



General Assembly

Seventy-eighth session

Official Records

Distr.: General
18 December 2023

Original: English

Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 24th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 6 November 2023, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Ms. Joyini (Chair) (South Africa)
later: Ms. Rendtorff-Smith (Vice-Chair) (Denmark)

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

Agenda item 50: Israeli practices and settlement activities affecting the rights of the Palestinian people and other Arabs of the occupied territories
([A/78/502](#), [A/78/529](#), [A/78/553](#) and [A/78/554](#))

1. **Mr. Pieris** (Sri Lanka), speaking as Chair of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, and introducing the report of the Special Committee ([A/78/553](#)), said that the report contained a historical overview focused on the increasing influence of settlers on Israeli policies and practices, which was a tragic prelude to the events that had been unfolding since the 7 October 2023 attack that had resulted in the deaths of 1,400 Israeli civilians. The Special Committee mourned the Israeli and foreign nationals who had been killed, injured or taken hostage on that tragic day. By 12 October, Palestinian fatalities had exceeded that horrific toll; by the end of October, Israeli forces had killed more children in Gaza than other militaries had killed worldwide since 2019.

2. Since 7 October, Israeli airstrikes had killed 88 staff members of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinians in the Near East (UNRWA). Despite those losses, UNRWA remained a lifeline for survival in Gaza as supplies of water, food, medicine and fuel were exhausted. The Special Committee reiterated its call for the General Assembly and Member States to provide UNRWA with predictable and sustainable financing to ensure that the Agency could provide services to millions of Palestine refugees.

3. Consistent violations of international law and the dehumanization of Palestinians by the Government of Israel had contributed to an environment in which senior Government representatives were inciting violence. In March 2023, the Minister of Finance of Israel and Additional Minister in the Ministry of Defence, Bezalel Smotrich, had called for the State of Israel to “wipe out” the Palestinian village of Huwwarah in the West Bank. On 9 October, when ordering a complete siege of the Gaza Strip, the Minister of Defence, Yoav Gallant, had said that Israel was fighting “human animals”. In recent weeks, the Minister of National Security, Itamar Ben-Gvir, had handed out weapons to settlers across the occupied West Bank. These Ministers were not representative of all Israelis, less than 10 per cent of whom were settlers. Likewise, Muhammad Dayf, the commander of the military wing of Hamas, did not represent all Palestinians in Gaza, where elections had not been held since January 2006.

4. Regrettably, the Israeli authorities had not granted the Special Committee access to the occupied territories since its establishment in 1968. Consequently, the Special Committee had travelled to Jordan and to Egypt. At a peace summit in Cairo on 21 October 2023, King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein of Jordan had said the unfolding tragedy had conveyed to the Arab world that Palestinian lives mattered less than Israeli lives, that the application of international law was optional and that human rights had boundaries. President Abdel Fattah Al Sisi of Egypt had expressed astonishment at the prevailing double standards and called for a ceasefire and a two-State solution.

5. Israel’s continued occupation, oppression and flagrant disregard for Palestinian human rights was at the heart of the conflict. December 2023 would mark the seventy-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. One wondered what the drafters of that document would make of the current world, in which leaders of the State of Israel were calling for Palestinian villages to be wiped out. The words “never again” applied to all peoples; the war in Gaza must end immediately.

6. **Ms. Brands Kehris** (Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights), introducing the reports of the Secretary-General under the current agenda item, said that the situation in the Palestinian Occupied Territories was growing increasingly dire. Since the 7 October attack that had killed more than 1,400 Israelis, more than 10,000 people, mostly civilians, had been killed in Gaza, an additional 2,100 people were missing, and more than 1.4 million people had been displaced. Israeli airstrikes had razed entire neighbourhoods. Under international humanitarian law, disproportionate strikes might amount to war crimes. The level of humanitarian assistance that had been allowed into Gaza was inadequate, and the humanitarian system and the health care sector were facing total collapse. The complete siege of the Gaza Strip by Israel amounted to the collective punishment of the population of Gaza, in violation of international humanitarian law. The escalation of violence in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the exchange of fire along the Blue Line, were also alarming. The parties to the conflict should immediately halt all actions contrary to international humanitarian law, including use of indiscriminate projectiles and wide-impact explosive weapons in densely populated residential areas, disproportionate attacks and attacks directed against civilians. A humanitarian ceasefire should be implemented immediately, and humanitarian workers should be granted unimpeded access within Gaza.

Hamas should promptly and unconditionally release all hostages.

7. In the report of the Secretary-General on Israeli practices affecting the human rights of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem (A/78/502), attention was drawn to two major escalations of hostilities between Israel and Palestinian armed groups in Gaza during the reporting period as well as an escalation of the use of unjustified lethal force by Israeli security forces against Palestinians across the West Bank. Escalation by Israel of punitive measures on Palestinian individuals, families and communities in the West Bank and its closure of Gaza might amount to collective punishment. The number of Palestinians, including children, held in Israeli detention had also increased considerably, and serious concerns had been raised regarding respect of the rights of the detained. Israeli authorities continued to impose restrictions on the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association and on the right to freedom of movement and residency.

