



General Assembly

Seventy-fifth session

67th plenary meeting
Thursday, 20 May 2021, 10 a.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Bozkir (Turkey)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 37 and 38 (continued)

The situation in the Middle East

Question of Palestine

The President: The General Assembly will resume its consideration of agenda item 37, entitled “The situation in the Middle East”, and agenda item 38, entitled “Question of Palestine”. Members will recall that the General Assembly held a debate on agenda item 37 at its 34th and 35th plenary meetings, on 2 December 2020, and a debate on agenda item 38 at its 34th plenary meeting, on 2 December 2020. Members will also recall that in my letter dated 17 May, I informed delegations that I had received a letter, also dated 17 May, from the Permanent Representatives of the Niger and Algeria in their respective capacities as Chairs of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and of the Group of Arab States, requesting a meeting of the General Assembly to hold a debate under these items. In the light of that request, may I take it that the Assembly decides to hold an additional joint debate on agenda items 37 and 38?

It was so decided (decision 75/565A).

The President: I would like to propose that the list of speakers for this joint debate be closed at this time in view of the large number of delegations inscribed on it. Unless I hear any objection, I will take it that the Assembly agrees to close the list of speakers now.

It was so decided.

The President: I will now deliver my opening statement from the rostrum. As indicated in my letter dated 17 May, I convened this formal plenary of the General Assembly in line with the request from the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the Group of Arab States that we hold a joint debate on the question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East. Subsequently, the Coordinating Bureau of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries informed me of its decision to join the request as well.

As we meet in the Assembly today, the situation on the ground continues to deteriorate. We have witnessed the worst violence in years. Hundreds of innocent lives have already been lost. The suffering is immense, inhumane and simply intolerable. I am extremely concerned about the protection of civilians, particularly amid the continued bombardment of Gaza, and about international humanitarian law. I condemn all attacks on civilians and religious sites. It is particularly heartbreaking that the escalation of the attacks began at the end of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. The raid on the Al-Aqsa Mosque, which is one of the holiest places on earth for 1.8 billion Muslims, was shocking. I once again urge that respect be shown towards all places of worship, including the Al-Aqsa Mosque, Al-Haram Al-Sharif.

Since the start of the current escalation, nearly two weeks ago, the United Nations has reported that more than 200 Palestinians, including 63 children and 35 women, have been killed in Gaza. In the last 24 hours alone there were six Palestinian fatalities in Gaza. The situation in the occupied West Bank,

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including East Jerusalem, is also dire, with the United Nations reporting that 25 Palestinians, including four children, have been killed. Three of those fatalities, which included one child, took place in the last 24 hours. Thousands of Palestinians have been injured across Gaza and the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and thousands have been rendered homeless, seeking refuge elsewhere, including in mosques and schools run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). Civilians have also been affected in Israel, with fatalities and hundreds of injuries reported. My thoughts and prayers are with the families of those who have been killed — may they rest in peace — and I wish a speedy recovery to the injured.

I echo the calls for a ceasefire in Gaza, which is needed immediately. The parties must step away from the brink and respect international law. Israel, as an occupying Power, must ensure that it complies with its obligations under international humanitarian law, including with regard to the proportionate use of force. The violence and incitement in the occupied West Bank, including in East Jerusalem, must stop. Palestinians should not live in perpetual fear of eviction from their homes because of expanding settler colonialism in the West Bank. The eviction of Palestinians from their homes in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood could constitute a war crime under international law. Israeli courts have no authority in occupied East Jerusalem.

The insecurity and extremely difficult humanitarian conditions that many vulnerable Palestinians are already experiencing on a daily basis have been exacerbated by the coronavirus disease pandemic. Rapid, safe and unimpeded access for humanitarian actors is essential in order to bring in food, health services and other crucial humanitarian relief. UNRWA facilities have become places of refuge and safety for thousands of Palestinians displaced in the past few days. This is another example of the Agency's vital humanitarian role, and Member States must ensure that UNRWA receives sufficient financial and political support, including for yesterday's \$38 million flash appeal, in order for it to continue providing its essential services. It is critical to regional stability.

We have unfortunately been at this juncture many times before. The question of Palestine is the longest-standing issue on the United Nations peace and security agenda. It has been around as long as the United Nations has. Let us therefore look at the real picture. This latest

escalation did not happen in a vacuum. It is yet another flare-up that has risen to a point where we simply cannot turn a blind eye. It is not an isolated occurrence and cannot be divorced from the broader context of this decades-long issue, including the protracted military occupation of the Palestinian territories. The occupation, compounded by political impasse and a lack of negotiations, is the main underlying source of instability and the main reason for the perpetuation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The Palestinian people have lived under occupation for decades. Such a sustained occupation has multifaceted consequences, including widespread feelings of disillusionment and hopelessness among Palestinians. At its core, the occupation is depriving Palestinians of their inherent human dignity. The United Nations position on this issue is thoroughly documented in countless resolutions and reports and includes serious, long-standing concerns about the human rights and humanitarian aspects of the situation. I welcome the OIC's request to convene a special session of the Human Rights Council next week to address the grave human rights situation in Gaza and the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. The human rights dimension of this matter requires more scrutiny and attention.

We have to show Palestinians and Israelis that there is light at the end of the tunnel, that all is not lost despite the bleakness of the current situation. Unlike so many of the challenges faced by the multilateral system, the institutional record of the United Nations clearly prescribes the way forward in this case, and that is a swift return to negotiations with the goal of ending the occupation, addressing all final status issues, including the status of Jerusalem, and achieving two independent, sovereign and viable States — Israel and Palestine — living side by side in peace, security and mutual recognition within the recognized borders on the basis of the pre-1967 lines, with Jerusalem as the capital of both States. That is in line with the relevant United Nations resolutions, international law, prior agreements and long-standing parameters for the Middle East peace process. It is our collective responsibility to support Israelis and Palestinians to that end.

The international community must show a renewed willingness to tackle the injustice and ensure that the rights of the Palestinian people are respected and upheld. It is a legal and moral obligation. In that regard, I wish to reiterate my full support for the ongoing

mediation efforts, including by the United Nations, the Middle East Quartet and key international partners, to reinvigorate credible negotiations in pursuit of a two-State solution. The Security Council must shoulder its responsibilities and once again overcome its paralysis on the longest-standing item on its agenda. Inaction on the issue undermines the credibility of the Council and the United Nations and hinders their ability to act on other pressing matters of peace and security. I hope that we will hear a unified voice from the Council on this important and urgent subject. As for the General Assembly, we need to assume our responsibility under the Charter of the United Nations and demonstrate that we can deliver more than just words. We need to let the Palestinian people know that their legitimate aspirations have been heard and that the international community cares about their suffering. We have a common duty to prevent any further erosion of international law. We must translate these words and commitments into action.

In September, as Member States commemorated the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, they recommitted to the purposes and principles of the Charter. We recommitted to upholding international peace and security. Yet when it comes to Israel and Palestine, we are clearly failing. Our failure undermines the credibility of the multilateral system and the United Nations. At this historic seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly, I call on both sides and on the international community to take real steps to stop the vicious cycle of violence, end the occupation, defend human rights and uphold the principles of international law and the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations.

I now give the floor to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. António Guterres.

The Secretary-General: The past 10 days have witnessed a dangerous and horrific surge in deadly violence in the occupied Palestinian territory, particularly Gaza, as well as in Israel. I am deeply shocked by the continuing air and artillery bombardment of Gaza by the Israel Defense Forces. As of 19 May, it has claimed the lives of at least 208 Palestinians, including 60 children, and injured thousands more. The continued indiscriminate firing of rockets by Hamas and other militant groups towards population centres in Israel, which has resulted in at least 12 fatalities, including two children, and hundreds of injuries, is also unacceptable. My heart goes out today to the victims and their loved ones. The fighting must stop immediately. I appeal to

all the parties to cease hostilities now and reiterate my call to all sides to declare an immediate ceasefire.

The hostilities have caused serious damage to vital civilian infrastructure in Gaza, including roads and electrical lines, contributing to a humanitarian emergency. Crossings into Gaza have been closed, and power shortages are affecting the water supply. Hundreds of buildings and homes have been destroyed, damaged or rendered uninhabitable. Air strikes have damaged several hospitals, which were already short of supplies due to years of debilitating closures exacerbated by the coronavirus disease pandemic. The fighting has left thousands of Palestinians homeless and has forced more than 50,000 people to leave their homes and seek shelter in schools run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), mosques and other places, with little access to water, food, hygiene or health services. I was horrified by reports that nine members of one family were killed in Al-Shati refugee camp.

If there is a hell on earth, it is the lives of children in Gaza today. The destruction of media offices and the killing of a journalist in Gaza are extremely concerning. Journalists must be able to carry out their essential work, including in conflict zones, without fear of attack or harassment. They must be protected and respected. I am deeply distressed by the damage to United Nations facilities in Gaza. United Nations premises are inviolable, including during armed conflict. Humanitarian installations must be respected and protected. United Nations agencies and our partners continue to provide aid to the people of Gaza. UNRWA is providing drinking water, sanitation and electricity generators for those sheltering in its schools, while the World Food Programme has provided electronic vouchers to 74,000 people in Gaza. Under-Secretary-General Mark Lowcock and I will be launching a full humanitarian appeal for funding as soon as possible. Meanwhile, to meet immediate needs, I am working on an allocation from the Central Emergency Response Fund, and the Humanitarian Coordinator intends to release \$14 million from the occupied Palestinian territory Humanitarian Fund. I urge donors to follow through on the pledges they have made.

It is vital to ensure access for humanitarian goods. Attacks by militant groups on areas surrounding crossing points are unacceptable. At the same time, Israel has a duty to allow and facilitate rapid and

unhindered access for humanitarian aid, including food, fuel and medical supplies, into Gaza.

Meanwhile, rockets fired by militants in Gaza have reached as far as Tel Aviv and its suburbs and Ben Gurion Airport, claiming civilian lives, causing hundreds of injuries and damaging residential and commercial property.

Even wars have rules. First and foremost, civilians must be protected. Indiscriminate attacks and attacks on civilians and civilian property are violations of the laws of war. So are attacks on military objectives that cause disproportionate loss of civilian life and injury to civilians. There is no justification, including for reasons of counter-terrorism or self-defence, for the abdication by the parties to the conflict of their obligations under international humanitarian law. I urge the Israeli authorities to abide by the laws governing armed conflict, including with regard to the proportionate use of force, and call on them to exercise maximum restraint in the conduct of military operations. I likewise urge Hamas and other militant groups to stop the indiscriminate launching of rockets and mortars from densely populated civilian neighbourhoods into civilian population centres in Israel, which is also in clear violation of international humanitarian law. Such civilian areas must not be used for military purposes. But above all, what we must achieve — and here I repeat my appeal — is an immediate ceasefire.

I am also deeply concerned about the continuing violent clashes between Israeli security forces and Palestinians across the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, where several Palestinian families are under the threat of eviction. These developments were preceded by weeks of tension, including around the holy sites. I urge Israel to cease demolitions and evictions in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, in line with its obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law. Any settlement activity, including evictions and demolitions, is illegal under international law. Jerusalem is a holy city for three world religions. I want to underscore that the status quo at holy sites must be upheld and respected.

In Israel, communal violence and inflammatory rhetoric have added a further worrying dimension to the crisis. That localized violence has diminished over the past week, and I commend Jewish and Arab community leaders and civil-society organizations for their positive

contributions to peace. However, with every day that passes, the risk that the violence could spread beyond Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory increases. The conflict is creating an environment that is ripe for exploitation by radicals and extremists. We must at all costs prevent the emergence of a new locus of dangerous instability in the region. It is imperative that we achieve de-escalation in order to prevent an uncontrollable cross-border security and humanitarian crisis.

United Nations officials, including the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and myself, are making extensive diplomatic efforts in the region, including with Egypt, Jordan and Qatar and key partners in the international community, to encourage all sides to halt the violence. We are engaging directly with the parties to conflict, including Hamas, in our efforts to secure an end to hostilities. I commend the ongoing efforts of Member States aimed at encouraging all parties to exercise restraint, de-escalate tensions, prevent further civilian casualties and achieve a cessation of hostilities. I call on all members of the international community to do everything in their power to enable the parties to the conflict to step back from the brink. And I call on the parties themselves to permit the mediation efforts to intensify in order to bring the fighting to an end.

These horrific events did not arise in isolation. They must be viewed in the context of decades of military occupation, political deadlock, grievances and hopelessness and a failure to address the core issues at the heart of the conflict. We know only too well that violence begets violence. The unconscionable death, suffering and destruction of the past 10 days only serve to push the prospect of sustained peace further into the future. A revitalized peace process is the sole route to a just and lasting solution, and it is imperative that we keep that long-term vision alive. That starts by replacing anger and disillusion with hope for a future in which both Palestinians and Israelis can live side by side in peace and security. We must work towards a resumption of negotiations that will address the status of Jerusalem and other final status issues, end the occupation and enable the realization of a two-State solution on the basis of the 1967 lines, United Nations resolutions, international law and mutual agreements, with Jerusalem as the capital of both Israel and Palestine. The United Nations is deeply committed to working with Israelis and Palestinians and with our international and regional partners, including the

Middle East Quartet, to realize a lasting and just peace. Only by renewing our commitment and redoubling our efforts to achieve a negotiated solution can we bring this cruel violence and hatred to a definitive end.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his statement. I now call on His Excellency Mr. Riad Al-Malki, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Observer State of Palestine.

Mr. Al-Malki (State of Palestine) (*spoke in Arabic*): We thank the General Assembly for holding today's meeting at the request of the Group of Arab States, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries. A large number of Foreign Ministers from Arab and Islamic States are taking part in this meeting, along with representatives of many other countries. That sends the clear message that the massacre must stop.

Israel, which is heavily armed, has been targeting families as they sleep in order to terrorize our people. It has not claimed that this is a mistake or even apologized. Rather, it stresses that it has a right to commit these crimes and kill innocent people, and to hold the victims responsible. Thus far, Israel has killed 230 Palestinians, including 65 children, 40 women and 15 elderly people, and has destroyed more than 1,500 residential units and 50 schools. The numbers are rising as Israel continues its aggression. It has also displaced 100,000 Palestinians during the coronavirus disease pandemic, in blatant violation of international law and in the face of the Secretary-General's call to halt conflicts during the pandemic.

To those who say that Israel has the right to defend itself, what right are they talking about? Israel is a colonizing Power. It is occupying our land and persecuting an entire people. Israel asks what others would have done if missiles were targeting their cities, but it is forgetting that its occupation is the root cause and origin of the violence. I would therefore like to ask the members of the Assembly what they would do if their territory were occupied and their people displaced, besieged, killed, arrested and persecuted. How can we recognize the occupying Power's right to defend itself when the people under occupation are deprived of the same right? How can some people rush to issue statements condemning the killing of one Israeli when the whole world remains silent in the face of the genocide of entire Palestinian families?

