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Chairman : Mr. Maitland. (South Africa)

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

Agenda item 77: Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories (*continued*) (A/57/204, A/57/314-318, A/57/421)

1. **Mr. Yahya** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that the report of the Special Committee for investigating the actions of Israel affecting human rights in connection with the Palestinian people and other Arabs on the occupied territories contains documentary confirmation regarding the actions of the Israeli occupying forces that have been carried out against the Palestinian people in the region, supposedly under the pretext of the war on terror. The occupying forces are equipped with the most modern arms, which have been made available by one of the greatest powers, which has closed its eyes to the use of these weapons against defenceless Palestinians, who are forced to fight tanks with stones.

2. Ignoring the will of the international community, Israel refuses to recognize the numerous resolutions and decisions of the international community, which condemn its actions on the occupied territories, and it is not implementing the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention on the protection of civilian populations during wartime. Israel is the only country in the world which is viewed by the Security Council as an occupying power. It is the only country that refuses to recognize the resolutions of the Security Council. As a witness to the military crimes committed by Israel and the policy of state terror carried out by it, the Security Council is not carrying out its obligations due to a position taken by one of its permanent members. The resolutions of the Security Council must be carried out — and not on a selective basis. The refusal of Israel to carry out the resolutions of the Council results in lowering the authority of that body and undermines its ability to foster the observance of the provisions of the Charter and the maintenance of international peace and security. The vile actions of Israel in the advancement of its political and economic interests create feelings of disappointment, despair, and anger in the populations of Arab and Islamic countries.

3. The basis of the problem lies in the Israeli occupation. The international community should exert pressure on the occupying forces with the goal of

forcing them to leave all occupied territories. The departure of Israel is the only road to peace. This would permit the Palestinians to create a state on their own land. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya looks forward to the day with impatience when the international community can carry out its obligations in promoting peace in this vexed region of the world.

4. **Mr. Chowdhuri** (Bangladesh) said that the reports of the Special Committee contain a direct reflection of the devastating consequences of the actions and policies of Israel on the occupied territories for the Palestinian civilian population. They also bear witness to Israel's scandalous non-observance of the human rights of the Palestinians. The illegal occupation itself is quite clearly a serious violation of human rights. In these conditions, the resistance shown by the Palestinians represents a quite natural response to which they have every legal right. The actions of Israel in suppressing this resistance trample on all known international humanitarian norms. Laws have been passed and administrative measures instituted in support of these actions by Israel. The policy of destroying homes does not permit to the victims of these acts of scandalous inhumanity a means of legal defence. Cruel laws regarding detention, the random application of excessive force, intentional strikes directed against the homes of peaceful residents, the use of Palestinian civilians as human shields — these are all examples of terrible violations of human rights, in particular of the Fourth Geneva Convention, the provisions of which are applied to the occupied Palestinian territories, including the Syrian Golan Heights.

5. It must be admitted that any discussion of the Palestinian problem must centrally focus on the question of foreign occupation. Israel may not shirk the obligations placed on it as an occupying power by the Fourth Geneva Convention. Unfortunately — and the report of the Special Committee shows this clearly — Israel continues to brazenly ignore its obligations, carrying out draconian measures under the pretext of promoting security. As a result, and even apart from this, the difficult situation on the occupied territories has taken on the dimensions of a true humanitarian catastrophe. Bangladesh once again declares its full support for the legal struggle of the Palestinian people. For its part, the Committee must at a minimum tirelessly remind Israel, an occupying power, of its obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention. The

High Contracting Parties to the Convention must not permit its provisions as they apply to the Palestinian civilian population to be ignored.

6. **Mr. Al-Habsi** (United Arab Emirates) said that the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem, the Syrian Golan Heights, and the Mazariya Shebaa strip in Lebanon represent the crudest violations of human rights and a serious threat to the security and stability in the region and the whole world. Flouting all norms of international humanitarian rights, the provisions of international conventions, and the resolutions of the Security Council and General Assembly, Israel continues to violate the right of the Palestinians to life — around 2000 persons have been killed and tens of thousands wounded or maimed. Israel is continuing its policy of collective punishment and forced relocation, resulting in the destruction of hundreds of homes, in the course of which in many cases residents have perished in the ruins of their houses. The Israeli occupying forces continue to use Palestinian civilians and the personnel of international humanitarian organizations as human shields; they have resorted to the arbitrary arrest and detention of thousands of civilians, including children. As a result of instituting a curfew and severe restrictions on movements, peaceful citizens are deprived of the opportunity of satisfying their basic needs, in particular, they are deprived of access to medical care; the institution of a blockade has led to devastating effects for the Palestinian economy. The construction and expansion of settlements continues, and the attempts of Israel to spread Jewish influence on the Syrian Golan Heights carry the most serious consequences for Arab culture and society.