8. The Secretary-General recommended that Israel ensure full respect for international humanitarian law and international human rights law, particularly in respect of civilians living under occupation and in the conduct of hostilities; end all practices that might amount to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; ensure that counter-terrorism legislation complied with international laws and standards; put an end to arbitrary detention; take all measures to end all discriminatory and unlawful practices, including all practices that amounted to collective punishment; and lift the closures on Gaza and ensure that the right to freedom of movement was guaranteed. Authorities and Palestinian armed groups in Gaza should ensure respect for international humanitarian law and accountability for all violations.

9. In the report of the Secretary-General on the Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan (A/78/554), it was noted that the current Government had endorsed a policy to expand long-term control over the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, which might amount to steps toward annexation of parts of the West Bank. Through May 2023, plans for some 16,500 housing units had been advanced or approved, and 25 new outposts had been established. Israel had continued to settle land title in East Jerusalem and expand roads and infrastructure in the West Bank, placing thousands of Palestinians at risk of forced eviction and forcible transfer. The continued expansion of settlements over Palestinian land had a wide-ranging impact on the human rights of the

Palestinian people. Settler violence against Palestinians had nearly doubled over the reporting period, and attacks by Palestinians against Israelis had also spiked.

10. The Secretary-General recommended that Israel immediately and completely cease and reverse all settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, in compliance with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions; halt demolitions and forced evictions of the Palestinian population and cease any activity that would further contribute to a coercive environment or lead to forcible transfer; issue clear, unambiguous orders to Israeli security forces to ensure the protection of the Palestinian population against settler violence; and ensure prompt, effective, thorough, and transparent investigations and prosecution of all incidents of violence by settlers and Israeli security forces against Palestinians.

11. In the report of the Secretary-General on the occupied Syrian Golan (A/78/529), a summary was given of Member States' replies to requests for information regarding any steps taken or envisaged concerning the implementation of General Assembly resolution 77/125, in which Israel was called upon to desist from changing the physical character, demographic composition, institutional structure and legal status of the occupied Syrian Golan and in particular to desist from the establishment of settlements. In the resolution, Israel was also called upon to comply with the relevant resolutions on the occupied Syrian Golan, in particular Security Council resolution 497 (1981), in which the Council had decided that the Israeli decision to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration on the occupied Syrian Golan was null and void.

12. The human rights and humanitarian concerns raised in the three reports had escalated to extreme levels since 7 October. It was essential to implement the recommendations of the Secretary-General in order to prevent the further escalation of violence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan.

13. **Ms. Abdelhady** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that it was tragic that, as the international community marked the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it was witnessing an escalation of a Nakbah that had been perpetrated against the Palestinian people since the very year that Declaration was adopted. Human rights must be upheld, in all cases and without exception, to ensure that international law would not be rendered meaningless, to save lives and to preserve international

peace and security. The international community needed to support and safeguard the human rights and humanitarian work of the United Nations, as Israel harassed, threatened and attacked special procedures mandate holders and Palestinian, Israeli and international human rights advocates. Israel had been withholding visas from United Nations personnel and had even repeatedly attacked the Secretary-General. Furthermore, the country had killed 88 UNRWA staff members in its war on Gaza. She asked why a Member State that wilfully breached international law and blatantly refused to abide by the obligations of the Charter of the United Nations was allowed to remain a Member State and enjoy the associated benefits and privileges.

14. **Ms. Brands Kehris** (Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights) said that the representative of the State of Palestine raised an important question for Member States and for the Organization. While the immediate focus of the Secretary-General and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights was to call for a humanitarian ceasefire and the release of the hostages, there was also a need for a system that could engage all stakeholders to holistically address human rights violations and hold those responsible for past and ongoing violations accountable. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) would continue to do all it could to support that process.

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

16. **Ms. Abdelhady** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that it was nearly impossible to keep up with the death tolls as Israel rampaged against the besieged civilian population of Gaza and escalated violence in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, methodically pursuing its plans to dominate the Palestinian people and diminish, if not erase, their presence in their land. As of that time, Israeli attacks on Gaza had killed more than 10,000 Palestinians and injured more than 24,000 civilians. Those figures would only rise as Israel pressed on with its genocidal onslaught, violating every rule of international law with absolute impunity. More families would be massacred or forced to flee their homes. More people would starve under the Israeli siege that was allowing only miniscule amounts of humanitarian aid to enter Gaza, intentionally creating a humanitarian catastrophe. More hospitals would collapse without fuel to operate, and more patients, medical personnel and displaced families would be endangered as Israel demanded the evacuation of health facilities and targeted them with its attacks. More homes would be destroyed, as Israel sought to

empty northern Gaza and forcibly transfer the population to Egypt. More medics, humanitarians and journalists would be murdered by Israel. More media blackouts would be imposed in attempts to silence the truth about the crimes being perpetrated in Gaza. More children would be orphaned, some left wounded without any surviving family. What was happening in Palestine was not self-defence; it was illegal, immoral and unjustifiable under any pretext.

