Gaza is a manifestation of collective punishment, which is a blatant violation of international law. We should remember the principle that how we treat others is how we invite them to treat us.

Indonesia restates its unwavering support and recognition of Palestine. We are pleased to offer our full support to all the relevant draft resolutions, which we consider as balanced and well crafted. We reject any attempt to distract us from the root cause of the issue, which is the occupation. No issue or aspect should be approached separately. The ultimate goal must be to end the occupation and fulfil all the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

Mr. Tayel (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): The Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories has been going on for 51 years. Despite the fact that occupations are by nature temporary, that particular occupation is slowly but surely becoming semi-permanent and perpetuating the oldest and most serious conflict in the Middle East, and as such subverts any prospects for coexistence in the region.

The international community has always called for a resolution to the Palestinian question, in harmony with Palestinians' legitimate right to self-determination, pursuant to the Charter of the United Nations and the aspirations of the Palestinian and Israeli peoples to coexist side by side in peace in two independent States, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions and on the basis of the borders of 4 June 1967. Today, however, a quarter of a century after the Oslo Accords, instead of a sovereign Palestinian State we are witnessing a quasi-State of illegal settlements, with a population of almost 500,000, that is expanding throughout the Palestinian territories and is about to irreversibly undermine the possibility of a two-State solution.

Indeed, to be clear, we are not meeting at the United Nations to discuss the items related to the Palestinian question, whether in the General Assembly or the Security Council, in order to target any one party or strip it of its legitimacy. On the contrary, our discussions are based on what the Organization recognized 70 years ago, which was the establishment of Israel. When we recognized the right of Israel to its independent State and the right of the Israeli people to live safely within their borders, that right was directly linked to the establishment of a Palestinian State and a similar right for the Palestinian people.

The implementation of the second part of resolution 181 (II) has been overdue for 70 years. The Palestinian question has therefore become the core of the various crises in the Middle East, despite the availability of legal

and political avenues, including the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, the latest of which is resolution 2334 (2016). In that context, the annual renewal of the international community's commitments through the General Assembly's adoption of resolutions supporting the settlement of this issue and the establishment of the State of Palestine is the only remaining ray of hope for the Palestinian people. As their rights are undermined on the ground, our role at the United Nations is therefore to preserve those inalienable rights until the parties and politicians with influence recognize that the Palestinian and Israeli peoples are here to stay on the same land and share the same fate. No one people of the two can live in peace and safety without recognizing the right of the other to land and peace. Everyone knows that the accepted and viable parameters for resolving that issue are the principle of land for peace and the 1967 borders, including Jerusalem.

I hope that everyone will realize that the choices for the Palestinians and Israelis are limited. They must either return to the negotiating table, on the basis of a two-State solution and the 1967 borders, as well as the Arab

Peace Initiative, or implement a unilateral one-State solution that has been rejected by both peoples for very logical reasons. The third choice — to foment populism leading to an uncontrollable, sustained conflict that would deprive the Palestinian and Israeli peoples of all hope of living a normal life like that of all peoples of the world — is too frightening to contemplate.

I am certain that Egypt's experience of achieving peace with Israel can be replicated. Until that reality is recognized by all parties, and until serious negotiations for reaching a settlement are launched, this year we must once again shoulder our responsibility to the parties to preserve the international legal order that governs all our relations and renew our commitment to the criteria of peace during the current session of the General Assembly.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item for today. We will continue the debate tomorrow at 10 a.m., followed by action on draft resolutions under agenda items 39 and 38.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.