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The situation in the Middle East

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Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to resolution [78/11](#), entitled “The Syrian Golan”, adopted by the General Assembly on 28 November 2023. On 26 April 2024, the Secretary-General sent a note verbale to the Permanent Missions of all Member States and the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations requesting that any pertinent information concerning any action taken, or envisaged, in relation to the implementation of resolution [78/11](#), be conveyed to the Secretariat by 24 June 2024. Replies were received from Bahrain, Brazil, the Russian Federation and the Syrian Arab Republic. Those replies are reproduced in the present report.

* [A/79/150](#).



I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 78/11, entitled “The Syrian Golan”, adopted on 28 November 2023. In that resolution, the Assembly demanded once more that Israel withdraw from all the occupied Syrian Golan to the line of 4 June 1967, in implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions.
2. On 26 April, to fulfil my reporting responsibility under resolution 78/11, I addressed a note verbale to the Permanent Representatives of all Member States and the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations. I requested them to inform me of any steps that their Governments had taken, or envisaged taking, concerning the implementation of the relevant provisions of resolution 78/11. As of 24 June 2024, replies had been received from Bahrain, Brazil, the Russian Federation and the Syrian Arab Republic. The replies are provided in section II of the present report.

II. Replies received

Bahrain

[Original: Arabic]

The Kingdom of Bahrain, in its various statements before international forums, including the United Nations, reaffirms that the Golan must be returned, in implementation of General Assembly and Security Council resolutions.

The Kingdom of Bahrain supports all resolutions issued by the United Nations, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf that support the return of the Golan.

The Kingdom of Bahrain supports the Arab Peace Initiative, which provides that all territories occupied by Israel, including the Syrian Golan, must be returned.

Brazil

[Original: English]

Brazil does not recognize the annexation of the Golan Heights, which are part of the Syrian territory and have been occupied by Israel since 1967, in violation of the prohibition of acquisition of territories by force, a cornerstone of the international order and of international law, including the Charter of the United Nations.

Brazil has been unequivocal, at the multilateral level, in recalling the international obligations incumbent upon Israel as the occupying Power, in accordance with the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 1949 (Fourth Geneva Convention). Brazil continues to reiterate, in the relevant forums, the illegality, under international law, of the occupation, as well as the obligations under international humanitarian law and human rights law of the occupying Power, including in the Syrian Golan. Brazil’s conduct aims to ensure that Israel respects the applicable provisions of international law.

At the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly, Brazil voted in favour of resolution 78/11 on the Syrian Golan).

In accordance with international law, in particular article 2 (4) of the Charter, Brazil has been reiterating the importance of the principle of inadmissibility of the acquisition of territories by force. Nevertheless, Brazil does not intend to prejudge

the precise delimitation of the territory to be returned by Israel to Syria, which is to be negotiated between the parties. In this regard, it is also worth mentioning resolution [497 \(1981\)](#) of the Security Council, adopted unanimously, which declares “null and void and without international effect” the so-called Israeli “Golan Heights Law”, which extended the application of Israeli legislation to the Occupied Golan, in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

The legislative decree that approved the Free Trade Agreement between the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) and Israel determines that Brazil will negotiate “the exclusion, from coverage of the Agreement, of goods whose certificates of origin indicate, as origin, places subjected to Israeli administration from 1967 onwards”, which, in addition to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, also include the Occupied Syrian Golan. The topic is on the agenda of the Joint Committee of the Free Trade Agreement.

Russian Federation

[Original: English]

The Russian Federation reiterates its consistent position in favour of strict compliance with the key resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly on the Middle East settlement, with emphasis on the relevant Security Council resolution [497 \(1981\)](#). In addition, the Russian Federation has consistently opposed the arbitrary decisions of the Israeli and United States of America authorities to extend and recognize Israeli sovereignty over the occupied territory of the Golan Heights and has condemned the illegal construction of Israeli settlements and Israeli attacks and airstrikes on the territory of Syria. We would also like to reiterate our full support for the mandate of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force in the Golan to monitor the withdrawal between Syria and Israel.

With regard to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), we wish to reiterate our unwavering support for the continued, sustained and uninterrupted operation of the Agency, which is the only structure providing comprehensive assistance to Palestinians, both in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and in the neighbouring Arab countries. The Russian Federation opposes attempts by the Israeli leadership to designate UNRWA as a terrorist organization and to prohibit its operations in East Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. We emphasize the importance of preserving and protecting the mandate of UNRWA with regard to one of the final status issues – the fundamental rights of Palestinian refugees.