17. For the entirety of its existence, Israel had been allowed to behave as if it were above the law. It had never faced any consequences for its illegal policies and practices, something that had emboldened it to continue to subjugate Palestinians, occupy their land and slaughter them at will. The Palestinian people were denied international protection and the right to defend themselves against a violent occupation. Even as global calls for a ceasefire grew louder, Israel remained undeterred, certain that it had the backing to carry on with its war and that feeble calls for “humanitarian pauses” would give it the time and space to kill and destroy as it wished. Believing that it would forever be shielded from accountability, Israel raged on with its cruel siege, blockade and aggression on Gaza and with its settlement, colonization, ethnic cleansing and annexation campaign in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, escalating its human rights abuses and measures to alter the Occupied Palestinian Territory’s demographic composition, character, identity and status and destroy the two-State solution. Israel was stepping up its collective punishment of Palestinians. Extremist settlers and officials were warning of “a greater Nakbah”, making genocidal threats against the Palestinian people and referring to them as “human animals”. Just the previous day, an Israeli Minister had even suggested that a nuclear bomb should be dropped on Gaza.

18. States had a duty to mobilize, collectively and individually, to stop the war crimes, crimes against humanity and State terrorism that were being committed against the Palestinian people. The international community must place pressure on Israel to make it stop. Double standards, hesitation and delay would only bring more disaster. The Security Council, General Assembly, the International Criminal Court, the International Court of Justice and all States had an obligation to act to reverse the current dynamic, which threatened not only the Palestinian people, but also the Israeli people, the region and the international community as a whole.

19. **Ms. Clune** (Observer for the European Union) said that the European Union condemned Hamas for its brutal and indiscriminate terrorist attacks and called for the release of all hostages. Israel had a right to self-

defence. The European Union was also deeply concerned about the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza and deplored all losses of civilian life.

20. The European Union remained committed to reaching a just and comprehensive solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, through a two-State solution on the basis of the relevant Security Council resolutions. In line with international law, including Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), the European Union had consistently reiterated its strong opposition to the settlement policy of Israel and the actions taken in that context. Israel should halt its settlement expansion, including in and around East Jerusalem and under the E1 plan, which severely threatened the two-State solution and jeopardized the possibility of Jerusalem serving as the future capital of both States. Actions such as evictions, forcible transfers, including in Masafer Yatta, confiscation of homes and demolitions, including of European Union-funded projects, would only further escalate tensions. The European Union would not recognize any changes to pre-1967 borders, including with regard to Jerusalem. The deteriorating conditions on the ground in the occupied West Bank were deeply concerning. Israel must stop settlement expansion, prevent settler violence and ensure that perpetrators were held accountable. Furthermore, wording should be found concerning the holy sites of Jerusalem to reflect their importance and historical significance and to respect religious and cultural sensitivities.

21. Strong, inclusive and accountable democratic Palestinian institutions were vital for the achievement of the two-State solution. All Palestinian factions should engage in good faith in the reconciliation process; adhere to previous agreements; renounce violence and terrorism; recognize the right of Israel to exist; and commit to democratic principles, including the rule of law. All parties must allow civil society to undertake its work freely, and freedom of expression must be upheld.

22. Restoring a political horizon towards a two-State solution was critical, in order to create tangible progress on the ground, to develop confidence-building measures, to improve living conditions and to open the path towards relaunching the peace process. The European Union was ready to work with both parties, its partners in the region and the international community towards the resumption of meaningful negotiations to resolve all final status issues and to achieve a just and lasting peace.

23. **Ms. Al-Rashdi** (Oman), speaking also on behalf of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, said that the countries of the Gulf Cooperation

Council were concerned by the dangerous Israeli escalation. They condemned all attacks on civilians and urged all parties to show restraint and be mindful of their obligations under international humanitarian law. All hostages, detainees and prisoners should be released. The siege should be lifted, and access to food, water and medicine should be restored. Ultimately, what was needed was a political solution that would prevent further violence resulting from continued Israeli violations against Palestinians and their holy places. The countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council had warned many times that the situation would remain at risk of blowing up as long as the occupation persisted and Palestinians continued to be denied their right to an independent State.

24. The question of Palestine continued to be the core issue for Arabs and Muslims. The international community should intervene to end the ongoing endeavour to eliminate the Palestinian presence in Jerusalem, including the eviction of Palestinians from their homes; attempts to change its legal character, demographic composition and the special arrangements for the Islamic holy places; and attempts to impose Israeli authority, in flagrant violation of international law. The countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council rejected any move by Israel to annex the West Bank settlements as a flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations, the principles of international law and United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), the 2004 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice and the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. The countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council condemned the ongoing construction by Israel of settlements on occupied Palestinian territory and called on the international community to pressure the Israeli authorities to rescind their decisions in that regard, which ran counter to international law and United Nations resolutions. The countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council condemned the repeated incursions into the Aqsa Mosque by Israeli settlers with the support and protection of the Israeli occupation forces. Such incursions were a breach of international law, violated the status quo in Jerusalem and its holy places and the sanctity of the Aqsa Mosque, and were a provocation of the sentiments of millions of Muslims around the world.