The Palestinian people are commemorating their Nakba at a time when they are dealing with further oppression and torture. For more than 70 years they have faced many disasters and calamities, made sacrifices and endured suffering. They have been displaced, they have been patient, they have struggled and been martyred. They have been arrested while defending their history, their nation and their holy sites. Yet not for a single day have they abandoned their struggle or their principles and national goals, as outlined in the resolutions of international legitimacy.

Meanwhile, Israel, the occupying Power, is repeating the same scenario in Sheikh Jarrah, in occupied Jerusalem. It is once again attempting to forcibly displace Palestinian families in order to erase any Palestinian Arab presence in the city. That aggression is taking place with the participation of the Israeli Government, the army of occupation and the Israeli courts, settlers and extremists. In past decades Israel, the occupying Power, has spared no effort in working to obliterate Jerusalem's Islamic, Christian and Arab Palestinian identity, displace the population there, surround the city with settlements and divide Al-Haram Al-Sharif physically and temporally. Israel continues its war against the deeply rooted Palestinian presence in the holy city, house by house, and has escalated those systematic policies in recent years. Its decision to break into one of our holiest places, the Al-Aqsa Mosque, during the holiest month of Ramadan and on Al-Qadr, one of its holiest nights, is an embodiment of those attempts, which have failed and will continue to fail.

To those who have claimed that they have united Jerusalem through occupation or can achieve peace in the Middle East without our people and at their expense, Jerusalem has responded as it always does. It has responded to whomever promised that Jerusalem would be gifted to the occupier by saying that Jerusalem is not for sale. It has responded to those who wanted to divide the Al-Aqsa Mosque by saying that the Mosque, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and Jerusalem have their own guards, who care nothing about a promise made by those who do not own it to those who do not deserve it. We affirm loudly and clearly the importance of respecting the current historic and legal status of Al-Haram Al-Sharif, as well as the important role of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the Hashemite custodianship on the city's holy sites.

We have accepted the fact that our question must be resolved by applying international legitimacy and

international law. We have accepted the use of political efforts and peaceful resistance as the way to resolve all the final status issues and reach a peace agreement that can end the occupation and the conflict. However, Israel, the occupying Power, has been procrastinating since the Oslo Accords. Moreover, the current Israeli Government does not even believe in a two-State solution. It continues to pursue its annexation and settlement policies on our occupied land in order to undermine it. It has promulgated racist laws and isolated the Gaza Strip from the rest of our homeland and the world while violating all the relevant political, economic and security agreements that it has signed.

International law is the cornerstone of the international order and does not tolerate duplication or false interpretation. Treating Israel as a State above the law will only encourage it to act as such. It is high time for the international community to shoulder its responsibilities and put an end to the Israeli aggression against our land and holy sites, our present and future. It is high time to take practical measures to provide international protection to the Palestinian people until they can exercise their right to self-determination, freedom and independence on their land, occupied since 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

We urge Member States to honour their commitments under international law, and not to acknowledge the illegal status created by Israel's procedures and policies in occupied Palestine, including East Jerusalem. We call on Member States to refrain from providing any support or assistance that could entrench or preserve the current status, to differentiate between Israel and the occupied territory and ensure accountability. Every country in the world has the responsibility to ensure that freedom, justice and peace prevail. Their duty is to hold Israel accountable and not provide it with arms; to help to protect the victims rather than provide immunity to war criminals; to fight the settlements rather than those who boycott them; and to acknowledge the rights of Palestinians rather than the Israeli violations. Every country should support our persecuted people in deeds and in words and should not help to persecute them. The world has a role to play, not to simply be a witness to a crime committed or to simply condemn it. It has a role to play in preventing the recurrence of such crimes.

From this rostrum at the United Nations, whose Charter enshrines the right of people to self-determination, and before the representatives of States that have wrested their independence from the clutches

of colonialism and apartheid, we would like to say that our people will not abandon or waive their right or their place among nations. Our people salute those States' solidarity with us, given their own struggles, miseries, history and principles. We have seen how people around the world have taken to the streets in the thousands, even millions, to defend freedom and humanity and to say to the Israeli occupier, Stop, enough is enough.

Some may accuse the United Nations of siding with Palestine, when in fact it is siding with its Charter and with the right and the struggle of peoples to achieve their freedom and independence. The bias that must be fought is that which immunizes the Israeli occupation against sanctions. These wars would never have happened had the occupation taken responsibility for its various crimes, including the repression of demonstrations — especially those concerning the right to return in the Gaza Strip, and its repeated aggressions in 2009, 2012 and 2014 — and decades of oppression, displacement and racial discrimination.

We are calling for peace and we are working for peace. However, that cannot come at the expense of our people and their rights, which are guaranteed by resolutions of international legitimacy. Ending the aggression against our people and our holy sites must be followed by a political process in line with the international terms of reference and international sponsorship, leading to an end to the Israeli occupation of the land of the State of Palestine and to the establishment of Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, as well as a solution to the refugee issue, pursuant to resolution 194 (III). We informed the United States Administration and the Middle East Quartet of this after the end of the Trump Administration, with its shameful deal claiming that Palestine was no longer a central but rather a marginal question in the Arab conscience, the Islamic world and worldwide. However, current events have reaffirmed the centrality of Jerusalem and the Palestinian question at the regional and international levels. But at what expense? The criminal Israeli occupation has targeted our people generation after generation and once again caused a level of pain that cannot be ended by a truce and ceasefire.

A child named Susan went to bed in her house in the Gaza Strip with her mother, father and four siblings. She woke up to find herself under the rubble, with no mother or siblings and her father the only other family member alive. Samira, whose father planted a tree in the garden of their house in Sheikh Jarrah after the

Nakba, is still under the threat of forced displacement. Mohammed, who loved to run and ride his bike, is in a prison cell, being robbed of his childhood. It is for them that those who want peace must win.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al-Thani, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the State of Qatar.

Sheikh Al-Thani (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for holding this urgent formal meeting to discuss an extremely grave issue that requires an immediate and appropriate response from the General Assembly and the international community. We also thank the Secretary-General for his informative statement.

We are witnessing a grave situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, especially in East Jerusalem, as well as the use of lethal weapons to bombard unarmed civilians and their homes in the Gaza Strip, which has resulted in the martyring of dozens of people, including women and children. All of this requires prompt action on the part of the international community to stop the Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people and the Al-Aqsa Mosque and prevent it from recurring, and to respect the Hashemite custodianship of the sisterly Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan for the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

The State of Qatar has repeatedly warned against the danger caused by Israel's policies of Judaization regarding the city of Jerusalem, and against attempts to violate the Islamic and Christian holy sites, especially Al-Haram Al-Sharif. Despite those warnings, and the international community's wide condemnation in the past few months of attempts by the Israeli authorities and settlers to assault Palestinian residents of Jerusalem and evict them from their homes in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood, the Judaization and settlement activities have increased to a degree that can only be described as ethnic cleansing against Palestinians. The Israeli forces have made repeated incursions into the Al-Aqsa Mosque and terrorized worshippers without respecting the sanctity of the month of Ramadan, thereby escalating the situation.

The State of Qatar reiterates its full rejection and condemnation of the aggressions by Israeli police and settlers against the inhabitants of Jerusalem's Bab Al-Amud neighbourhood within the holy Mosque. They have carried out acts of violence against unarmed civilians and erected roadblocks to prevent them from

practicing their religious rights. The Israeli occupation forces have also stormed the courtyards of Al-Aqsa Mosque and brutally assaulted the worshippers. There can be no doubt that these unlawful practices, some of which can be considered war crimes, constitute provocations to the feelings of millions of Muslims around the world and a blatant violation of human rights, international conventions, religious laws and humanitarian values.

In the light of recent unfortunate developments in this situation, we stress the importance of respecting international humanitarian law, protecting civilians and not targeting civilians with excessive and disproportionate force. In that context, the State of Qatar condemns the random Israeli rocket fire against the Gaza Strip in the past few days, which has resulted in many civilian deaths and casualties, especially the attack on Al-Shati camp, which killed dozens of civilians, including 10 people from one family alone. Residential apartment towers are still being targeted, resulting in dozens of casualties, most of them children. The State of Qatar emphasizes its strong condemnation and rejection of the targeting of the Red Cross building in Gaza and points out that targeting humanitarian and media institutions is a blatant violation of international law, humanitarian laws and humanitarian values.

We firmly demand to know when the international community will act to establish international legitimacy, provide justice for the Palestinian people and deter Israel from conducting provocative unilateral policies through its attempts to Judaize Jerusalem and change its demographic nature. Israel must end its ongoing settlement policy, its disrespect for the holy sites and its continued unjust siege against the Gaza Strip. The Security Council's failure to apply the right concept of international legitimacy to the Palestinian question undermines the credibility of the United Nations in achieving its main objective, that of maintaining international peace and security. From that perspective, we call on the international community to take serious action, assume its responsibility to protect the Palestinian people immediately and put an end to Israel's aggression and all of its unlawful practices so that the Palestinian people can restore all their legitimate rights, including that of practicing their religious rites.

The State of Qatar's position will always be one of support to all sincere international efforts to achieve genuine progress towards a resolution of the situation

in the Middle East. In the wake of recent events and based on our established policy on the importance of resolving disputes and differences peacefully, including through dialogue and mediation, we have made intensive diplomatic efforts, in coordination with the United Nations and other international and regional stakeholders, to de-escalate the situation in Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip. In that context, Qatar values and supports the commendable efforts made by our sister countries and other friends to achieve de-escalation and sustainable calm in the occupied Palestinian territories. We would like to mention in particular the Arab Republic of Egypt, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the Republic of Tunisia, which is currently a non-permanent member of the Security Council, and the United States.

We would also like to stress the importance of achieving the desired objectives of our meeting today through the serious involvement of the international community, especially the major States, with a view to achieving lasting peace in the Middle East. That requires immediately halting the aggressions against Muslim and Christian holy sites, ceasing acts and policies aimed at displacing people or carrying out settlement activities anywhere in the occupied territory, and preventing extremist groups from controlling the situation on the ground, as happened in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood. It also requires ending the bombing and the war on the Gaza Strip, while accelerating the work of rebuilding it through the efforts of the international community and international humanitarian and development institutions.

The current events should be an incentive for the international community to work seriously to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Palestinian question and the establishment of a Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, within the 1967 borders, in accordance with the concept of a two-State solution and the resolutions of international legitimacy, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Middle East Quartet. That would put an end to these deplorable situations and would have a positive impact on peace, security and stability in the Middle East and the world.

In conclusion, the State of Qatar reaffirms its solidarity with our brother people of Palestine in their steadfast and just struggle. We emphasize once again our firm position on the just Palestinian cause and the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Ayman Safadi, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

Mr. Safadi (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): Since Israel began its aggression against Gaza on 10 May, 65 children and 39 mothers, sisters, wives and daughters have been killed. Every day that the international community fails to shoulder its responsibilities and end the aggression, parents lose their children and children lose their parents. In the space of 25 minutes, 52 warplanes carried out 120 air strikes on the besieged Gaza Strip. Innocent people are being killed, the homes of unarmed civilians demolished, their rights violated and their hopes for safe homes, schools and clinics dashed. In 11 days, the Israeli aggression has displaced around 75,000 Palestinians in Gaza, most of whom have taken shelter in the schools run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which are unable to provide them with humanitarian assistance. We must continue to provide financial support to UNRWA.

Enough is enough. There has been enough destruction and enough killings and violations of human rights, international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the resolutions of international legitimacy; enough hopes dashed and despair perpetuated, enough tampering with the region's future. Israel's practices are pushing the region towards more conflict. They deny everyone in the region the right to security and peace and undermine international peace and security. The United Nations must take immediate action to safeguard its Charter and its resolutions. The international community must take immediate action to end the aggression against Gaza, reach a ceasefire, compel Israel, the occupying Power, to end its breaches of international law and cease its aggressions in occupied Jerusalem and its sanctuaries and in other occupied Palestinian territories, while providing protection for the Palestinian people.

The Israeli occupation has turned Al-Quds, a city of peace, into an arena of oppression, suppression and injustice, provoking the sentiments of nearly 2 billion Muslims through its aggression against the Al-Aqsa Mosque at Al-Haram Al-Sharif, whose total area of 144 acres is an exclusive place of worship for Muslims. Israel is violating the right of Palestinian citizens to their homes in an attempt to alter the Arab, Islamic and Christian identity in occupied Jerusalem. The

displacement of the population of Sheikh Jarrah from their homes is a war crime. Those Palestinian citizens have a clear right to the homes where they were born and live and where their parents and grandparents also lived. What kind of obscurantism denies them that right?

The residents of Al-Quds are protected under international law. Pursuant to Security Council resolution 478 (1980), the occupier has no authority or dominion over them. A defence of the rights of Sheikh Jarrah residents to their homes is a defence of international law and our common human values. The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan will continue to defend the population of Sheikh Jarrah and their rights through all possible means and in coordination with our brethren in the State of Palestine. We will also continue to deploy all our capabilities to protect the population of Al-Quds, defend Al-Quds and preserve the Arab, Islamic and Christian identity of the sanctuaries in occupied Al-Quds. Protecting the historical and legal status of Al-Quds will remain the priority of the custodian, His Majesty King Abdullah II bin Al Hussein, who reiterates that Al-Quds represents a red line and that meddling with the city and its sanctuary is playing with fire. The Kingdom will continue to make every effort to work with all our brothers and partners to end the occupation and realize all the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, especially the right to freedom and to a sovereign independent State, with the occupied Al-Quds as its capital, within the borders of 4 June 1967 and with the aim of achieving a just and comprehensive peace.

This grave escalation, for which Israel is responsible, must end. That is the immediate priority, and the way to achieve it is to act urgently to end the aggression and all the Israeli practices that have caused the escalation, and to reach a ceasefire to stop this deadly cycle of violence. The international community must pool all its efforts to end this historical injustice against the Palestinian people. If the situation is left unchecked, there will be more serious escalations and the whole region will remain hostage to conflict. The occupation is the source of this evil, and ending it is the only way to achieve peace. Israel will not enjoy security if it continues to deny security to Palestinians, nor will Israel or the region enjoy peace if Palestinians continue to be denied it.