Syrian Arab Republic

[Original: Arabic]

From the time that Israel occupied the Syrian Golan in 1967, the international community has reiterated that it rejects that occupation and has demanded that Israel withdraw from the entire occupied Syrian Golan to the line of 4 June 1967. The General Assembly, in its resolution [78/11](#) of 28 November 2023, entitled “The Syrian Golan”, demands once more that Israel, the occupying Power, withdraw from the entire occupied Syrian Golan to the line of 4 June 1967, in implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions.

The General Assembly, in its resolution [78/77](#), entitled “The Occupied Syrian Golan”, also once again demands that Israel, the occupying Power, comply with United Nations resolutions concerning the occupied Syrian Golan, in particular Security Council resolution [497 \(1981\)](#). In that resolution, the Security Council

declares that the decision taken by Israel on 14 December 1981 to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration in the occupied Syrian Golan is null and void and completely illegal. In addition, the General Assembly demands that Israel should rescind forthwith its decision.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic reaffirms that the occupied Syrian Arab Golan has been and will continue to be Arab and Syrian, that it is an integral part of the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic and that the Syrian Arab Republic has the right to recover it by all the means provided for under international law. That right is eternal, cannot be bargained over or waived, and cannot lapse.

The Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan has persisted for 57 years. During that time, the United Nations has repeatedly adopted resolutions calling upon Israel, the occupying Power, to end its occupation of the Syrian Golan and cease its blatant violations of international instruments and norms. Nevertheless, to this day, Israel refuses to implement United Nations resolutions and continues to occupy the Syrian Golan, escaping accountability thanks to the protection offered by certain States members of the Security Council.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic denounces the settlement policies that are being implemented by Israel, the occupying Power, in the occupied Syrian Golan in violation of the relevant Security Council, General Assembly and Human Rights Council resolutions. In their resolutions, those bodies reaffirm the illegality of Israeli settlement-building and other activities in the occupied Syrian Golan.

Syria once again calls upon the United Nations to compel Israel to cease efforts, in particular the establishment of settlements, that are aimed at changing the cultural identity, demographic composition, physical characteristics, institutional structure and legal status of the occupied Syrian Golan.

In that connection, the Syrian Government draws attention to what is stated in the report of the Secretary-General on Israeli settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan, dated 25 October 2023 ([A/78/554](#)): “Eighteen months have passed since the Government of Israel announced its goal to ‘double the population of the Golan Heights’ in order to ‘advance the interests of the State of Israel.’ According to the government’s projected rate of growth, the settler population in the occupied Golan will increase by 23,000 before 2027. As a result, the number of settlers has, for the first time, exceeded the local Syrian population of 28,000.” The following is also stated in that report: “The establishment and expansion of Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan amount to the transfer by Israel of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies, which is prohibited under international humanitarian law, as consistently confirmed by the competent United Nations organs, including the International Court of Justice. It may also amount to a war crime.”

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic condemns all Israeli practices and actions aimed at controlling the natural resources of the occupied Syrian Golan and the systematic looting of those resources by Israel, the occupying Power, in flagrant violation of the principle of the permanent sovereignty of peoples under foreign occupation over their natural resources, Security Council resolution [497 \(1981\)](#) and General Assembly resolution [78/170](#) of 19 December 2023, entitled “Permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources”. Not only does Israel continue to deplete the natural resources of the occupied Syrian Golan and deprive the territory’s Syrian population of the ability to benefit from their natural resources, but it also confiscates their land, as indicated in the aforementioned report of the Secretary-General: “On 20 June 2023, Israel

commenced work on 23 wind turbines in orchards near the towns of Majdal Shams and Mas'adah in the occupied Syrian Golan." Israeli police provided on-site protection for works reportedly carried out by Energix, an Israeli company.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic condemns the great increase in the pace of the violations perpetrated by and the practices of the Israeli occupiers against the people of the occupied Syrian Golan since the illegal March 2019 declaration by the United States Administration recognizing the so-called annexation by Israel of the occupied Syrian Golan. That declaration blatantly violates the rules of international law, the Fourth Geneva Convention, Security Council resolution 497 (1981) and the resolutions concerning the occupied Syrian Golan adopted by the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Human Rights Council.