25. The countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council supported a two-State solution including the establishment of an independent Palestinian State along the borders of 4 June 1967 with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the Arab Peace Initiative and the relevant Security Council resolutions, and preserve

the historical and religious status of Jerusalem. The Israeli occupation authorities needed to respond to calls for peace and take part in good-faith negotiations towards that end.

26. **Mr. Elshandawily** (Egypt) said that, as stated in the report of the Secretary-General on Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan (A/78/554), international human rights law and international humanitarian law applied in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan, including the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, which was binding upon Israel as the occupying Power. There were no caveats, disclaimers or exceptions to that obligation. Citizens were entitled to protection in times of war regardless of circumstances; no right of self-defence could be used to justify the slaughter of civilians by Israel.

27. In response to heinous acts committed by Israel against Palestinians, principled members of the international community had voted overwhelmingly in favour of General Assembly resolution ES-10/21, which called for an immediate, durable and sustained humanitarian truce leading to a cessation of hostilities and contained provisions on the need to uphold international humanitarian law, provide essential goods and services to civilians, protect Palestinian civilians and reject their forced displacement. Nevertheless, Israel, enabled by the positions of certain Member States, had continued its aggression against the Palestinians. Egypt called for a full cessation of hostilities.

28. Even before 7 October 2023, Israel had been engaged in a consistent pattern of violations and practices contrary to its obligations under international law and relevant United Nations resolutions, as documented in the aforementioned report. The current Government of Israel had been building illegal settlements at a feverish pace under a plan to move 500,000 new settlers to the West Bank and to construct 16,500 housing units in Area C and East Jerusalem. Israel made it virtually impossible for Palestinians to obtain building permits on their own land and demolished the structures for which it refused to issue permits. Furthermore, settlers commonly carried firearms and were encouraged by high-level political leaders to use them against “terrorists”; they were not held accountable even in cases in which Palestinian children had been shot for no reason. OHCHR had documented a growing number of cases in which Israeli security forces had actively supported or joined settler attacks. Israel also continued to build illegal settlements

in the occupied Syrian Golan, where the Israeli population now outnumbered the local Syrian population.

29. Those Israeli practices and activities were not only detrimental to the rights of Palestinians and Syrians but also threatened the viability of a peace process leading to a two-State solution, which was the only hope for preventing a recurrence of the tragic war in Gaza. Their repercussions stretched far beyond the occupied territories and Israel and affected international peace and security. The international community must demonstrate more unity to end the illegal occupation and practices and work towards launching a peace process leading to the establishment of a fully independent and viable State of Palestine based on the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

30. **Ms. Al-mashehari** (Yemen) said that Yemen supported the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to establish a sovereign and independent State, in line with relevant international resolutions and with the Arab Peace Initiative, which stressed that comprehensive peace and the normalization of relations with Israel must be predicated on an end to the occupation of Arab lands, the exercise of the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, and the right of Palestine refugees to return to their homeland and to a just solution consistent with General Assembly resolution 194 (III). Continued efforts were needed to preserve the city’s Muslim and Christian demographic character. His Government condemned the settler-colonial policies of the occupying Power and called on the Security Council to implement its resolution 2334 (2016). The Israeli entity, the occupying Power, should immediately end all settlement activity in all Palestinian territories, especially in Jerusalem). The State of Palestine should be granted full membership in the United Nations. Countries that had not yet done so should recognize the State of Palestine and support all its endeavours to hold the Israeli occupation accountable for crimes against humanity and war crimes.

31. Yemen condemned in the strongest terms the ongoing Israeli aggression against the Gaza Strip. Hospitals and schools were being targeted indiscriminately. Thousands of defenceless civilians had been killed or injured. A brutal siege had cut off access to water, electricity, food and medicine. That was a war crime in violation of international humanitarian law, international human rights law and international norms.

32. The continued occupation of the Syrian Arab Golan was a major threat to regional peace and security. All Israeli practices aimed at imposing its laws,

jurisdiction and administration in the Golan Heights to be null and void and without international legal effect. The Syrian people had a right to recover all of the occupied Syrian Golan.

33. **Mr. Alwasil** (Saudi Arabia), speaking on behalf of the Group of Arab States, said that the current war was in no way an act of self-defence but rather a case of illegal use of force that violated the laws of armed conflict. It called for immediate implementation of General Assembly resolution [ES-10/21](#) calling for a humanitarian truce, protection of civilians, compliance with humanitarian law, and delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza without restrictions. The Group condemned in the strongest terms the use by Israel of prohibited weapons; its deliberate attacks on women, children and the elderly by air and by land; and its targeting of schools, hospitals, holy places and infrastructure.