Israel is undermining the prospects for peace by building and expanding settlements, confiscating land,

demolishing homes and displacing populations. In addition, it continues to attempt to change the legal and historical status of the holy sites and to alter the demographic composition of Al-Quds and the rest of the occupied West Bank. There are currently more than 700,000 settlers in Jerusalem and the rest of the occupied West Bank, compared to nearly 500,000 in 2010 and 370,000 in 2000. The construction of illegal settlements continues at an unprecedented pace, systematically undermining the possibility of a two-State solution, which the entire world has agreed is the only way to achieve a comprehensive and just peace.

Killing the idea of a two-State solution leads inevitably to a one-State solution, raising the question of whether that State guarantees equal rights for its entire population or seeks an apartheid regime. It is an illusion to imagine that peace, stability and security can be achieved under apartheid. It is also an illusion to imagine that the question of Palestine can be marginalized, that peace can be achieved without Palestine and that occupation can come without a cost. Without genuine prospects for ending the occupation and the injustice, for achieving a just peace focused on the people's rights and accepted by them on the basis of a two-State solution and in accordance with international law and the Arab Peace Initiative, one escalation will follow another in a deadly cycle of violence for which the region and the world will pay the price.

This moment is critical. Either we wait for that cycle to explode, accompanied by suffering, violence, destruction and threats to international peace and security that will result in violations of the Charter of the United Nations and our human values every few years, as is happening now, or we take immediate and effective action to address the root causes of the conflict in terms of injustice, oppression and occupation in order to restore hope and achieve the just and comprehensive peace that the region and its people deserve. That is a strategic choice and a regional and international necessity. The choice should be clear, and it is high time to act.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Sabri Boukadoum, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, speaking on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

Mr. Boukadoum (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the Group of Arab States, I would like to express my sincere thanks and gratitude to you,

Mr. President, for your quick response to the request of the Arab Group and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation that we hold this emergency meeting.

We are meeting today at a time when our Palestinian brothers are living through tragic circumstances arising from the brutal crimes and severe attacks by an occupying Power against a people whose only fault is refusing to accept the theft of their land by force and a fait accompli. We have all seen the graphic images of death and destruction, followed the attacks on Palestinians and their holy sites in occupied Jerusalem and witnessed the brutal raids that have sown the seeds of death and terror in the besieged Gaza Strip. After everything we have seen, is it possible to stay silent as we count the victims, especially children, women and elderly people, let alone assess the large-scale destruction of infrastructure? Palestine's Minister for Foreign Affairs has just given us some horrible numbers, especially those related to the destruction of schools. Is it possible after everything we have seen merely to listen to false speeches justifying the disgraceful silence of the Security Council or equating the aggressor and the victim, the oppressor and the oppressed?

There can be no question that any attempt to falsify reality will fail. There is irrefutable and credible evidence of the destruction of houses while innocent civilians were inside them, and of every kind of injustice and oppression, along with violations of human rights. There can also be no doubt that the impunity enjoyed by the occupying Power will only exacerbate and complicate the situation and ultimately will not serve the interests of the beneficiary.

The joint initiative by the Arab Group and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, which was later supported by the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, is aimed at urging our Organization to assume its responsibilities under the Charter of the United Nations. Since the Security Council has failed to take a position on these tragic events, the Arab Group believes it is important for the General Assembly to act swiftly and take practical steps to reach a comprehensive end to the violence against Palestinians and to use all the available tools to protect them and their holy sites. In that regard, the Arab Group also believes that the gravity of the situation requires collective efforts to ensure an immediate cessation of hostilities and to immediately address the catastrophic humanitarian situation throughout the occupied Palestinian territories. We must create the necessary environment

and conditions for a resumption of the peace process in order to address the root causes of the conflict and end the occupation of all Palestinian territories, in line with the relevant international terms of reference.

The Arab Group expects everyone to clearly and expressly condemn the systematic killing of Palestinians, without introducing any double standards, and to hold accountable those who have committed crimes against unarmed Palestinians. We call on the Secretary-General to declare a state of humanitarian emergency so as to allow the international community to effectively alleviate the suffering of Palestinian civilians and take steps to rebuild Gaza, which has been suffering under an unjust occupation for the past 15 years. These painful events remind us once again of the reality of the suffering of the proud Palestinian people, who remain under occupation and besieged. We salute their resilience and their attachment to their legitimate rights. We reiterate that the United Nations, especially the Security Council, has failed to find a just and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian question, which is only fuelling the flames of instability at the regional level and constitutes a threat to international peace and security.

We have to start calling things by their real names. The occupation of Palestinian and other Arab territories will always be an occupation no matter how long it lasts, and will continue to lead to terrible violations. The Palestinian question can be solved only by addressing the root causes of the conflict, that is, by ending the occupation of Palestinian territories and enabling the Palestinian people to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination and the establishment of their own independent State, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. In that regard, the Arab Group reaffirms that the occupied city of Al-Quds Al-Sharif remains forever the capital of Palestine and an integral part of the occupied Palestinian territories. We stress the importance of preserving the legal and historic status of Jerusalem and its Islamic and Christian holy sites, including the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

Seventy-six years ago the United Nations was established, and the Palestinian question has been an item on its agenda ever since. Hundreds of resolutions have been adopted, all of which stress the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, independence and sovereignty and to return to their homes and property. However, the historical injustice inflicted on the Palestinians continues today. The

promises of the international community as represented by the General Assembly have not been acted on, and Palestinians continue to be displaced and their land and property confiscated. Where do we stand today after the adoption of resolution 181 (II), which provided for the partition and granted international status to the city of Jerusalem, accompanied by a detailed map of the established boundaries? Where do we stand today, 30 years after the Madrid Conference and the Oslo Accords? Have we implemented the hundreds of General Assembly and scores of Security Council resolutions, from resolution 242 (1967) to the latest, resolution 2334 (2016)?

During that period, the occupying Power has continued to control more than 85 per cent of the Palestinian territories, while Jerusalem has been subjected to displacement and destruction campaigns aimed at obliterating its identity. We therefore firmly believe that there can be no solution to the Palestinian question unless we all take a courageous position on ending two things — impunity and the occupation of Palestinian territory.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey.

Mr. Çavuşoğlu (Turkey) (*spoke in Turkish; English text provided by the delegation*): Let me begin by thanking you, Mr. President, for your leadership in convening today's meeting.

May Allah's mercy be on the Palestinian victims, including women and children, who have lost their lives to the Israeli aggression. I also express our heartfelt condolences to the Palestinian people and wish a speedy recovery to our wounded brothers and sisters, who now number in the thousands.

A heartbreaking tragedy has been unfolding before our eyes in Palestine for many years. Through repetition, its perpetrators want us to become insensitive to these outrageous crimes, the oppression of the Palestinian people and the violations of their basic human rights and freedoms. However, we will not remain silent in the face of unspeakable atrocities and brutality, because we know that silence in the face of injustice is tantamount to being an accomplice to the crimes committed. He who remains silent in the face of injustice is a mute demon.

In order to effectively address the current situation, we should first and foremost correctly diagnose its root

causes, which are the continuing Israeli provocations in Jerusalem. The desecration of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, the violation of freedom of worship and the forced eviction of Palestinians from their homes in Sheikh Jarrah triggered the current crisis. All of these acts of aggression took place during the holy month of Ramadan, a time of prayer and peaceful reflection for Muslims. In Gaza, schools and hospitals have been targeted as well as high-rise residential buildings. Israel did not even hesitate to bomb buildings used by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, the Red Crescent and media outlets. Some of Gaza's most renowned doctors have been killed in Israeli air strikes.

I want to make it clear that such acts of aggression amount to war crimes. We have to assign the blame where it belongs. Israel alone is responsible for what is happening today in Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza. We cannot prevent repetitions of such tragedies unless and until Israel is held accountable for its crimes and its sense of impunity is ended. Sustainable peace and stability in the Palestinian territories can be achieved only if and when the illegal and inhumane Israeli occupation finally ends. Indeed, Israel's recent acts of aggression are part of its policies designed to subject Palestinians to ethnic cleansing and advance its annexation plan. Likewise, its continuing blockade of Gaza has effectively turned that territory — 365 square kilometres that are home to more than 2 million people — into the largest open-air prison in the world.

I would like the Assembly to look at these maps. They show the truth and sum up the continued occupation and suffering since 1947. In this way, Israel aims to further erode the parameters established for a two-State solution and create a new fait accompli. What needs to be done now is therefore not only to help establish a ceasefire, but also to mobilize international efforts to end Israel's occupation and blockade of Palestinian territories.

It is unfortunate and disturbing that the Security Council has once again failed to deliver. When the world most needs it to protect international peace and security, the Council's position has once again been one of inaction and dysfunction. That is the reason for President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's statement that "the world is bigger than the Five". If the Council and its members held the moral high ground they claim to, they would have categorically condemned Israel's indiscriminate attacks on innocent civilians and acted

to stop its ethnic cleansing campaign. It is high time for the international community to come up with effective legal and moral means to end Israel's attacks on Palestinians. Moreover, the barriers to the entry of humanitarian aid into Gaza for thousands of displaced Palestinians should be removed.

In the face of past inaction on the part of the Council, the General Assembly has been able to adopt landmark resolutions on the protection of Palestinians and the status of Jerusalem, two issues that remain at the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict today. The international community has a responsibility to protect the Palestinian people. Resolution ES-10/20, which the Assembly adopted on 13 June 2018, called for the consideration of measures to guarantee the safety and protection of the Palestinian civilian population, an end to Israel's closure and restrictions on access to and movement in and out of the Gaza Strip and the provision of immediate and unimpeded humanitarian assistance to Palestinians in Gaza.

In line with that resolution, we have to work to establish an international protection mechanism for Palestinian civilians. It should include physical protection through the establishment of an international protection force, with countries making voluntary military and financial contributions. Ensuring Israel's accountability for the crimes it has committed is also vital if we are to prevent a recurrence of such acts of aggression. We believe that United Nations human rights mechanisms and the International Criminal Court have important roles to play in that regard. And it is also the responsibility of the international community to end this cycle of violence. In order to achieve peaceful coexistence between Palestinians and Israelis, the peace process and the vision of a two-State reality should be revitalized. The status of Jerusalem, as the centre of the three Abrahamic religions, is the most important component of a lasting solution.

I would also like to emphasize the following. Those who criticize the Israeli Government's aggression are immediately accused of antisemitism in an attempt to silence them. However, we believe that antisemitism is a crime against humanity, just as Islamophobia and Christianophobia are.

It is also high time that the Palestinians resolved their differences and achieved reconciliation. Only a united Palestine can take ownership of the Palestinian cause and effectively address the sufferings of the

Palestinian people. Elections should be held without further delay, though it should not be forgotten that Israel is the one that is preventing their holding.

The legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people for freedom and dignity can no longer be suppressed. A just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict can no longer be delayed. Turkey will continue to stand by the Palestinian people until their legitimate aspirations are realized and their rights and freedoms protected.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Hussain Qureshi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

Mr. Qureshi (Pakistan): There are times in history when the decisions of nations are remembered by posterity. This is one such moment. What we do, or cannot do, today will be recorded in history.

Driven by arrogance and emboldened by impunity, Israel has mounted a relentless onslaught against the occupied and beleaguered people of Palestine. As we speak, children, women and men in Palestine are being killed with impunity. In one week of Israeli attacks, more than 250 Palestinians have been killed and thousands injured, one third of them women and children. Death echoes in every home in Gaza. The Israeli air strikes are responsible for the taking of every single life in the Abu Hatab family — two women and eight children. Let that sink in for just a moment. Hundreds of such tragedies are taking place every day in Gaza and other parts of the Palestinian territories. So far, more than 50,000 Palestinians have fled their homes in Gaza. There is limited access to water, food, hygiene and health services. Hospitals and access to water and sanitation services are dependent on electricity, but fuel for the power plants has almost run out. Gaza is plunged in darkness, literally and metaphorically. The only light comes from Israeli explosions. That is Palestine, where, in full view of the world, the Israeli strikes bring down entire buildings to kill and terrorize innocent Palestinians and even silence the media. It is time to say enough. The voices of the Palestinian people cannot and will not be silenced. We, the representatives of the Islamic world, are here to speak with them and for them.

It is appalling that the Security Council has been unable to exercise its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. It

has failed even to demand a cessation of hostilities. Those preventing the Council from doing so bear a heavy responsibility. In the circumstances, the General Assembly must assume its own responsibility. We must not fail the Palestinian people at this critical juncture.

Our first priority must be to halt the Israeli aggression. I hope that even at this eleventh hour the Security Council will call for a cessation of the Israeli attacks. If it fails to do so, the General Assembly must make that demand on behalf of the entire international community. Let us be clear. There is no moral or military equivalency between the beleaguered and occupied Palestinian people, who have no army, navy or air force, and the Israeli war machine, one of the most powerful in the world. This is a war between a military occupier and an occupied people. It is a conflict between an illegal occupation and a legitimate struggle for self-determination. In that context, it is worth recalling resolution 2649 (XXV), of 1970, which affirms

“the legitimacy of the struggle of peoples under colonial and alien domination recognized as being entitled to the right of self-determination to restore to themselves that right by any means at their disposal”.

Secondly, we should mobilize all possible humanitarian help for the devastated Palestinian population in Gaza and other parts of the occupied territories. In addition to the emergency appeal of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, the Secretary-General should launch a comprehensive humanitarian assistance plan to provide succour and sustenance to Palestinians. We need to send medical teams, medicines and other supplies, food and other necessities to Gaza and other parts of the occupied Palestinian territories. We welcome the access that Egypt is providing to Gaza. Israel must open all access points to Gaza to ensure the timely and rapid delivery of international assistance.

Thirdly, the General Assembly should call for concrete steps to protect Palestinians. We should deploy an international protection force, as called for in resolution ES-10/20 and demanded by the Islamic Summit Conference on 18 May 2018. If the Security Council cannot agree to send a protection force, a coalition of the willing can be formed to at least provide civilian observers to monitor a cessation of hostilities and supervise the provision of humanitarian help to

Palestinians. We also call on the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner for Human Rights to offer protection to Israel's Arab citizens, who are currently being lynched and murdered by fascist Israeli gangs.

Fourthly, the General Assembly should condemn Israel's forcible and illegal eviction of Palestinians, including in the Sheikh Jarrah district of Jerusalem, the continued construction of Jewish settlements, the onslaught against Palestinian worshippers in Al-Haram Al-Sharif and the Al-Aqsa Mosque, the first Qibla of Islam, during the month of Ramadan, and Israel's brutal and indiscriminate aerial and land bombardment of Gaza. Israel's crimes against humanity should not escape accountability. There should be no impunity for violations of international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention and other human rights conventions. The Human Rights Council, the International Criminal Court, the International Court of Justice and other avenues should be activated to ensure that Israel is held accountable for its war crimes.