7. The United Arab Emirates affirm their support of the Palestinian people in its struggle against the Israeli occupation for the right of self-determination and the creation of an independent state with its capital in Al-Kuds esh-Sharif. The United Arab Emirates are deeply troubled by the difficulties encountered by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for assistance to Palestine refugees in the Near East (BAPOR), which over the course of many years has suffered from a serious lack of financial resources, and whose employees have been subject to persecution. In view of this, United Arab Emirates call on the international community and on donor countries to increase the scope of their contributions and to carry out their financial obligations with respect to BAPOR to the full

amount and in a timely fashion. It is also necessary to increase the pressure on Israel that it cease the occupation of all Arab territories and promote the observation of the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and General Assembly. The United Arab Emirates attach great significance to assisting the Palestinian people in overcoming the consequences of the aggressive actions of the Israeli occupying forces. In this connection the United Arab Emirates have made available to BAPOR the sum of \$27 million for reconstructing the refugee camps in Jenin, and they shall also participate in carrying out a whole range of other projects.

8. **Mr. Soufan** (Lebanon) gave a high grade to the work of the Special Committee, whose representatives from the moment of its creation in 1968 have not once been on the occupied territories due to the refusal of Israel to grant them this permission. During the period discussed in the report, there has been an escalation in the bloody policy of Israel. After the invasion of Israeli forces of the occupied territories, serious violations of the human rights of the Palestinian people have occurred. The economic situation on the occupied territories is also extremely serious. The occupation has had consequences in all spheres of life. The situation with regard to human rights has worsened, and the sufferings of the Palestinian people have increased. The Israeli army has had recourse to using employees of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Palestinian civilians as human shields. On the occupied territories, Israel exercises a “double standard” policy. Israel is carrying out a destructive war against the Palestinian people and has recourse to repressions on the occupied Syrian Golan Heights. This practice has also affected Lebanon, since Israel has occupied a significant portion of its territory. Mines, as before, can now be found in our country, and Lebanese prisoners are being held in Israeli prisons without any legal basis, representing a violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949.

9. The practice being carried out by Israel is both dangerous as well as counterproductive, and it stands in the way of implementing the resolutions of a recognized international organization and of applying the principle of “land for peace.” Lebanon approves of all the recommendations of the Special Committee and calls on the world to invigorate its efforts directed at achieving peace and realising the Arab peace initiative, in order to assure respect for the rights of the

Palestinian people, halt the bloodshed, and put an end to violence.

10. **Mr. Mohammad Hasan Fadaifard** (Iran) said that during the period under discussion, which has been clouded by the worst explosion of violence during the entire time of the existence of the Special Committee, an unprecedented degree of invasion activity by the Israeli army has been noted into regions that are under the complete control of Palestinians. As a result of these invasions, thousands of Palestinians have been killed and wounded, including women and children. The terrible destruction and suffering of the people have been the result of wide-ranging operations of Israel in the Jenin refugee camps, in the course of which Israeli soldiers took civilians as hostages and used them as human shields. The speaker said that, only with regard to Jenin and Nablus, through the destruction of residential buildings, thousands of persons have been left without a roof over their head. Israeli bulldozer operators were not stopped even by the fact that there were people inside these homes. Searches have been carried out on many sites — in medical institutions, schools, cultural institutions, and on the premises of official institutions of the Palestinian Authority. Military operations and the institution of a curfew and other restrictions, in particular, on the activities of representatives of international organizations and institutional donors have caused terrible suffering to the population, sufferings which have reached the level of a humanitarian crisis. However, during this year the construction of Israeli settlements has not stopped on the Palestinian territories and on the occupied Syrian Golan Heights.