34. The Group of Arab States called for an end to incursions by extremists, settlers and members of the Israeli Knesset into the Aqsa Mosque under Israeli police protection. The Group condemned Israeli violations in Islamic and Christian holy places, especially those aimed at changing the historical and legal status quo in the Haram al-Sharif/Aqsa Mosque and attempting to divide it in time and space and undermine the right of Muslims to pray there. The Group condemned the escalating aggression against Jerusalem and the policy of forcible evictions in Shaykh Jarrah, Silwan and other areas, the alteration of their demographic composition, the disruption of the demographic and physical contiguity of their people and their isolation from their Palestinian surroundings.

35. In order to achieve peace, the Palestinian people must exercise their rights under international law and the recognized terms of reference, of which the most comprehensive was the Arab Peace Initiative, including the establishment of an independent sovereign Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital along the borders of 4 June 1967, living side-by-side in peace and security with Israel. Palestinians had the right to self-determination and sovereignty over all their territory, natural resources, airspace and territorial waters. The Group rejected Israeli settler-colonial policies and practices in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including the annexation of land, the construction and expansion of settlements and the annexation wall, the forcible eviction of the Palestinian population, the destruction of their property, and the terrorizing of the population with the complicity of the occupation forces. It condemned the ongoing escalation in the occupied West Bank and called on the Security Council to fulfil its responsibility to implement resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#), in which the Council called on

Israel, the occupying Power, to end all settlement activities imperilling the two-State solution based on the 1967 lines.

36. The continued occupation since 1967 of the Syrian Arab Golan threatened regional and international peace and security. The Group reaffirmed its commitment to all United Nations resolutions, which affirmed that the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 were applicable to the occupied Syrian Arab Golan. The imposition by Israel, the occupying Power, of its laws, judicial authority and administration on the Golan was null and void and utterly illegitimate.

37. The Group called on the international community to follow up on the situation of Palestinian prisoners and detainees in Israeli prisons and to condemn the arbitrary detention of women, children, older persons and parliamentarians; medical neglect and torture; and the withholding of the bodies of those killed. The international community must demand that Israel immediately release all prisoners and compel Israel to abandon its policy of collective and individual punishment, which ran counter to the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. The Group called on Member States to recognize the State of Palestine if they had not already done so, and support the right of the State of Palestine to full membership in the United Nations.

38. **Mr. Shatil** (Bangladesh) said that a ceasefire must be implemented immediately to prevent the further killing of innocent civilians. The international community needed to ensure the immediate, continuous, sufficient and unhindered provision of essential supplies and services to civilians throughout the Gaza Strip without further delay. The United Nations, particularly the Security Council, must take urgent action to those ends.

39. Bangladesh was deeply concerned by the illegal Israeli practices and settlement activities, including the record number of demolitions in East Jerusalem; the plans to consolidate a ring of settlements to separate East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank; the land title settlement process; the regularization of outposts and illegal structures; and the escalation of settler violence, which had doubled in the reporting period. Israel had pursued a clear policy of maintaining an environment that was repressive for Palestinians and favourable for Israeli settlers with a view to ensuring complete control over the Occupied Palestinian Territory and altering its demographic composition.

40. At the highest political level, Israel had fostered a culture of impunity for illegal settlers and encouraged illegal practices and policies, which hindered the

possibility of achieving a two-State solution. The failure on the part of the United Nations and the international community to take action had exacerbated the situation. Consensus actions should be taken to prevail on Israel to comply with the recommendations made by the Secretary-General. The General Assembly must take tangible measures to hold Israel accountable for its war crimes and crimes against humanity in Gaza and the occupied West Bank. The Security Council should consider sanctions against Israel if it continued to disregard its obligations under international law. Israel should be added to the lists of parties engaging in violations against children included in the annexes to reports of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in accordance with Security Council resolution [1379 \(2001\)](#) and subsequent resolutions.

41. The world was witnessing a dire crisis involving the blockade of humanitarian assistance, the targeted killing of civilians and United Nations personnel, use of white phosphorus in artillery shells and threats of the use of nuclear weapons. Israel was an occupying Power with duties under international law. Its claim to a right to self-defence was therefore a fallacy and could not justify its collective punishment of a civilian population. The only possible way to guarantee the rights of the people of Palestine was to establish an independent, viable and sovereign State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, under a two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders. Israel must also withdraw from the occupied Syrian Golan.

42. **Mr. Sezer** (Türkiye) said that the indiscriminate attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure, acts of collective punishment and attempts at forced displacement currently under way in Gaza were unacceptable. An immediate and unconditional ceasefire and uninterrupted humanitarian access to and within Gaza were urgently needed. The situation elsewhere in the Occupied Palestinian Territory was also deeply concerning, including the spread of settler violence, which increased the risk of widespread hostilities. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 136 Palestinians, including 43 children, had been killed by settlers and Israeli security forces in the West Bank since 7 October 2023.