Fifthly, we must revive concrete efforts to end Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories and dismantle the illegal settlements and apartheid-like regime that it has imposed in the occupied territories. The Assembly should secure the unconditional implementation of Security Council resolution 242 (1967), in which the Council declared the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war and demanded that Israel withdraw its armed forces from territories occupied during the 1967 war. It is therefore imperative to initiate bold steps to secure the implementation of the Security Council and General Assembly resolutions calling for the establishment of a viable, independent and contiguous Palestinian State, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. Pakistan endorses President Abbas's call for an international conference to secure a peaceful settlement.

The Palestinian tragedy is at the heart of the turmoil and conflicts in the Middle East. It is also the principal root cause of humiliation and anger in the Muslim and Arab world, anger that breeds extremism and often spawns acts of violence. A just solution for Palestine is vital to the maintenance of regional and global peace and security. Clearly, the onus for restoring peace rests on Israel. It must end its occupation and implement the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. This meeting of the Assembly must send a clear message to the Palestinian people and to Israel. It is only through determined and decisive action that

this Assembly can restore the credibility of the United Nations and demonstrate its effective role in preserving world peace and global order based on equity and justice.

I would like to end with a verse from a great resistance poet of Pakistan: “O land of Palestine! I too am there for you”.

The President: I now call on Her Excellency Mrs. Retno Lestari Priansari Marsudi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia.

Mrs. Marsudi (Indonesia): I am here today to fight for humanity and for justice for the Palestinian people. I am here today to call for an end to the violence and for an immediate ceasefire to save the lives of innocent people, including women and children. The safety and well-being of humankind is always our number-one priority. I am sure that every one of us is touched when confronted with images of an injured two-month-old baby being pulled from the rubble as her family lies dead. The only question we should ask ourselves is how much longer we will let these atrocities continue.

We all know that this conflict is asymmetric by nature, between Israel, the oppressor and occupying Power, and the Palestinians, the occupied, who are under constant oppression. Occupation is the core issue. The international community owes the Palestinian people a long-overdue independent State of Palestine, living side by side and on an equal footing with all of us. Israel’s continued occupation and aggression not only warrants condemnation, but it is also a grave violation of international law that demands our action. I therefore call on the General Assembly to take three actions.

First, the violence and military activity must be stopped in order to prevent further casualties. At the same time, the Assembly should demand an immediate, durable and fully respected ceasefire. Every avenue must be exhausted in order to de-escalate the situation as quickly as possible, and we also support the Secretary-General’s continuing tireless efforts. Furthermore, any future recurrence of the atrocities must be prevented. In that regard, the General Assembly should call for the establishment of an international presence in Al-Quds to monitor and ensure the safety of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories and to protect the status of the Al-Haram Al-Sharif compound, the holy place of three religions.

Secondly, humanitarian access and the protection of civilians must be ensured. Our ultimate responsibility

is saving lives, and every minute we spend here deliberating could mean another Palestinian life lost. I call on the Assembly, together with the relevant United Nations agencies and other actors, to step up the efforts to provide humanitarian assistance to the affected Palestinian people. The Assembly must urge Israel to open and allow access for the delivery of humanitarian aid, including to Gaza, which has been under siege for more than 13 years.

Thirdly, we must pursue credible multilateral negotiations, which are vital to advancing a just and comprehensive peace based on a two-State solution and in line with the internationally agreed parameters. The Assembly has a moral and political responsibility to ensure that peace negotiations take place. We must put a stop to the systematic efforts of the occupying Power, which may result in nothing being left to be negotiated. We must not allow an outcome whereby the Palestinians have no choice but to accept injustice for the rest of their lives. We therefore have to stop the injustice now and continue our support to Palestinians in obtaining their independence and justice.

In recent days, during the coronavirus disease pandemic, we have witnessed the erosion of trust in multilateral institutions. We are holding this meeting today with one main purpose, which is to ensure that justice prevails for the Palestinians. The meeting will be seen as a litmus test for multilateralism. We must remain committed and stand united in our efforts against all of Israel’s illegal acts and for an end to the occupation in Palestine. We have to act now, together. The United Nations has to act now.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammed Al-Sabah, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs of the State of Kuwait.

Sheikh Al-Sabah (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to express our gratitude and appreciation to you, Mr. President, for all your efforts in preparing for this important meeting, held at the request of both the Group of Arab States and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in the light of the acts of violence and aggression in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem. I would like to confirm the support of the State of Kuwait for the statement by the Foreign Minister of Algeria, on behalf of the Arab Group, and the statements to be delivered on behalf of the OIC and the Movement of

Non-Aligned Countries. I also thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

This month marks the fifty-eighth anniversary of Kuwait's accession to our Organization. As my country renews its commitment to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and its determination to make every effort to establish peace, we are keen to be here today to renew our support and our steadfast and principled commitment to the defence of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. From this rostrum, we salute them for their resilience and their struggle to attain all their legitimate political rights.

Seventy-six years ago, when we agreed to adopt the Charter of the United Nations, on which this Organization was established, we pledged to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, respect human rights and dignity, achieve justice and maintain international peace and security. Those are the promises we made when we joined this international Organization. Yet today we are gathered at a special meeting, under agenda items 36 and 37, on the situation in the Middle East and the question of Palestine, amid the international community's grave concern in the wake of a dangerous escalation in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, resulting from a brutal Israeli aggression that has targeted the lives, holy sites and property of the Palestinian people. What we are witnessing today — heinous crimes perpetrated by the Israeli occupation forces, together with the seizure of homes and properties by illegitimate settlers and the commission of acts of aggression against unarmed Palestinians, in full view of the international community — are practices that confirm Israel's determination, as an occupying Power, to pursue a policy of occupation and apartheid contrary to the purposes and principles of the Charter, a policy that constitutes a flagrant violation of international law and human rights.

The State of Kuwait condemns in the strongest terms all the policies and crimes perpetrated by Israel, the occupying Power, in the city of Jerusalem and across the occupied Palestinian territories. We also condemn all Israeli settlement plans involving the seizure of homes and property of Palestinian citizens in the occupied territories, especially the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood, in an attempt to empty the holy city of its inhabitants and displace them in order to Judaize the city.

We are all aware that the question of Palestine is the central issue for the Arab and Muslim nations. East Jerusalem, the capital of the State of Palestine, must remain an integral part of the Palestinian territories of 1967. The Al-Aqsa Mosque, the first of the two Qibla and the third of the two Holy Mosques, has a special importance and status for every Muslim all over the world. Today, if we want to look for the main reason behind the recent dangerous escalation in the Palestinian territories, we must recognize that it is the result of the longest military occupation in the contemporary world and of the efforts by Israel, as the occupying Power, to foment tensions through its aggressive policies in Al-Quds Al-Sharif during the holy month of Ramadan, in addition to attempting to alter facts and project an image of itself as the victim rather than the aggressor.

Kuwait firmly rejects all such desperate attempts by the Israeli occupation authorities to change the facts on the ground. We emphasize that it is dangerous to tamper with legal criteria that have been established over many years. Beginning with resolution 181 (II), in 1947, the General Assembly has since adopted more than 700 resolutions on this issue, while since 1967 the Security Council has adopted 86, starting with resolution 242 (1967) and followed by other important resolutions, such as resolution 478 (1980), culminating in resolution 2334 (2016). Among other things, they all affirm the importance of not compromising the special status of Jerusalem, and they invalidate any action that would change its nature. The occupying Power must respect its commitments and preserve private property in the occupied territory, where it cannot be seized. The Israeli settlements are null and void according to international law.

We pay tribute to all Arab and international efforts to put an end to the Israeli acts of aggression and their humanitarian consequences, which have only aggravated the Palestinian people's difficult living conditions in the occupied territories. It is imperative to ensure that the Security Council, the organ responsible for maintaining international peace and security, assumes its responsibilities and puts an end to these Israeli violations, which so far have killed more than 256 Palestinians, including women and children, and displaced more than 75,000 people, including 2,500 who are now homeless. As long as the Council remains silent, Israel, the occupying Power, will never cease its crimes and acts of aggression against unarmed civilians or its settlement policies.

There can be no question that a lack of accountability and impunity anywhere, at any time, will lead to more crimes. That also applies to what is happening in the occupied Palestinian territories, whose inhabitants are suffering from crimes committed against them on a daily basis. More than ever, Israel's practices demand that we activate international political and legal mechanisms to ensure that the occupying Power is held accountable for its continued violations of the rights of the Palestinian people, guaranteed under international laws and the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. The killing of civilians, the destruction of homes and buildings and the seizure of property must be stopped, not to mention the blockade that has been imposed on Gaza for nearly 14 years and the repeated acts of aggression against holy sites.

In conclusion, the State of Kuwait affirms its support for all Arab, Islamic and international efforts to put an end to the Israeli aggression and revive the peace process and negotiations on the basis of international terms of reference, so that the Palestinian people can obtain all their legitimate political rights and build an independent State on their territory, with East Jerusalem as its capital, within the 4 June 1967 borders and in accordance with international legitimacy, the relevant Security Council resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative of 2002.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Abdulla Shahid, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Maldives.

Mr. Shahid (Maldives): For more than seven decades we have discussed the question of Palestine in the General Assembly. Year after year, the halls of this body have heard the same speeches, held the same debates and adopted more resolutions. And for more than seven decades, our collective will and resolve to address the issue have failed. Very little has changed on the ground. Generations of Palestinians have lived, and continue to live, under occupation and oppression, and the situation has worsened in the past few weeks. Palestinians have been waking up to the sound of bombs, thanking the Almighty for making it to another day. They are being attacked in their homes and even on the grounds of the holy Al-Aqsa Mosque. Families are being forced to leave their homes, innocent people, including children, are dying, buildings are crumbling under rocket fire. And all of this is going on during the holy month of Ramadan and Eid Al-Fitr, which is usually a time for celebration, family and kindness. It has

reached a predictable certainty. Yet it is the lived reality of the Palestinian people. It is life under occupation.

The Government and the people of the Maldives are gravely concerned about the escalating violence against the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip. We strongly condemn Israel's violent aggression and excessive and indiscriminate use of force, especially against civilians, civilian infrastructure, media personnel and offices and United Nations facilities. We believe that any further deterioration of the situation will have serious, far-reaching security implications for the region.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic may have normalized the term "isolation" globally. But for almost 15 years, more than 2 million people in Gaza have been forcibly isolated from the rest of the world. At just 41 kilometres long and 12 kilometres wide, Gaza remains the world's largest open-air prison. There is no safe place in Gaza. The indiscriminate bombings have killed hundreds, displaced tens of thousands and obliterated key infrastructure, including the only COVID-19 testing facility in Gaza. Without an immediate ceasefire, all that will remain is rubble.

The violence has further victimized the most vulnerable — women and children, the children whom we commit to protecting every year in this Hall. The ongoing conflict has taken the lives of far too many Palestinian children. In the past week alone, more than 60 innocent children have been killed and many more injured. Many are forced into arbitrary detention, harmed and afflicted with lifelong trauma. The international community has a duty to protect them. We cannot leave them behind. Our commitment to "For Every Child, Every Right" must also include Palestinian children.

The international community cannot and must not ignore the plight of the Palestinian people. Their suffering and the injustice and inequality they face must not be discounted. We must stand with them in solidarity and rally for their protection. That is why supporting the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is paramount. The deteriorating situation warrants more support. Millions of Palestinian people depend on UNRWA for shelter, food, education and health care. We join the calls for unhindered humanitarian access to the people of Gaza. Essential humanitarian aid, food,

fuel and medical supplies, including those needed to counter the spread of COVID-19, must be allowed in. This is urgent.

The Maldives firmly believes that an internationally accepted two-State solution is the only viable long-term pathway to lasting peace in the region. We stand with our sisters and brothers in Palestine in securing their inalienable rights. We call for a sovereign and independent State of Palestine, based on the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The Palestinian people deserve a life of peace, prosperity and dignity. They deserve peace, and so does the entire region. We must work to achieve long-lasting solutions to long-standing conflicts. But long-lasting solutions are only possible with a cessation of the violence. That is the first step. We therefore join the global call for an immediate ceasefire and for much-needed humanitarian access. Peace is possible only with undeterred will and commitment and through dialogue, negotiation and respect for human dignity and international law. That is the only way forward and the only way to ensure lasting peace in this long-standing conflict, for the region and for the Palestinian people.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Othman Jerandi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Tunisia.

Mr. Jerandi (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to you, Mr. President, for your response to the request of the Group of Arab States and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to hold an emergency meeting, one that is warranted by the situation that has developed in occupied Palestine and the Gaza Strip owing to Israel's continuing unjust escalation of its brutal military aggression against the Palestinian people and the refusal of the Israeli occupation forces to respond to the calls for an end to it from the international community and the free peoples of the world.

The occupying Power's position is not surprising, considering the 73 years of its occupation, during which we have witnessed various violations of international legitimacy, international human rights law and international humanitarian law with a total absence of accountability. Its actions constitute war crimes, genocide and ethnic cleansing. When will the international community address these violations with the seriousness needed to put an end to the policy of

impunity that the occupation forces have been hiding behind for more than 73 years?

The continued Israeli aggression against the occupied Palestinian territories and the besieged Gaza Strip has resulted in the deaths of 241 martyrs, including 65 children and 40 women. According to United Nations reports, more than 8,000 Palestinians have been injured, more than 52,000 are homeless and almost 450 buildings have been destroyed. These figures have by now undoubtedly been exceeded, given that the machine of mass destruction is still operating under the occupation forces. How many martyrs have to fall? How many women have to be widowed? How many children have to lose their lives, their innocence and childhood? How many families have to be left homeless? How much land has to be seized and safe homes destroyed before the international community puts an end to this unprecedented human tragedy? Sixty-five children were killed in just a few days. What crime can be worse than killing innocent children, including infants, or rendering them displaced and homeless? What will it take for these grave violations of the human rights of Palestinians to be considered a war crime that should be referred to the International Criminal Court?

The recent developments, including the targeting of holy places and mass and forced displacement, even of the residents of the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood of Jerusalem, in addition to the military escalation in Gaza, represent just another episode in the series of Israeli crimes. The ongoing settlement policies aimed at imposing a fait accompli by force and terror while changing the landmarks of Palestinian cities make it clear that this entity is one of settlements, colonization and racism. It has never asked for peace or even believed in peace. In the face of its provocative policies, any failure by the international community to put an end to such violations will simply encourage the occupation forces to continue acting as if they are above the law and out of the reach of international conventions and mechanisms of international legitimacy. That will not serve the cause of peace and security in the world in any way. We are turning to the General Assembly today, as we did previously with the Security Council, in order to defend the international legitimacy and conventions that Israel is violating day after day.