The policies of the United States of America reflect a dangerous propensity to undermine international law and the role and status of the United Nations and to ignore all legal principles and provisions, terms of reference and the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions concerning the Arab-Israeli conflict and the absolute need for Israel to end its occupation of Arab lands and withdraw to the borders of 4 June 1967.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic condemns Israel, the occupying Power, for pressuring Syrian students abroad who come back to spend their vacations in the occupied Golan to accept Israeli citizenship and, if they refuse to comply, by threatening them that they will be prevented from travelling in order to complete their studies.

In addition to those actions, the occupying Israeli authorities have pressured the people of occupied Syrian villages to accept title deeds issued by the Israel Land Survey Department in place of title deeds registered in their Syrian motherland, on pain of confiscation of their land. Such pressure is all part of the occupying Power's scheme to seize the land and change its identity by imposing the use of replacement "Israeli documents". The occupying Israeli authorities have been insistent that Syrian landowners, in particular those in the village of Ayn Quniyah and the industrial area belonging to the village of Majdal Shams, should turn over title deeds handed down to them by their parents and grandparents. That measure will eventually be extended to the rest of the villages in the occupied Syrian Golan. The occupying authorities have threatened to seize the land from its true owners and award it to Israeli settlers if the owners do not accept Israeli title deeds.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic calls upon the Secretary-General, the Security Council, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross to pressure Israel, the occupying Power, to cease its discriminatory and racist practices towards Syrian citizens in the occupied Syrian Golan, practices that have affected their health conditions and led to lack of medical services. In addition, Israel must end its destructive practices with respect to the environment and natural resources, in particular water. Over the years, the occupying Israeli authorities have buried some 1,500 barrels of nuclear waste at 20 locations in the occupied Syrian Golan, including Nashbat al-Muqbilah, Qasr Sabib and Birkat Marj al-Mann, in flagrant violation of international law and the Fourth Geneva Convention. Those violations pose an ongoing threat to the occupied Syrian Golan, exposing the lives of Syrian citizens to numerous risks, including cancer, which now accounts for 30 per cent of all deaths. In that connection, we note that, in the aforementioned report of the Secretary-General, it is stated that "settlement expansion and such commercial activity as the construction of wind turbines, which could potentially have a detrimental effect on the health of the population of the occupied Syrian Golan, further worsen the overall human rights situation and continue to limit the Syrian population's access to land

and water, in violation of a wide range of their human rights, including the rights to food, health and adequate housing”.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic stresses the need for the international authorities referred to above to pressure Israel, the occupying Power, to desist from its practice of taking peremptory decisions that prevent Syrian citizens in the occupied Syrian Golan from visiting their homeland, Syria, via the Qunaytirah crossing. These arbitrary Israeli actions, which violate the Geneva Conventions and all international norms and instruments, will only bring about further material, psychological and physical suffering for Syrian citizens in the occupied Syrian Golan that is beyond all legal and moral limits. Syria calls for the occupying Israeli authorities to be compelled to open the Qunaytirah crossing, in order to enable Syrian citizens in the occupied Syrian Golan to visit their country and their relatives.

The Syrian Arab Republic condemns the repeated and ongoing Israeli attacks against Syrian territory, including those that are carried out from the airspace over the occupied Syrian Golan. Such attacks have resulted in loss of life and damage to public and private buildings. Those attacks by Israel constitute a flagrant violation of international law, international humanitarian law and legally established protection for civilian installations.

Syria calls on the international community to fulfil its responsibility to deter Israel and put a stop to its aggression, which significantly undermines security and stability in the region. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic reaffirms that, in order to ensure stability in the Middle East and preserve the credibility of the United Nations, measures must be taken to implement all international resolutions aimed at ending the Israeli occupation of occupied Arab territories, including the Syrian Arab Golan, and to compel Israel to withdraw to the line of 4 June 1967, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions, including, Security Council resolutions [242 \(1967\)](#), [338 \(1973\)](#) and [497 \(1981\)](#).

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic emphasizes, in particular, the need to refrain from providing any assistance to the occupying Israeli authorities, in particular economic assistance and assistance for business and tourism activities, or any support for the continuation of Israeli settlements and/or the establishment of new settlements that would reinforce the occupation of the occupied Syrian Golan and the continued violation of the human rights of its Syrian Arab population.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic renews its call on the international community and international organizations to monitor the flagrant violations by Israel of international law and norms, human rights and the Fourth Geneva Convention; to express its categorical rejection of such violations; and to compel Israel, the occupying Power, to cease its illegal settlement policies and repressive measures against Syrian residents of the occupied Syrian Golan, and to end its occupation of the Syrian Golan.