43. The current violence resulted from the ongoing occupation by Israel of Palestinian territory, together with the dispossession, oppression and dehumanization of the Palestinian people. Illegal settlement expansion, forced evictions, demolitions, mass displacement and extrajudicial killings in the Occupied Palestinian Territory undermined the achievement of a just and lasting solution contravening international law and the relevant Security Council resolutions.

44. His delegation was concerned by attempts to violate the sanctity of the Aqsa Mosque and the Muslim and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem, which fuelled violence and entrenched hatred and mistrust. The sanctity and historic status quo of the holy sites in Jerusalem must be respected. Israel could not ensure its security at the cost of the fundamental human rights and freedoms of the Palestinian people, or achieve its stated objectives by breaching international humanitarian law. The adoption of General Assembly resolution [ES-10/21](#) reflected the demand of the majority of Member States for an immediate end to indiscriminate attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure. The Security Council had a responsibility to ensure an end to such violations.

45. *Ms. Rendtorff-Smith (Denmark), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

46. **Mr. Pérez Ayestarán** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that the most recent spiral of violence, death and destruction in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was abhorrent. The current situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, particularly in the Gaza Strip, went beyond a humanitarian catastrophe. The United States Government would have resolutely condemned any other such actions; but in this case, it was complicit in an act of genocide. The Gaza Strip had been subject to a long-standing blockade together with three Israeli military operations during the previous year, and was currently under siege, without access to humanitarian aid and essential goods. Such acts amounted to war crimes.

47. Despite the risks, which included the potential spread of the conflict to other parts of the Middle East, there was no apparent will to de-escalate the situation. Certain representatives of the Israeli regime had even proposed the launching of an atomic bomb over Gaza. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela firmly supported the recommendation, set out in the report of the Special Committee, for the International Criminal Court to make progress in its investigation into the serious crimes being committed. Although the Court had jurisdiction over the case in hand, it had failed to take action, something that only served the interests of the aggressor. It was time to end the impunity that had enabled Israel, the occupying Power, to pursue its brutal aggression, with its inhumane practices, colonial occupation and apartheid, which the noble Palestinian people had been resisting for over 50 years. It was therefore essential to end the settlement policy in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan, and any other practices intended to modify the legal, physical or demographic status of those territories.

48. A two-State solution supported by the international community was the only means to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and move towards the withdrawal of Israel from the Syrian Golan and from all the occupied Arab territories. However, to that end, the Security Council must assume its responsibilities, and the entire international community must insist on the need to guarantee a clear political way forward. Progress towards that objective was also contingent on reaching a ceasefire and guaranteeing access to life-saving humanitarian assistance. His delegation steadfastly supported the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, the defence of their independence and the realization of their legitimate national aspirations within the Palestinian State, on the basis of the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

49. **Mr. Salah** (Tunisia) said that the Security Council had tried and failed on four separate occasions to adopt a resolution to stop the aggression and genocide being perpetrated unabated for over a month against the Palestinian people. His delegation condemned in the strongest terms the war crimes being committed by the occupying Power, which included systematic killing of women and families; targeting of hospitals, schools, humanitarian workers and houses of worship; and the use of starvation and deprivation of basic services as weapons of war. The international community could not remain silent.

50. On more than one occasion, the occupying entity had reneged on pledges and passed up opportunities to establish a genuine peace. In fact, it deliberately fanned the flames to elicit a reaction that could justify its illegal retribution against defenceless civilians. The current situation was a turning point. If the international community failed to intervene, that would mean capitulating in the face of flagrant violations of international law, human rights and the founding principles of the United Nations. Tunisia rejected fraudulent claims of self-defence and any attempts to draw an equivalence between aggressor and victim. It demanded an immediate ceasefire, international protection for the Palestinian people, an end to the bloodshed and forced displacement, and the delivery of humanitarian and medical assistance.

51. The continued occupation of the Syrian Arab Golan was a threat to regional and international peace and security. International resolutions had stressed the applicability to the occupied Syrian Arab Golan of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. Efforts by the occupying Power to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration in the Golan Heights were null and void and without international legal effect.

52. **Ms. Fernández Palacios** (Cuba) said that the Palestinian people continued to suffer from the foreign occupation and policies and practices of Israel, which were in grave violation of international law, including international humanitarian law. Such actions had led to the destruction of civilian property and infrastructure, forced displacements and collective punishment by the Israeli authorities as part of an unprecedented escalation. The subjugation of the Palestinian people and the appropriation of their natural resources amounted to a system of apartheid.

53. Any action taken by Israel to modify the legal, physical and demographic situation and the institutional structure of the occupied Syrian Golan, or to exercise its jurisdiction or administration in that territory, were without international legal effect. Such actions, including the illegal expansion of Israeli settlements, were in violation of international law. Cuba called for the complete and unconditional withdrawal by Israel from the Syrian Golan and all the occupied Arab territories, and for constructive and respectful dialogue between the peoples of the region.