Since the beginning of this unjust aggression against our brother people of Palestine, Tunisia, through President Kaïs Saïed, has requested the international

community to intervene and put an end to these acts of aggression. In order to give effect to that call and based on our firm commitment to standing by the Palestinian people and by what is right, Tunisia, as a member of the Security Council and various regional and international organizations, and through bilateral contacts with its sister nations and friendly countries, has spared no effort to halt the military aggression against the Palestinian people. We will continue our diplomatic efforts with members of the Security Council and other influential international stakeholders, urging them to exert more pressure on the occupying Power and compel it to respect international law. Today we are counting on the General Assembly, as the main United Nations organ representing all the peoples of the world, to live up to its historical, legal and moral responsibilities and condemn the evil aggression by the Israeli occupation forces against the Palestinian occupied territories and the Gaza Strip. The Assembly must call for an immediate ceasefire and take a firm and decisive position in the face of this ongoing military provocation.

Given the continued Israeli violations, today the international community is committed to providing the Palestinian people with the protection they need and putting an end to any policy of impunity. The crimes perpetrated by the occupying Power must be referred to the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice. In that regard, we welcome the fact that the Special Committee against Apartheid in Geneva has admitted the Palestinian complaint against the occupying Power and will initiate an investigation into the grave violations of the Palestinian people's human rights, including systematic and widespread discrimination. We hope that this can be a first step towards accountability.

Tunisia once again calls on the international community to take immediate action to stop the Palestinian bloodshed and end Israel's evil aggression, in order to prevent the humanitarian situation in the Palestinian occupied territories and the Gaza Strip from deteriorating further while saving the region from relapsing into violence and instability. We urge regional and international stakeholders to exert pressure on the occupying Power to lift its continuing unjust blockade of the Gaza Strip, which has lasted for more than 15 years, and to increase its support and humanitarian response in view of the unprecedented situation there, which the blockade has rendered unliveable, as all the relevant United Nations reports confirm.

Tunisia calls on the Secretary-General, the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and all stakeholders to continue their efforts to stop the shameful Israeli escalation and prevent it from recurring. We call on the various international parties involved, in particular the Middle East Quartet, to take action to stop Israel's crimes and immediately halt its settlement activities, as stipulated in Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), and to put a definitive end to Israel's intention to annex Palestinian territories. That is a prerequisite for resuming serious and credible peace negotiations.

One does not need to be an Arab, a Muslim, a Christian or a Palestinian to believe in the righteousness of the Palestinian cause. It is enough to believe in the humanity of human beings, wherever they may be. Israel's aggressive and expansionist policies will not change the nature of the occupation and will not give it any legitimacy. The occupation remains an occupation and as such is rejected under all international conventions and laws. What is right also remains right under all international conventions and laws.

I would like to address the Palestinian people from this rostrum with the words of the Tunisian poet Abu Al-Qasim Al-Shabi, who said, "If one day a people desire to live, fate will answer their call". Tunisia will continue to believe in lasting, just and comprehensive peace while supporting our brother people of Palestine until the occupation is over and they see the restoration of all their legitimate and inalienable rights, which are not subject to any statute of limitations — and first and foremost their right to self-determination and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

The President: I now call on His Highness Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al-Saud, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Prince Faisal (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to sincerely thank the General Assembly for holding this meeting on the situation in the Middle East to discuss the developments in the occupied Palestinian territories brought on by the Israeli provocations in the neighbourhoods of Bab Al-Amud, the Al-Aqsa Mosque and Sheikh Jarrah, which have ignited the feelings of Muslims all over the world. I would also like to thank Secretary-General António Guterres for his efforts to put an end to this crisis and preserve the rights of the Palestinian people.

Israel's latest escalation and continued assault on the rights of the Palestinian people are dangerous violations of international law and the Charter of the United Nations — which enshrines the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force and bans any threat to international peace and security or stability anywhere in the world — in addition to undermining the chances of achieving peace in the region and worldwide or reaching a two-State solution, promoting violence and extremism and torpedoing every international effort to bring about security, safety and stability in the region.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as head of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), which was established after a fire was set at the Al-Aqsa Mosque in 1969 and which has 57 member States, representing more than 25 per cent of the United Nations membership, would like to stress what was agreed to at the OIC Executive Committee's open-ended virtual extraordinary meeting at the Foreign Minister level held on 16 May. The participants rejected and condemned Israel's continued occupation of Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, and its establishment there of an apartheid regime, particularly through the construction of settlements, the demolition of Palestinian properties and the building of an expansion wall, as well as the confiscation of Palestinian land, houses and property and the eviction and forcible displacement of Palestinians from their homes and land.

We are particularly concerned about the accelerated Israeli colonial policy in Palestinian territory, especially the eviction of hundreds of Palestinian families from their homes in forcibly occupied East Jerusalem, including the Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan neighbourhoods, by extremist settlers who are supported by the Israeli occupation authorities and racist courts. We call for an immediate end to those policies and illegitimate practices, which run counter to the commitments of the occupying Power pursuant to the Charter, the Fourth Geneva Convention, international human rights law and the relevant United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolution 2334 (2016). We call for addressing these illegal actions at all levels and taking prompt international measures to counter them.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has warned time and again that violence only begets violence, and the cycle of violence only begets havoc and destruction while further fuelling the conflict. We firmly denounce

the targeting of civilians, the use of excessive or disproportionate force, all unilateral provocative practices and any incitement to hatred, extremism and violence by any party. We stress the importance of ensuring that we never deviate from the noble objective of bringing about just and lasting peace based on a two-State solution, international legitimacy and the Arab Peace Initiative. We must spare no effort to put an end to the bloodshed and the cycle of violence as soon as possible, since not only do they not create security but they lead only to greater despair, frustration and hatred. The objective is to restore hope and maintain the goal of working for a safe and prosperous future for everyone. Accordingly, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia welcomes all constructive efforts to bring a speedy end to the military operations and ensure the delivery of humanitarian and medical assistance to those affected in the Gaza Strip.

In conclusion, the historical stance that Saudi Arabia and its leaders have taken over the years continues to be one of support for the Palestinian cause and the Palestinian people. It is based on the principle that the Palestinian question is a fundamental and genuine issue for us and will remain a central focus of the Kingdom's foreign policy until the Palestinian people regain their rights and their land and a Palestinian State is established along the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, and Secretary-General Guterres for his continued attention to this issue.

Over the past two weeks, the United States has approached this crisis in Israel and Gaza with a single focus — bringing an end to the conflict as quickly as possible. We have not been silent. In fact, I do not believe that there is any country working more urgently or more fervently towards peace. That is not a slight, nor is it silence. It is a fact that I share to underscore our deep engagement and commitment to working with Israelis, Palestinians and partners across the region to resolve this conflict.

The United States has had more than 60 diplomatic meetings at the highest levels, including at least five involving President Biden. In his most recent call with Prime Minister Netanyahu yesterday, President Biden communicated that we continue to stand by Israel's right to defend itself, we believe Israel is now in a position

to begin winding down the conflict and we expect a significant de-escalation to start. In the hours and days ahead, we will continue to relentlessly push for peace and appreciate that so many nations have come together in the Assembly to express the importance of resolving the conflict.

The Security Council has met four times on this topic in the past 10 days, including an open debate over the weekend (see S/2021/480) to deliberate on the situation, particularly the suffering of civilians caught in the conflict through no fault of their own. Again, we have not been silent, and we hope that people across the region have heard us loud and clear. The United States calls on all parties to respect their obligations under international law, including with respect to the protection of civilians, medical facilities and facilities that serve as civilian shelters. We continue to condemn rocket attacks by Hamas and other terrorist groups and to stand against extremism, which has led to violence against both communities. We commend the tireless dedication and life-saving work of the United Nations and other humanitarian workers on the ground.

We have to focus on making tangible progress towards peace. The United States will continue to champion every diplomatic effort that moves us closer to that goal. Israelis and Palestinians deserve safety and security and should enjoy equal measures of freedom, security, prosperity and democracy. This requires that all the parties return to working in good faith towards the vision of Israel and a Palestinian State living side by side in peace, within secure and recognized borders. I would also encourage all participating today to take a hard look at how they are investing in the region. The needs in Gaza, in particular, are immense. We hope that the international community will step up to meet the humanitarian needs on the ground in a manner that serves the needs of the Palestinians and not of Hamas, which has failed the Palestinian people time and time again.

The human toll of this violence has been heartbreaking. The stories of the families and children who have been killed and of those living with the trauma of having survived are painful. We will never be silent in the face of such suffering. We are committed to working in concert with other members of the Assembly to bring a rapid end to the current violence and, over the longer term, to create the conditions for a lasting and sustainable peace.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the European Union, in its capacity as observer.

Mr. Skoog (European Union): Thank you, Mr. President, for convening us today.

The European Union (EU) is deeply concerned about the situation in the Middle East. The priority has to be an immediate cessation of all violence and the implementation of a ceasefire, in order to protect civilians and provide full humanitarian access to Gaza. I want to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General and others who have been working to achieve that.

The upsurge in violence in the last days has led to a high number of deaths and injuries of civilians, including many children and women. That is unacceptable. The EU condemns the indiscriminate rocket attacks by Hamas and other terrorist groups on Israeli territory. We fully support Israel's right to self-defence, which should be exercised in a proportionate manner and with full respect for international humanitarian law. In Jerusalem, the status quo of the holy sites must be fully respected and the right to worship upheld. The EU reiterates its strong opposition to Israel's settlement policy and to actions taken in that context. It will be important to refrain from proceeding with the evictions in Sheikh Jarrah.

Looking ahead, real security for Israel and Palestine requires a true political solution that will bring peace. In order to achieve that outcome, we need to restore a political horizon, explore the space for meaningful re-engagement between the parties, develop confidence-building measures, improve living conditions for ordinary people and open a path towards the potential relaunch of the peace process. In that context, the holding of Palestinian elections, including in East Jerusalem, must be considered a priority. To that end, the EU will renew its engagement with key international partners, including the United States and other partners in the region, as well as with a revived Middle East Quartet.

Ms. Eneström (Sweden): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Nordic countries — Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and my own country, Sweden.

We welcome the opportunity for the General Assembly to meet amid the most serious escalations

in Israel and Palestine in years. We also welcome the latest meetings of the Security Council on the matter. We urge the Council to shoulder its responsibilities and act according to its mandate. We support the efforts of Norway, Tunisia, China and France in that regard, as well as the engagement of neighbouring countries, the Middle East Quartet, the European Union and the United States in seeking an immediate de-escalation of the conflict. As the Secretary-General pointed out, the latest round of violence only perpetuates a cycle of despair and makes hopes for coexistence and peace more distant. The Nordic countries have stressed several times in recent weeks that this grave escalation, and not least the major upsurge in violence from and in Gaza, must stop immediately. A ceasefire must be reached without delay.

We continue to strongly condemn the indiscriminate and recurrent firing of rockets into Israel by Hamas and other groups in the Gaza Strip. We recognize Israel's legitimate right to protect itself and its citizens. At the same time, we underline that the response must be in accordance with international law and that obligations under international humanitarian law, including the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution, must be strictly observed. We are appalled by the number of civilian lives that have already been lost, especially the many children who have died. All children must be protected from violence and harm, including the psychosocial stress of conflict.

The humanitarian situation in Gaza was already serious before the escalation. It is now acute and deteriorating. Humanitarian access must be ensured in line with international humanitarian law. We commend the pivotal humanitarian role that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East is playing and urge donors to support the Agency and other humanitarian actors.

Beyond the short-term priority of ending the violence and achieving a ceasefire, the international community must address the root causes of the conflict. It needs to facilitate concrete steps towards realizing a two-State solution and ending the occupation. As we have recently witnessed, continued settlement expansion, which is illegal under international law, as well as evictions, demolitions and tensions around the holy sites can easily spark an increase in violence and unrest. The recurring cycle of violence must be broken. We must draw lessons from the current events. Moreover, the risk of regional escalation must be taken

seriously. Leaders must act in a responsible manner and raise their voices against incitement.

The international parameters for a sustainable solution to the conflict are clear. The end destination is well-known, but once again the road itself needs to be paved. The international community must remobilize its efforts to create a credible process towards a two-State solution, based on international law, with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace, security and mutual recognition. The Nordic countries have a long-term commitment to peace, as well as a friendship with the peoples of Israel and Palestine. We stand ready to contribute accordingly. Let me conclude by voicing our support for the statement delivered by the representative of the European Union, in its capacity as observer.

Mr. Chanfi (Comoros): On behalf of the Group of African States, I want to express my sincere thanks and gratitude to you, Mr. President, for convening this timely and important meeting. I also extend my profound thanks to the Permanent Representatives of the Niger and Algeria, in their respective capacities as Chairs of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Group of Arab States, for requesting a meeting of the General Assembly to hold a debate under agenda items 37 and 38, entitled "The situation in the Middle East", and "Question of Palestine".

We are meeting today at a time of grave concern about the situation in the occupied territories and Israel following the clashes during the month of Ramadan in occupied East Jerusalem, including at the Al-Aqsa Mosque, Al-Haram Al-Sharif, and in Sheikh Jarrah. The Israeli air strikes on Gaza have killed more than 200 people, including children, women and elderly persons, and have destroyed thousands of homes and buildings, dramatically worsening an already fragile situation. The cost to the civilian population is intolerable and unacceptable. The clashes have led to the displacement of more than 58,000 Palestinians, many of whom are seeking refuge in schools run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East across Gaza. We are also concerned about the lasting effects of coronavirus disease for the vulnerable people huddled in crowded shelters, especially considering the inability of the health-care system to cope.

I call on the Government of Israel to ensure that it upholds its obligations under international human rights law and international humanitarian law. I further

call on the international community to shoulder its responsibilities by providing protection to civilians and access to humanitarian assistance. Today, more than ever before, there is an urgent need for all those involved to take concrete steps to bring an end to the violence. In that regard, I echo the Secretary-General's calls to the parties to stop their bombardments and rocket launches, which have brought nothing but death, destruction and widespread trauma throughout the occupied Palestinian territory and Israel. We should intensify our efforts to find a just and lasting solution to the conflict based on the vision of a two-State solution, with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and harmony, within the framework of the relevant African Union and United Nations pronouncements. But that can only start with the taking of urgent action to end the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land.

African support to the Palestinian cause is premised on the values of freedom and justice, and on the humanitarian principles that Africa defends in international forums alongside all those striving to ensure that Palestine can regain its right to exist as a viable and key State in the Middle East. Africa has consistently expressed deep concerns about the consequences of unilateral policies, actions and provocations, including the ongoing blockade of the Gaza Strip.

In conclusion, we call on the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Middle East Quartet and the Secretary-General to resolutely commit to ending this situation and launching a peace process to find a just and lasting solution to the conflict that can establish a sovereign Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions.