54. It was regrettable that the Security Council had not reached an agreement to definitively end the aggression and settlement practices of Israel against the Palestinian people and the Syrian people in the occupied Golan. The United States was both complicit and responsible for the impunity of Israel, having prevented the Security Council from taking concrete measures to end that historic injustice. Its latest veto in the Security Council had made it impossible to end the current siege, which amounted to war crimes on several counts. Ending the blockade in the Gaza Strip immediately and in all its manifestations was also crucial. Cuba continued to support the call for the General Assembly to seek guidance from the International Court of Justice on the legal consequences of the Israeli policies and practices, at what was a critical and alarming juncture for the Palestinian people.

55. Her delegation reiterated its support for Palestine to become a full member in the United Nations and called for the Security Council to speak out promptly in that regard, as it would for any other member of the Organization. Cuba advocated a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, on the basis of a two-State solution and an end to the violations of the inalienable rights of the Palestinians in their own territory, to enable them to exercise their right to self-determination and to establish an independent and sovereign Palestinian State on the basis of the pre-1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital, as well as their right of return.

56. At a time when the Palestinian people were faced with the war machine of Israel, the occupying Power, every minute of silence, inactivity, neglect and double standards would claim yet more innocent lives.

57. **Mr. Kim In Chol** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea strongly denounced Israel for its heinous massacre of civilians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, which was in flagrant violation of international law, and expressed its condolences to the bereaved. The issue of Palestine must be addressed urgently in view of the horrifying bloodshed under way.

58. The failure to pursue the Middle East peace process was a result of the bias and double standards shown by the United States of America, which had abetted Israel in its unlawful attempts at territorial expansion. On the Security Council, the United States had vetoed a resolution on an immediate ceasefire and alleviation of the humanitarian crisis. Such arbitrary and arrogant behaviour was eliciting widespread condemnation. The international community should resolutely denounce Israel and the schemes of the United States to aggravate the situation. Israel should observe General Assembly resolution [ES-10/21](#), cease to violate the rights of the Palestinian people and immediately withdraw from the occupied Arab territories, including the Syrian Golan. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea would continue to support the Palestinian people in its endeavour to end the Israeli occupation of its territory and establish its independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital.

59. **Mr. Abuzied Shamseldin Ahmed Mohamed** (Sudan) said that once again, the Committee's consideration of the annual agenda item coincided with an alarming outbreak of violence resulting from the decades-long failure of the international community to reach a settlement of the Palestinian issue. A just, comprehensive and lasting peace in line with international law, the Arab Peace Initiative and the relevant resolutions was the only strategic choice for regional stability. Unfortunately, Palestinians continued to be deprived of their right to an independent sovereign State with East Jerusalem as its capital.

60. The international community was failing in its moral duty to protect civilians and civilian facilities. Israeli practices – in particular cutting off electricity and water and bombing civilians – were contrary to international humanitarian law. The Sudan supported all efforts to avoid escalation and reach a ceasefire. Humanitarian corridors should be established, and forced displacement should cease. His delegation welcomed the

Secretary-General's visit to the region and the adoption of General Assembly resolution [ES-10/21](#).

61. The Palestinian cause was a core issue for Arabs and Muslims, who were committed to the establishment of a sovereign independent Palestinian State along the borders of 4 June 1967, with Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with international law, the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Arab Peace Initiative, and the other accepted terms of reference. The historical Muslim and Christian identity of East Jerusalem must be respected. The occupied Syrian Golan should be returned, and in the meantime, the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War should be applicable.

62. **Mr. Niang** (Senegal) said that his delegation condemned the massacre of the civilian population in the Gaza Strip, and supported all initiatives to de-escalate the situation and free the hostages. It called for an immediate ceasefire to enable immediate and unhindered humanitarian access, and firmly supported General Assembly resolution [ES-10/21](#). Retaliation by Israel in the form of air strikes and a ground offensive had already led to 10,000 deaths, including 88 UNRWA staff, as well as the destruction of civilian homes and critical infrastructure. Israel, the occupying Power, must exercise restraint and spare the civilian population, humanitarian staff, civilian infrastructure and United Nations facilities.

63. The international community must redouble its efforts to address the root causes of conflict and put a stop to halt the illegal and unjust practices that obstructed the path to peace. His delegation deplored the statements made by the Israeli Government fomenting instability and encouraging aggressive and discriminatory settlement policies. The General Assembly and Security Council should heed the recommendations of the Committee and supported the ongoing investigation of the International Criminal Court launched in March 2021.

64. It was regrettable that the Israeli Government had not authorized the Committee to visit the Occupied Palestinian Territory. His delegation hoped that, despite the current climate of anger, the will to build peace on both sides would prevail. The blockade of Gaza and the mass detention of Palestinians must be brought to an end, and the Government of Israel should comply with international law. Otherwise, the international community would fail to enable the Palestinian people to realize their inalienable right to a viable State of their own, within safe and internationally recognized borders.

65. **Ms. Dhanutirto** (Indonesia) said that current events in Gaza had clearly not happened in a vacuum;

the escalating settler violence, expansion of settlements and deteriorating human rights situation in Palestine were well documented. The ongoing aggression in Gaza was a direct consequence of impunity, and the United Nations had yet to intervene. Indonesia strongly condemned the indiscriminate attacks by Israel against civilians and reiterated its call for an immediate ceasefire, unhindered access to humanitarian assistance and an end to the forced displacement of Palestinians.