Mr. Aliyev (Azerbaijan): I am delivering this statement on behalf of the Coordination Bureau of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (NAM).

At the outset, we would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this debate under agenda items 37 and 38, "The situation in the Middle East", and "Question of Palestine", at the request of the delegations of the Niger and Algeria, in their respective capacities as Chairs of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Group of Arab States, a request that the Coordination Bureau later joined, and for the opportunity to present our position on the question of

Palestine, which has historically constituted an issue of deep concern and vital importance to the Movement.

The Non-Aligned Movement is deeply concerned about the recent developments and dangerous deterioration in the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. We condemn in the strongest terms the acts of aggression by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian civilian population, including attacks on Palestinian worshippers at the Al-Aqsa Mosque in occupied East Jerusalem in recent days in which hundreds of people have been wounded, many critically, and the launching on 10 May of a military aggression against the Gaza Strip that has killed at least 245 Palestinians, including 68 children and 37 women, and injured more than 1,500 civilians. Attacks by Israeli forces have also caused enormous destruction to homes and vital civilian infrastructure, including schools, medical centres and electricity grids, and displaced more than 38,000 people, who are now sheltering in 47 schools run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) after fleeing their homes in fear during a pandemic. NAM calls for an immediate cessation of the Israeli military aggression in all its manifestations and for the protection of the Palestinian civilian population in accordance with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions, including resolution ES-10/20 of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly.

The Non-Aligned Movement reaffirms its abiding solidarity with the Palestinian people and its unwavering support for their inalienable rights, including to self-determination, of which they continue to be unjustly deprived yet steadfastly continue to seek. The Movement continues to appeal and affirm its support for all efforts to achieve a just, lasting and peaceful solution to the question of Palestine in line with international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

Recalling the relevant decisions of its ministerial and summit meetings, as well as its declarations, including the communiqué issued on 13 May, the Movement reiterates its demands for an immediate halt to this military aggression and all acts of violence, provocation and incitement, including by extremist Israeli settlers, and calls for Israel to scrupulously respect international law, including humanitarian and human rights law, in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. The occupying Power must

also cease all other human rights violations against the Palestinian civilian population, many of which may amount to war crimes, notably the mass collective punishment of 2 million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. The illegal and inhumane blockade of Gaza must be completely lifted, and as the occupying Power, Israel must fully comply with its duties and responsibilities under international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention, without exception.

According to the demands of international law and countless United Nations resolutions, Israel must also immediately cease all policies and measures aimed at altering the demography, character, identity and legal status of the occupied territory, including East Jerusalem. These include all settlement activities, the seizure of Palestinian land and property, the demolition of Palestinian homes, the expulsion or forced displacement of Palestinian families, including from the Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan areas of East Jerusalem, among other places, and the transfer of settlers. Those actions constitute grave breaches of international law and cannot be justified under any circumstances. Israel must also cease its provocations and incitement, including the targeting of holy sites, and must respect the historic and legal status quo of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, Al-Haram Al-Sharif, as well as the right of Muslims to worship there in peace, free from harassment, intimidation and attacks.

The Non-Aligned Movement reaffirms all Security Council and General Assembly resolutions on Jerusalem that affirm that the city is an integral part of the occupied Palestinian territory. The member States of the Movement call on the Security Council to uphold its responsibilities for the maintenance of international peace and security, act urgently to de-escalate the volatile situation, demand a cessation of the violence and all illegal actions and provocations and ensure respect for international law and its own resolutions, including resolution 2334 (2016) and all provisions concerning Jerusalem. The Movement calls for action to ensure accountability for all of Israel's violations against the Palestinian people. Israel's continued non-compliance with the law warrants collective action in line with various obligations under international law, including article 1 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, on respecting and ensuring respect for the Convention in all circumstances.

The Non-Aligned Movement stresses once again that respect for the Charter, international law and

United Nations resolutions constitutes the foundation for a just solution to the Palestinian question, the cornerstone of regional and global peace and security. The Movement reiterates its calls to the international community to make all necessary efforts to promote the realization of a just, lasting and peaceful solution based on the internationally endorsed parameters enshrined in the relevant United Nations resolutions and stands ready to engage with and support initiatives to that end. The international community must translate its long-standing principled positions and commitments into urgent action. The Non-Aligned Movement also reiterates its call for the continued provision of the necessary humanitarian and socioeconomic assistance to the Palestinian people, including Palestine refugees.

In that regard, the Movement calls for urgently needed funding to support UNRWA and its capacity to provide the necessary assistance to Palestine refugees, including those who have tragically been displaced once again from their homes in the Gaza Strip. UNRWA is already facing a funding shortfall that constrains its ability to meet needs, which have now been exacerbated by the senseless devastation of families and destruction of homes and properties caused by yet another Israeli military aggression. The Non-Aligned Movement appeals to the international community to show compassion and ensure that emergency food, hygiene, medical and shelter needs are met by supporting UNRWA, UNICEF and other United Nations agencies active in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem.

In conclusion, the Non-Aligned Movement reiterates its call for an immediate end to the Israeli aggression and to its illegal 54-year military occupation, as well as for the restoration of justice and rights for the Palestinian people. We reaffirm our strong support for and solidarity with the just cause of Palestine, and our commitment to continuing to support the Palestinian people in their quest to achieve their inalienable rights and legitimate national aspirations, including their right to return and to self-determination, freedom and independence in their State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, which is absolutely vital to ensuring that justice prevails and a just, comprehensive and sustainable peace is realized.

Mr. Erdan (Israel): Let me remind the Assembly of something that many members are unfortunately ignoring, and that is that Hamas is an internationally designated jihadi terrorist organization that has fired

more than 4,000 rockets at Israeli cities over the past 11 days. Right now, as I speak, Israeli civilians are running to find shelter from Hamas's indiscriminate attacks.

Here is a quote from the Hamas Charter: "Israel will exist and will continue to exist until Islam obliterates it, just as it obliterated others before it." It goes on to say that "the Day of Judgment will not come until Muslims fight the Jews and kill them."

I would now like to remind the Assembly of another charter, one that some in this Hall seem to have forgotten — the Charter of the United Nations, which was formulated in the wake of the horrors of the Second World War and the Nazi genocide of the Jewish people. The Charter calls on us to reaffirm our faith in fundamental human rights, practise tolerance and maintain international peace and security. Sadly, in today's debate, we are seeing, not a defence of the goals laid out for the United Nations but rather indifference to the Hamas Charter, which, like the Nazis, is committed to the genocide of the Jewish people. We are seeing an attempt to create a false moral equivalence — an immoral equivalence — between Israel, a democracy that seeks peace and abides by international law, and a murderous terrorist organization with an ideology similar to that of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) that is committing the double war crime of firing at Israeli civilians while hiding its weapons behind Palestinian civilians, using them as human shields. That is what today's debate should be about.

It should be about who takes steps to support the values of the United Nations Charter and who takes steps to ignore the values of the Hamas Charter. It is about who is on the side of extremism and hate and who is on the side of moderation and dialogue, and it is about who has the moral courage to support a democracy fighting radical terrorists and who has sunk to such depths of moral depravity that they equate between the two. Every speaker here today who fails to unequivocally condemn Hamas and to distinguish between Hamas's war crimes and Israel's self-defence, and who chooses to demonize Israel rather than supporting its heroic efforts to dismantle Hamas's terrorist infrastructure, is only strengthening extremist forces, encouraging terrorist groups to use civilians as human shields and undermining the chances for peace. For years now, Hamas has held hostage Israeli citizens and the bodies of our soldiers. It is outrageous that the Assembly not only fails to call Hamas a terror organization but

also refuses to demand that our sons be returned to their families.

It is really quite remarkable. Usually, as all of us here know, the United Nations works very slowly. It took the General Assembly a few months to convene a discussion on the fight against the coronavirus disease pandemic, from which millions around the world have died. But when it comes to holding a debate to pressure Israel and give a terrorist organization a free pass, the Assembly was able to convene after only 11 days. What a disgrace. Is this what the United Nations was established for? Are those its priorities?

These debates in the General Assembly are always characterized by deception and lies. So let me share some simple but critical truths. Hamas targets civilians; Israel targets terrorists. Israel makes every effort to avoid civilian casualties; Hamas makes every effort to increase them, both Israeli and Palestinian, by the way. Israel uses its missiles to protect its children; Hamas uses its children to protect its missiles. Hamas rockets are indiscriminate by design. They have struck Jewish towns, Arab cities and Bedouin villages. They have killed not only Jewish and Muslim Israelis, but also Indian and Thai citizens and numerous innocent Gazan children, and have destroyed Gazan homes. Are you aware, Mr. President, that of every 100 rockets fired by Hamas at Israel, approximately 25 fall on Gaza, spreading death and destruction among Hamas's own people?

While Hamas rockets are indiscriminate, Israel's strikes are precise, surgical. We go above and beyond the demands of international law. How many militaries warn civilians with phone calls and text messages to evacuate buildings that hide terror centres, in order to avoid collateral damage? Yet sadly, despite our greatest efforts, Hamas's cynical ploy — of building a subterranean terror metro beneath schools, maternity wards and mosques in order to cause the death of civilians — works. But we must not forget that Hamas is to blame for those fatalities as well. As an Israeli and a Jew, I am deeply pained by every civilian casualty. But while Israel sees every civilian death as a tragedy, Hamas sees every Israeli civilian death as a victory in its campaign of jihad and every Palestinian civilian death as a victory in its propaganda campaign.

I have heard voices in this Hall accusing Israel of a disproportionate response based on the difference between the numbers of Israeli and Palestinian

casualties. Well, if the Assembly had existed during the Nazi regime, would it have held a special meeting to condemn the Allies for their disproportionate response and the large number of German casualties? Would it have urged them to show restraint in the face of Hitler, the Nazi army and their supporters? I do not think so. Did the Assembly hold an emergency debate to condemn the coalition forces for acting disproportionately in their fight against ISIS? All of us here, and everyone else around the world, know the answer to that question. Let me be clear. This is not a war between Israel and the people of Gaza or a war between Israel and the Palestinians. This is a war only between Israel and Hamas. We will never apologize for defending our citizens, even if some of the countries here might be happy to see a larger number of dead Jews.

Those are the facts. And here is one more critical fact that members should take into account as they choose which side of history they will be on today. The massive unprovoked Hamas assault had nothing to do with the legal dispute in Sheikh Jarrah or the situation in the Al-Aqsa Mosque. In fact, during this Ramadan, and throughout the year, as they do every year, hundreds of thousands of Muslims prayed peacefully at the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Israel's police were forced to enter the Temple Mount only after Hamas encouraged Palestinian extremists to store weapons at the holy site and desecrate its sanctity by turning it into a launching pad for attacks on Jewish worshippers and the police.

Here is a photograph. Is that the way to treat a sensitive holy site? Who undermined the holiness of this site? The police that worked to restore order and quickly reopen the site for prayers or the rioters who repeatedly launched violent attacks? All of us here, even the Palestinian representative, know that Hamas's premeditated assault had nothing to do with any Israeli action. It was entirely the result of Hamas's frustration with President Abbas's decision to cancel the elections and its desire to increase its political influence in East Jerusalem and the West Bank. Hamas is seeking to replace the Palestinian Authority and take control of the Palestinian territories. So after the elections were cancelled — once again, by the way — Hamas decided to launch a war of aggression against Israel. Suddenly, its leader, Muhammed Deif, who has been silent for years, was threatening that Israel would pay a heavy price if an Israeli court went ahead and ruled on a property dispute in Jerusalem. Have members asked themselves why the Hamas leadership in Gaza would

be commenting on a legal dispute in Jerusalem that has been going on for years? It was all part of Hamas's strategy to gain political power.

We all know that Israel did everything to de-escalate the situation. Our efforts were met with rockets fired on Jerusalem, our capital. No one can fire at our capital and then pretend to want a ceasefire. Israel wants a ceasefire, but only after significantly degrading Hamas's terror machine. We are looking for a cure, not a Band-Aid. Yet the Assembly has once again been calling on Israel to exercise restraint when facing hundreds of indiscriminate attacks every day. Let me ask members a question. What would they do if it was them? If it was their civilians under fire, their families running to bomb shelters? How would they want the international community to respond? Would they be responding differently if jihadi terrorists were firing thousands of rockets at Istanbul or Tripoli? Let us think about that. Would they be calling on both sides to show restraint if rockets were destroying homes in Copenhagen or Paris? I do not think so. The hypocrisy in this institution knows no bounds. I will tell them what they would not do. They would not accept attempts by the General Assembly to make an immoral comparison between a State that sanctifies life and a terrorist group that glorifies death.

Mrs. Raz (Afghanistan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Despite the hypocrisy and institutional bias here at the United Nations and the acquiescence exhibited to actions by Hamas — an organization, I should remind the Assembly, that celebrated the 9/11 terror attacks and mourned the death of Osama bin Laden — the State of Israel will take all steps necessary to protect its civilians while making every effort to avoid harming Palestinian civilians. I thank all of the countries that have expressed their support for Israel's right to self-defence, first and foremost President Biden and the United States Administration.

Just as Israel will always defend its civilians against terror, we will always work to advance peace. This year alone, we signed four peace agreements with Muslim countries. We are so proud of that. We made painful concessions for peace with Egypt and Jordan, and six Israeli Prime Ministers were ready to make painful concessions in the past to reach peace with our Palestinian neighbours. In 2005, we uprooted and removed every Jewish home in the Gaza Strip because

some thought that this would bring calm. Instead, ever since Hamas seized power in the Gaza Strip, we have experienced unending terror. In 2007, when Hamas violently took control of the Gaza Strip, its militants threw their Palestinian brothers — Fatah members — off roofs and cheered as the bodies fell. Today I hope that the Assembly will not choose to throw the chances for peace off the roof and pat themselves on the back as extremism triumphs.

Hamas does not accept Israel's right to exist and refuses to renounce violence and acknowledge past agreements, the three things that are the Middle East Quartet's three principles. There should be no mistake. If this institution strengthens Hamas, it will make the possibility that Hamas will replace the Palestinian Authority much more likely and will eliminate the chance of future dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians. There is nothing to discuss with a terror organization committed to one's annihilation. So no one can say we did not warn them.

The demonization of Israel in the international arena, spurred on by members of this Assembly such as Turkey using antisemitic tropes, is encouraging sickening antisemitic attacks all around the world. The Turkish leadership is in no position to preach to Israel or anyone else about human rights or about military harm to innocent civilians. The State of Israel will never stay silent in the face of such antisemitic attacks. Never has there been a clearer example of the fact that anti-Zionism is antisemitism. So today, we call on all Governments to take swift and effective action to protect their Jewish communities, apprehend the perpetrators of antisemitic acts and ensure that Jewish citizens everywhere can live proud and open Jewish lives.