66. The current violence must be brought to an end, as it caused immeasurable suffering and would have broader regional and global repercussions. Action should be taken to address the root causes of the conflict, including by halting the expansion of illegal settlements in the occupied territories was a clear impediment to the two-State solution. Her delegation supported the request for an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice concerning the legal consequences of such violations; impunity must never become the norm, and no party to an armed conflict was above international humanitarian law. The actions currently taking place amounted to a war crime. An independent commission of inquiry should therefore be established to investigate the humanitarian situation in Gaza, and the international community should ensure that tangible progress was made towards resolving the long-standing conflict.

67. **Ms. Hamzah** (Brunei Darussalam) said that the hardships suffered by the Palestinian people under the occupying Power had been exacerbated by the recent developments in Palestine and the catastrophic humanitarian situation on the ground. In addition to extrajudicial killings, Palestinians in Gaza faced an inhumane blockade that cut off such most basic needs as food, water and electricity. The current escalation resulted from the ongoing oppression by the occupying Power, including its prolonged occupation, acts of forced displacement and ongoing expansion of illegal settlements.

68. The occupying Power should de-escalate tensions and halt its aggression against the Palestinian people. It was essential to uphold international law consistently and avoid disproportionate action when addressing violations of international human rights and international humanitarian law. Her delegation supported the request for an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice regarding the legal consequences arising from the policies and practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel should be granted access to the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

69. Member States should support the work of UNRWA, which played a key role in supporting the vulnerable and offering opportunities in Palestine and beyond. Her delegation extended its heartfelt condolences to the UNRWA team and their families who had lost colleagues and loved ones. Humanitarian personnel and civilians should never be targeted. Her Government would be contributing to UNRWA and had also established a national humanitarian fund to alleviate the urgent humanitarian situation in Palestine. The plight of the Palestinian people was at the core of the conflict in the Middle East, and lasting peace could not be achieved without an independent State of Palestine, based on pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. Lastly, the State of Palestine should be granted full membership in the United Nations.

70. **Mr. Muhamad** (Malaysia) said that the report of the Special Committee reflected the ongoing devastation of the war in Gaza and the shocking scale of destruction enforced by the Israeli military. The current hostilities were yet another cruel manifestation of the oppressive policies of Israel towards Palestinians, against a backdrop of increasing hate speech and provocative acts by Israeli leaders, settler violence and military operations in the occupied territories.

71. Malaysia condemned in the strongest terms the indiscriminate killing of civilians and disproportionate use of force by Israel in Gaza, as well as its total disregard for international law, including human rights law and international humanitarian law. Targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure, and cutting off basic necessities such as water and electricity, amounted to war crimes. His delegation paid tribute to the civilians, including UNRWA staff, who had lost their lives in Gaza. Under the illegal occupation by Israel, Palestinians were being denied their basic human rights. The unrelenting and systematic oppression and inhumane policies and actions perpetrated by Israel against Palestinians had been widely condemned as being akin to apartheid.

72. Despite numerous United Nations resolutions, nothing had happened to change the fate of the Palestinians. Malaysia called for an immediate ceasefire to the ongoing hostilities in Gaza, which was vital to prevent further loss of innocent lives. The Security Council must fulfil its responsibility to protect global peace and security. The free nations of the world must unite to halt the oppression and occupation of Palestine, which was the root cause of the long-standing tensions in the region. The conflict could be resolved only through a two-State solution based on the pre-1967

borders, with East Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Palestine.

73. **Mr. Sahraoui** (Algeria) said that the current attack on the Gaza Strip showed yet again the flagrant disregard of the occupation forces for all international norms. One month into the aggression, the international response still fell short, laying bare the world's double standard. The scorched earth policy in Gaza was of a piece with the occupation's attempt to impose facts on the ground in the West Bank and Jerusalem, where despite Security Council resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#), the settlement policy continued, accompanied by desecration of Muslim and Christian holy places. The recent attacks in Gaza spared nothing and no one, targeting humanitarian workers, United Nations staff, hospitals, mosques and churches. Nothing could justify the brutality of the occupation towards Palestinians. The blame-the-victim mentality and fraudulent claims of self-defence were both legally invalid and morally reprehensible. An immediate ceasefire must be declared before the entire Middle East was engulfed in conflict. The siege of Gaza should be lifted and humanitarian assistance should be allowed in. His country had already airlifted emergency supplies to Arish airport at the border.

74. A large majority of the inhabitants of Gaza had been refugees to begin with. The last thing they needed was a second Nakbah. Algeria rejected any attempts at forcible displacement. It was delusional to think that time could normalize the abnormal; the passing decades had only strengthened Palestinian resistance. There would be no peace in the Middle East without a comprehensive and just solution to the question of Palestine, including the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with Jerusalem as its capital.

The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.