In the face of those here who have chosen the values of the Hamas Charter over those of the United Nations Charter, I stand here as a proud representative of the State of Israel, which was founded on the 4,000-year connection between the land of Israel and the Jewish people, and which rose from the ashes of the Holocaust to ensure that the Jewish people would never be defenceless. I stand here and declare: never again. The State of Israel will always do whatever is necessary to defend its people and we will do so while continuing to protect human lives and aspiring to peace with all of our neighbours.

Mr. De la Fuente Ramirez (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): We appreciate the convening of this debate.

The General Assembly is the multilateral forum par excellence.

We have come today to express our deep dismay at the continuing deterioration of the situation in the Middle East. We cannot ignore the fact that while we are gathered here today, the number of civilian casualties is rising both in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory, particularly Gaza. It is deeply regrettable that in just a few days the tragic toll in the recent clashes has risen to hundreds of civilians dead — dozens of them minors — and thousands wounded. Mexico repudiates any act that jeopardizes the safety of the civilian population, Palestinian or Israeli. Indiscriminate attacks, inflammatory rhetoric and provocations only fuel the spiral of violence.

We regret that although the situation on the ground is worsening day by day, the Security Council has not yet succeeded in taking a decision. We hope that it will rise to the challenge posed by the current circumstances as soon as possible and assume its role as one of the main guarantors of international peace and security. It is a matter of putting an end to the violence of the past few days, appealing urgently for the civilian population to be protected, respecting international humanitarian law and accepting that dialogue between the parties is the only possible solution. Mediation efforts, both bilateral and multilateral, should be welcomed. Far from being mutually exclusive, such measures complement each other. Mexico supports the work of the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and the Middle East Quartet, as well as other international actors, but will also insist to the Security Council, as we have done since the first time the Council met to discuss this conflict, that the Council must act in accordance with its mandate.

The intercommunal violence in several areas in Israel is also worrying. Nothing can justify the violent disruption of religious services. Attacks on churches, synagogues, mosques or other places of worship are deplorable in any circumstances. Jerusalem must retain its special status, in accordance with United Nations resolutions, and be a space for the harmonious coexistence of the three monotheistic religions. My country denounces all measures that seek to alter the character and demographic composition of East Jerusalem. Population transfers, property seizures, demolitions, forced evictions and settlement expansion activities constitute violations of international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions, including

Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), and are therefore inadmissible. We reiterate our condemnation of the disproportionate use of force in the Gaza Strip against civilian infrastructure, whether of schools, health facilities or the media. We also strongly condemn the rocket and incendiary attacks launched by Hamas and other organizations from Gaza against Israel.

Mexico reaffirms its commitment to a comprehensive and definitive two-State solution that addresses Israel's legitimate security concerns and allows for the consolidation of a politically and economically viable Palestinian State — two States living side by side within secure and internationally recognized borders. While direct responsibility for resuming the peace process lies with the parties to the conflict, the international community must encourage and facilitate that process. We recognize the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East in providing humanitarian assistance to the millions of Palestinian refugees, but what is urgently needed today is a cessation of hostilities, the ceasefire for which the Secretary-General has repeatedly called. We believe that the United Nations can and should play a more active role in that regard.

Mr. Kadiri (Morocco) (*spoke in Arabic*): I have the honour of delivering this statement on behalf of His Excellency Mr. Nasser Bourita, Minister for Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccans Living Abroad of the Kingdom of Morocco.

“I thank the President of the General Assembly for his initiative to hold this urgent and extremely important meeting under these exceptional circumstances. I also express my thanks and appreciation to Secretary-General António Guterres for his sincere efforts and endeavours to end the tension and escalation in the occupied Palestinian territories.

“Once again, and for the same reasons, serious acts of violence have erupted and led to the death and injury of hundreds of victims and the large-scale destruction of civilian facilities, thereby causing more suffering and constituting a direct threat to regional and international peace and security. What we are witnessing, in the increased fighting and violence, is the inevitable result of the untenable situation affecting the peace process in the region, exacerbated by repeated provocative violations against the Palestinian people and an increase in

abominable hate rhetoric from extremist groups. We have warned of the impact that such destructive practices could have on the prospects for peace, worsening the conflict and transforming it from a political into a religious one, which would be a disaster for the region in an absence of sincere effort and intentions to end the conflict.

“His Majesty King Mohammed VI, in his capacity as Chair of the Al-Quds Committee of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, has never ceased to emphasize that attempts to undermine the legal and historical status of Jerusalem and the Al-Aqsa Mosque, Al-Haram Al-Sharif, as well as to terrorize worshippers at the holy sites, in addition to illegally displacing the inhabitants of the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood, are unacceptable and must be stopped for the sake of peace and stability. His Majesty has also reiterated that it is necessary to avoid any action likely to cause further crises and tensions in the region, and that unilateral measures and any actions that contravene international law and legitimacy will widen the gap between Palestinians and Israelis and hinder the peace process in the region. His Majesty therefore insists on the need to preserve the holy city as the common heritage of humankind, a meeting ground and a symbol of peaceful coexistence of the three monotheistic religions, as called for in the Al-Quds declaration signed by King Mohammed and His Holiness Pope Francis in Rabat on 30 March 2019.

“The Kingdom of Morocco reiterates its full commitment to a just and equitable peace based on international law and a two-State solution, agreed by the international community. There is no alternative to a political solution leading to the establishment of an independent, sovereign and viable Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, within the June 1967 borders. Today we call on the international community, particularly the Security Council and the Middle East Quartet, to begin working in earnest to stop the escalation, address the reasons behind it, end the cycle of violence and make effective and intense diplomatic efforts to revitalize efforts to achieve a peaceful settlement in line with international resolutions.

“At the same time, we reiterate the urgent need for the international community to provide generous assistance to the Palestinian people in the West Bank, Al-Quds and the Gaza Strip in

order to overcome these tragic conditions. In that connection, Morocco, by order of King Mohammed VI, has sent emergency humanitarian aid to the Palestinian inhabitants of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, consisting of basic foodstuffs, emergency medicines and blankets, in an attempt to alleviate the difficult conditions arising from the current situation. That high royal order is part of Morocco's ongoing support for the just Palestinian cause and our continued solidarity with the brotherly Palestinian people. It is also part of the continuing work of King Mohammed, in his capacity as Chair of the Al-Quds Committee, by combining political and diplomatic efforts with field action, such as that carried out by the Bayt Mal Al-Quds Al-Sharif Agency, the executive and field arm of the Al-Quds Committee, under His Majesty's personal supervision, to enable the inhabitants of Jerusalem to live in dignity and support their resilience.

"The Kingdom of Morocco, which is committed to the choice of peace, will make every effort to contact and communicate with active countries in order to contribute to taking steps that can ensure an end to the escalation and revive constructive momentum for achieving peace in the region.

"In conclusion, Morocco continues to believe in the Palestinian question as a central priority on the international agenda. That is the position that we reaffirm with all peace-loving countries on every possible occasion, in our belief that stability and lasting peace in the Middle East remain a strategic choice, essential to achieving a just and fair solution to this question in keeping with international law and the relevant Security Council resolutions in order to enable all the peoples of the region to live in peace and security."

Mr. Zhang Jun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Over the past couple of weeks, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict has escalated to its most severe point in recent years. China is gravely concerned about this development and urges the international community to take immediate action to end the current crisis and prevent the situation from spinning entirely out of control.

The Security Council bears the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. Since the latest outbreak of the conflict, China, as President of the Council for this month,

has worked closely with Council members, overcome difficulties, held four Council meetings and proposed a draft presidential statement to urge the parties to cease hostilities and ease the tensions as soon as possible. On 16 May, Wang Yi, China's Minister for Foreign Affairs, presided over the Council's open emergency meeting on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (see S/2021/480), expressing China's commitment to the Council's role in ending the current crisis. Representatives of both Palestine and Israel, as well as the relevant regional organizations and countries, attended the meeting, which sent a strong message. The great majority of Council members called for an immediate cessation of hostilities, demanded protection measures for civilians, expressed their support for a just resolution of the question of Palestine on the basis of a two-State solution and supported the Council in fulfilling its duties under the Charter of the United Nations.

China commends that majority of Council members for their efforts and urges the remaining member to demonstrate its sense of responsibility. Despite the difficulties, China will continue to support the Council in taking action, remaining united and speaking with one voice, so as to work with the international community in an unremitting and determined effort to end the current crisis and find a just solution to the Palestinian question. In view of the current situation, China would like to make the following proposals.

First, the hostilities and violence must cease immediately to avoid more civilian casualties. Days of conflict have caused heavy casualties among Palestinian civilians, including many women and children, some only a few months old. There are also casualties among Israeli civilians. This is all very saddening. There cannot be a fundamental solution through the use of force. Responding to violence with violence will only beget more hatred. China condemns all violence against civilians, opposes all rhetoric that incites violence and calls for the immediate end to the hostilities and violence. Israel, in particular, should exercise restraint. The facts have repeatedly shown that no so-called surgical strike can prevent civilian casualties. China supports the United Nations and the relevant regional organizations and countries in their diplomatic and mediation efforts to achieve a ceasefire as soon as possible.

Secondly, United Nations resolutions must be implemented in earnest and the legitimate rights and interests of the Palestinian people must be protected.

Building settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories, in violation of international law, gravely undermines the prospects for a two-State solution. The issue of settlements is a core topic of the final status negotiations and must be properly resolved before the two sides can improve mutual trust and the Middle East process can break out of this vicious circle. China calls on Israel, in line with United Nations resolutions, to stop building settlements on occupied Palestinian land, evicting Palestinian families and demolishing Palestinian houses, to suppress violence against Palestinians and to genuinely protect the legitimate rights and interests of Palestinians in the occupied territories. The historical status quo of holy sites in Jerusalem's old city must be maintained and respected.

Thirdly, robust measures must be taken to prevent humanitarian disasters. The mutually compounding effects of conflict, the pandemic and the blockade have further aggravated the very fragile humanitarian situation in Gaza, reflected in power shortages, a lack of medical resources and the mass displacement of civilians. China calls on the parties to conflict to observe international humanitarian law, stop attacking civilian facilities, especially hospitals and schools, and cease military operations in civilian areas. Israel should lift the blockade on Gaza and facilitate access for humanitarian supplies to the area immediately. The conflict has led to the destruction of many residential homes in Gaza. The international community should step up its reconstruction support for Gaza and relieve the hardships afflicting local people.

Fourthly, efforts must be redoubled to promote peace talks and a two-State solution. The root cause of the repeated eruptions of conflict between Palestine and Israel is the fact that the Middle East peace process is stalled, and United Nations resolutions are not effectively implemented. In particular, Palestine's right to independent statehood has been persistently infringed, and a two-State solution has yet to become a reality on the ground. Seventy years on, an independent State remains an unrealized dream for the Palestinian people. China supports all efforts conducive to the realization of a two-State solution. To that end, the international community, especially countries with influence over the parties, should play an active role. As a sincere friend of the Palestinian people, China firmly supports Palestine's just demands and its people's establishment of a fully sovereign, independent Palestinian State on

the basis of the 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital. China will continue to work with that aim.

Mr. Abarry (Niger) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of His Excellency Mr. Hassoumi Massoudou, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Republic of the Niger, who is unable to attend, I would like to thank the President for convening this meeting in order to enable us to consider the serious situation that has been going on for a number of days in occupied Palestine. The Niger, as the current Chair of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, was pleased to share the initiative of convening this important meeting with Algeria, Chair of the Group of Arab States, to enable the Assembly to make its voice heard on the tragedy that has been unfolding in plain view in the occupied territories. We also thank the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries for joining us.

I welcome the participation of several Foreign Ministers, who have made the trip, despite the difficult conditions created by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, to take part in the first major meeting of the General Assembly in the COVID-19 era in person. It is powerful proof of their commitment to defending the ideals of the Charter of the United Nations, so unjustly violated in occupied Palestine. The presence here today of Secretary-General António Guterres is a demonstration of his constant commitment to the quest for a solution to this crisis.

For the Niger, the defence of the ideals and principles of the Charter is not an option but an imperative and a guarantee of peace and security for each and every Member State, large and small. The grave situation in Palestine that has resulted from the Israeli occupation is a test of the willingness of all of us to respect the values on which our Organization is based. In the face of a deadlock in the Security Council, which after four meetings has not been able to take a decision on the ongoing serious events, it is the General Assembly's role to help to de-escalate the violence in order to spare human lives and stop the destruction of infrastructure and housing that is further widening the gap between Israelis and Palestinians.

We should not be afraid to say it. The violence of the past few days is a direct consequence of the policy of unbridled colonization of Palestinian lands that Israel has pursued for more than 54 years. This policy, expressed in the eviction, intimidation, provocation and bullying of many population groups, especially in

East Jerusalem, by Israeli security forces and extremist settlers, and during the holy month of Ramadan to boot, was unquestionably the trigger for the uprising we are witnessing. As we did in the Security Council, my delegation condemns these acts unreservedly and calls on Israel, the occupying Power, to respect international law and international humanitarian law.

No one contests Israel's right to protect and defend itself, despite the insistence of some as if it were Israeli territory that is occupied. Similarly, no one can contemplate or demand that defenceless people living under the yoke of a ferocious occupation should resign themselves to eternal inaction in the face of the inertia of an international community that is supposed to defend and protect them. In view of the urgency of the issue, we call for an immediate cessation of hostilities by demanding a halt to the bombardments of Palestinian civilians, which unfortunately have not spared even refugee camps, schools and United Nations buildings, as well as media outlets. Civilians on all sides must be protected regardless of their origin, race or religion in accordance with international humanitarian law and the relevant Security Council resolutions on their protection in times of conflict. And if peace is to be given a chance, the rockets being fired towards Israel in response to the bombardment should be stopped.

The peace so long sought since Oslo is not simply a matter of a cessation of ongoing hostilities. We have an obligation to resolve the root causes of the problem. In that regard, we commend the intense diplomatic efforts of the United Nations through Mr. Tor Wennesland, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, the Middle East Quartet and other relevant actors to bring an end to the hostilities in order to give respite to the civilians caught up in this latest outbreak of violence. Just as one cannot cure a disease by treating only its symptoms, one cannot solve the Israeli-Palestinian crisis by simply halting the current violence, as has happened many times before.

The real solution is to induce Israel to end its policy of colonization of the Palestinian territories. The real solution is to have the courage to create the conditions for the emergence of an independent and viable Palestinian State, within its 1967 borders, living side by side with Israel and with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. The long years of waiting, unfulfilled promises and vain hopes are pushing a two-State solution further out of reach,

especially when Israel's actions make it unattainable in the long run through its continued policy of turning the Palestinian territories into a Bantustan by means of evictions, confiscations and the illegal occupation of Palestinian lands.

The humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territories is also of great concern. The destruction of public service buildings, schools, hospitals and transportation routes will have serious consequences for the provision of basic services to the population and efforts to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. My delegation therefore calls for meaningful support to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East to strengthen its capacity to address the pressing needs of people made even more vulnerable by the current crisis. We commend the efforts of the International Committee of the Red Cross, UNICEF and the entire humanitarian family, whose teams are risking their lives to save others.

In conclusion, my delegation hopes that this meeting will help to put an end to this dangerous escalation. We must do everything possible to achieve justice, peace and freedom. We must have the courage to create the conditions for an independent and viable Palestinian State, in accordance with the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. The peoples of this wonderful region, the cradle of the three great monotheistic religions, are watching us. So is the world. We must not and cannot fail in our historic responsibility to help them.

Mrs. Broadhurst Estival (France) (*spoke in French*): I welcome the presence in the Assembly today of the Secretary-General and a number of Foreign Ministers.

The situation in the Middle East is serious. As we are meeting, the fighting continues, and civilians on both sides are the first victims. The conflict could lead to a general conflagration, with serious consequences for the Palestinian territories, Israel and the whole region. The priority today is silencing the guns. France supports the Secretary-General's call for an immediate cessation of hostilities. The human toll continues to rise in Gaza, where the population was already enduring a blockade that has lasted too long, as well as in Israel.

We firmly condemn the firing of rockets into populated areas in Israel by Hamas and other terrorist groups. Such indiscriminate firing is contrary to international humanitarian law and must stop. France

will not waver in its support for Israel's security, but we urge the Israeli authorities to exercise the greatest possible restraint and to act proportionately, taking all necessary precautions, in strict compliance with international law. We call on all the parties to protect civilians, especially children, and to guarantee immediate and unhindered access for humanitarian aid to meet people's urgent needs, especially displaced persons. France also calls for the protection of humanitarian and medical personnel and infrastructure, in accordance with international humanitarian law, and for the protection of journalists, whose safety in times of conflict is essential to the right to information.

The escalation that we have witnessed once again over the past 10 days is part of a context that we know only too well — a lack of political prospects and a failure to respect international law for too many years. The cycles of violence will continue if there is no will to make progress towards the establishment of two States living in peace and security, within secure and recognized borders based on the 1967 lines, with Jerusalem as the capital for both, in keeping with international law and the relevant Security Council resolutions.

The international community's commitment to a just and lasting peace in the Middle East must be total. As long as this conflict is not resolved politically, it will come back to haunt us through violence, and it is the Palestinian and Israeli populations who will pay the price every time. Jean-Yves Le Drian, France's Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, warned the international community about this when he brought together his German, Egyptian and Jordanian counterparts in Paris in March, well before the current crisis. In the weeks that followed, France expressed its grave concern about the eviction of Palestinian families in East Jerusalem, particularly the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood, and condemned the ongoing settlement activity, since colonization is illegal under international law and aggravates tensions on the ground. Similarly, we reiterated our commitment to respecting the 1967 status quo at the holy sites, working in particular with Jordan, given its specific role in that regard. Beyond that and more broadly, all provocations and incitement to hatred and violence must cease in order to ease tensions in both the Palestinian territories and Israel.

The fighting must stop as a matter of urgency. France wants to see the Security Council assume all the responsibilities assigned to it by the Charter of the United Nations. The Council has a leading role to play

in this crisis, as in all crises relating to international peace and security. What is at stake first and foremost is human lives. That is why, at the initiative of President Macron, together with President Al Sisi and King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein, France presented a draft resolution to the members of the Security Council yesterday, building on the efforts of other Council members over the past few days. The draft calls for three simple things on which consensus should be attainable — an immediate cessation of hostilities, respect for international humanitarian law and the protection of civilians, and a speedy resumption of negotiations to implement a two-State solution. It reiterates our condemnation of the indiscriminate bombardments and violations of international law and complements all the ongoing efforts to bring about a cessation of hostilities and the implementation of a durable ceasefire. We are supporting and actively contributing to those efforts, notably those of several of our partners, in particular the bilateral engagement of the United States and the steps taken by Egypt.

France therefore calls on the members of the Security Council to act responsibly, in a manner that complements their individual efforts and in accordance with the Council's jurisdiction. Now, almost two weeks after the start of the latest cycle of violence, we must translate into action our commitment to supporting multilateralism and the peaceful settlement of disputes.

Ms. Mudallali (Lebanon): The Bible tells us that for everything there is a season and a time — a time for war and a time for peace. As far as the Palestinians are concerned, for decades there has been only one season — a time for war, loss and mourning. Israel's latest assault on Gaza, dubbed "Guardians of the Walls", with all its pain and destruction, is on the Palestinians. Its aim, as Israel's Prime Minister Netanyahu has put it, is to restore deterrence and prevent future conflict.

However, what is happening is actually a recipe for future conflicts. To prove it, I would like to remind the Assembly of the seven major military operations undertaken by Israel against Gaza since 2006 with the aim of deterrence. All the Israeli operations start in the same way and end with the same pain and suffering — from "Summer Rains", the first military operation in 2006, and the second, "Autumn Clouds", in the same year, to the start of the blockade of Gaza in 2007, operations "Hot Winter" and "Cast Lead" in 2008, operations "Returning Echo" in 2012 and "Protective Edge" in 2014, the killing of protesters on

the Gaza border in 2018 and now “Operation Guardians of the Walls”. They have turned Gaza into a large prison for 2 million people and taken thousands of lives, including of entire families, injured thousands, destroyed homes, targeted schools and hospitals and reduced buildings to rubble, but they have never succeeded in silencing the Palestinians. Thanks to the current operation, the situation in Gaza is grave, with more than 230 Palestinians killed, including 65 children and 40 women, thousands injured and more than 50,000 reported displaced.

Nothing can guard against a people who are determined to defend their homes, and no degree of deterrence will work in the face of a people who want to break free. Like all the previous operations, the fighting will probably end with a ceasefire. But that will not end the conflict, because it is not about rockets, weapons or ceasefires but about occupation and self-determination. It is also about a holy city, Jerusalem, the key to peace in our time and in all times. Jerusalem, the city of peace, is what brought things to a head, because the Palestinians feel that it is slipping from their hands, one neighbourhood at a time, and falling to the occupation.

That is why this month of May saw Palestinians everywhere rise up to defend what they consider to be the latest attack on their rights in the city and its holy sites, when the Israeli army entered Al-Haram Al-Sharif, the third most sacred shrine of Islam, during the holy month of Ramadan, and attacked worshippers inside the mosque. The Palestinians’ anger did not come out of thin air. It is simply the consequence of decades of occupation, humiliation, dispossession, imprisonment, annexation and settlement activities. It is also the result of the years of impunity enjoyed by successive Israeli Governments for their policies and years of indifference on the part of the international community to this plight, which has brought the Palestinians to this explosive situation and to a state of despair that has left them with no recourse but to defend themselves.

Palestinians have been evicted from their ancestral homes in Jerusalem since the beginning of the occupation, under a policy aimed at emptying Jerusalem of its Palestinian population. The case of Sheikh Jarrah is merely the latest example of that policy. The demolition of homes is another Israeli policy that Palestinians rightly see as uprooting them from their land. The continued oppression resulting from Israel’s policies and Government actions has

united Palestinians as never before. The general strike now being observed is a wake-up call to everyone that a return to the status quo will not work this time.

Palestinians, and the world, are demanding change. They are rejecting Israel’s continued policy of creating facts on the ground and undermining the agreed formula for peace. They want a commitment and adherence to a comprehensive, lasting and just solution that puts an end to the occupation and preserves the foundations of a Palestinian State to make a two-State solution viable. They want the Security Council to shoulder its responsibilities under the Charter of the United Nations and end this war. The United Nations and the international community must renew their support and commitment to a settlement that guarantees the political rights of Palestinians on a basis of international law, Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 2334 (2016), the Arab Peace Initiative of 2002 and the principle of land for peace, a settlement that leads to the establishment of an independent Palestinian State, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

Time is of the essence when it comes to reaching a solution to the Palestine question. Extremism and radicalization are on the rise in Israel, and the senseless attacks that we have seen in the last two weeks raise alarm bells about what is to come. The chants of “death to the Arabs” heard from those extremists culminated last week in the lynching of a Palestinian. The Palestinians are afforded protection under the Geneva Conventions, and the Israeli Government has a responsibility to ensure that protection.

Israel also has a responsibility to adhere to international humanitarian law when dealing with the Palestinians and others in its neighbourhood. A week ago, Israeli forces shot and killed an unarmed 21-year-old Lebanese protester who was expressing his solidarity with the Palestinians on the border. The continued Israeli attacks are stirring up emotions and fuelling anger all over the Arab world. The tensions on the southern border of Lebanon are a stark reminder that there will never be durable peace and security in the region unless the Palestinian question is resolved. Lebanon remains committed to the provisions of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) and has no wish to see any escalation. Israel has also destroyed a building that housed international media in Gaza. The world cannot turn a blind eye to all these actions when Israel destroys a building in which journalists work and live.

In conclusion, we call for a ceasefire to stop the suffering of the Palestinian people and the bloodshed. However, a ceasefire is a Band-Aid, not a solution. What is needed now is a political solution that ends this conflict once and for all. What is needed now is freedom for Palestinians, an end to the occupation and for Jerusalem to once again be a city of peace for the whole world.

Dame Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom): As others in the Assembly have made clear, the violence across Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories must stop. The United Kingdom offers its deepest condolences to the families of the civilians who have been killed. The United Kingdom calls for an immediate ceasefire to prevent any further loss of life and a worsening humanitarian situation. We continue to support the ongoing United Nations, Egyptian and Qatari mediation efforts. The United Kingdom unequivocally condemns the firing of rockets at civilian populations. Such acts of terrorism and incitement by Hamas and other terrorist groups must end permanently.

Israel has a legitimate right to self-defence and the right to defend its citizens from attack. When it does so, it is vital that Israel make every effort to avoid civilian casualties. We call on Israel to adhere to the principles of necessity and proportionality when defending its legitimate security interests. In addition, we are concerned about reports that Hamas is again using civilian infrastructure and populations as a cover for military operations. We are also gravely concerned about the United Nations reports that medical installations, schools and hundreds of homes in Gaza have been destroyed or seriously damaged. That is why the United Kingdom announced today that it will provide an initial £3.2 million to the emergency flash appeal of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), support that will help UNRWA deliver life-saving humanitarian aid to those who need it most. In that connection, the United Kingdom urges for ensuring the unimpeded entry and exit of vital humanitarian supplies and personnel, and for Hamas to cease its mortar attacks on border crossings.

I want to reiterate the importance of maintaining the historic status quo in Jerusalem. The United Kingdom strongly supports the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan's important role as custodian of the holy sites. As my Foreign Secretary reiterated this week, the United Kingdom firmly opposes settlements in the West Bank,

including East Jerusalem, as well as demolitions and evictions of Palestinians from their homes.

Recent events highlight the urgent need to make progress towards a two-State solution, with a safe and secure Israel alongside a viable Palestinian State, based on the 1967 lines, with Jerusalem as their shared capital. Above all, the United Kingdom will continue pushing for an end to violence and a political pathway to peace.

The Acting President: At this stage, before we conclude this morning's meeting, if there is no objection, I would like to give the floor to the observer of the League of Arab States.

It was so decided (decision 75/565B).

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the observer of the League of Arab States.

Mr. Zaki (League of Arab States) (*spoke in Arabic*): In the past few years, Israel has been able to block any prospect of a political solution to the Palestinian question and has engaged in systematic brainwashing, whereby the victim is made to seem the aggressor and the occupied people as if they are perpetrating unjustifiable acts of violence. The present moment, however, is revealing. The world can see the situation for what it really is — the just cause of a people under a despicable, decades-long military occupation and apartheid regime that is practising a new form of ethnic cleansing. That is the truth of what the whole world has seen in the neighbourhoods of East Jerusalem and other occupied Palestinian areas in the past few weeks.

Amid the barrage of brutal attacks by Israel on Gaza, which have taken hundreds of innocent lives, we should not forget that the escalation of this bloody conflict began in occupied East Jerusalem. The spark was a series of provocative and deliberate racist measures by the Israeli occupation forces, which are really behaving like any other occupation force in history in seizing the property of an indigenous population, driving them out of their homes and replacing them with settlers. That is an explicit violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention. In Jerusalem, Israeli citizens enjoy all their rights to security, housing, ownership and freedom of movement. However, Palestinians live under the threat of eviction from their homes at any time. They do not have the right to practise their religious rites freely or to have free access to their place of worship, nor do they have the right to freedom of movement in the city where they were born. They live in isolation, just a few kilometres

from the rest of their people, separated by an outrageous racist wall, in addition to inspection points and daily humiliation. That situation goes against the course of history and against all human or moral principles.

The courageous Palestinians who have expressed their solidarity with those evicted from their homes, and their determination to combat the racist plan to Judaize Al-Quds in the neighbourhoods of Sheikh Jarrah, Silwan and other parts of the city, are exercising their legal right to civic struggle. The response has been rubber bullets, excessive violence, tear gas, sound bombs and relentless arrests, followed by indiscriminate bombardments of Gaza that have hit residences, hospitals, schools and even the offices of international media, resulting in more than 220 martyrs so far.

The General Assembly is the world's conscience, free of the language of force and coercion. It must take a clear position on the original question, which is that the occupation has continued with no prospects for a political solution or a timetable for ending it. With the growing rise of the extreme right in Israel, the issue is currently taking a dangerous turn. The agenda of the extremist settlers, those who are calling expressly for Arabs to be killed and driven out of their land, has essentially become the agenda of the Israeli Government. It is regrettable that the way to stay in

power in Israel has become one of escalating the situation in the holy city and taking revenge on civilians in Gaza and elsewhere.

The current bloody crisis has shown the threats that can result if the international community turns away from dealing with the Palestinian question. A two-State solution based on negotiations, whose chances are eroding day by day, was the choice of the Palestinian Liberation Organization and was unanimously supported by the League of Arab States. However, the occupying Power prefers a solution based on apartheid and is prepared to go too far to implement it, by using brute force and committing crimes against humanity. The League of Arab States calls on the Assembly to reject this false logic, whose aim is to protect and perpetuate the occupation. It is high time that the voice of the world's conscience, the Assembly's voice, was loudly heard in rejection of this despicable situation. It is high time that the Israeli occupation was held accountable for its crimes.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on these items for this meeting. We shall hear the remaining speakers this afternoon at 3 p.m. in this Hall.

The meeting rose at 2.05 p.m.