11. The principal reason for the conflict lies in the continuing Israeli occupation, which must be ended. The international community as a whole and the United Nations in particular must concentrate their attention to the maximum degree on the task of interrupting the inhuman practices of the Israeli regime and on caring for the security of the defenceless Palestinian population in the occupied territories. It is vital to achieve a cessation of military operations and the total application of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Members of the Special Committee must be granted access to the occupied territories in order to investigate Israeli practices affecting the human rights of the Palestinian people and other Arabs on these territories.

12. **Mr. Jon Yong Ryong** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that the inhuman practices of Israel in the occupied territories and other Arab countries are a witness to the destructive position of the Government of Israel regarding the question of establishing peace in the Near East. Rocket attacks on defenceless, peaceful citizens by the regular army and placing under house arrest the lawful leaders of the Palestinian people — this is nothing other than state terrorism, for which there cannot be any justification. Similar actions have created a serious obstacle on the road to peace and security and represent a scandalous violation of the norms of human international rights. Peace in the Near East will remain unattainable as long as Israel continues to carry out its inhuman policy. But no army can delay the victory of the just cause of the Palestinian people. The use of force in international relations is unacceptable under any circumstances. Israel must immediately refrain from open coercion in the guise of retaliation and must withdraw its troops unconditionally from the occupied Palestinian territories. Israel must also cease the construction and expansion of settlements as well as the practice of expelling the Palestinian population, destroying its infrastructure, and seizing objects of cultural value.

13. The Security Council must make a significant contribution to strengthening peace in the Near East and in this way recover its authority as a non-partisan body. Palestinians and all Arab peoples struggling for the restitution of their human rights and the realization of the right for self-determination are acting in a just cause. His country entirely supports the struggle of the Palestinian people for their rights, including the right to create an independent state with its capital in Jerusalem. In the implementation of the resolutions of the United Nations and in accordance with the principle of "land for peace," Israel must withdraw its troops from all occupied Arab territories, including the occupied Syrian Golan Heights.

14. **Mr. Al-Otaibi** (Kuwait) said that Israel continues to ignore the resolutions of the United Nations and the bilateral agreements that have been concluded with the Palestinian administration in the context of the peace process. It continues to create new settlements and to expand existing ones, to destroy the homes of Arabs, and to institute curfews and restrictions on movement. All of this is taking place in full sight of the entire world community. Is it possible that Israel stands outside the law? Unfortunately, the good efforts of

some parties have not prompted the government of Israel to refrain from its obstinate policy in favour of adopting a civilised approach. The Palestinian question can only be resolved by direct dialogue. Pressure on Israel to cease its criminal actions must be increased.

15. **Mr. Musambachime** (Zambia) expressed his gratitude to the governments of Egypt, Jordan, and the Syrian Arab Republic for assistance shown to the Special Committee. With regard to the Government of Israel, unfortunately, it continues not to permit the Special Committee on the occupied territories. However, the Government of Israel has also refused access to the occupied territories to fact-finding missions created for investigating the situation on the occupied Arab territories, especially in the refugee camp in Jenin, and to missions established at the 58th session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. Zambia condemns the murder by suicide bombers of Israeli citizens who are guilty of nothing, just as it condemns the murder of Palestinians who are guilty of nothing by Israeli defence forces, for violence begets only violence. The delegation of Zambia calls on Israel to put an end to its policy of destroying Palestinians and their property. Only a mutually acceptable political solution can bring peace to this region.

16. **Mr. Lamba** (Malawi) said that his delegation agrees with the conclusions and recommendations set out in the report of the Special Committee, and he expressed the hope that they will make it possible to achieve a lasting peace in the region. The United Nations has adopted not a few resolutions on the question of defending the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, but the Palestinian question remains unresolved. One of the consequences of this situation is the enormous concentration of Palestinians and other Arab refugees in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and other regions of the world. Furthermore, problems such as poverty, unemployment, and deteriorating health conditions can also be observed. In addition, the restrictions instituted by the Israeli powers on the West Bank and in the Gaza sector also limit the opportunities of humanitarian organizations to provide goods and services that are especially needed. The delegation of Malawi expresses its sadness at the fact that the city of Ramallah, in which the central office of the Palestinian Authority is located, is regularly blockaded and is subject to shelling by the Israeli armed forces, and that the Palestinian leader has been deprived of the

opportunity of moving about the territories and participating in important international conferences, including those devoted to settling the Near East conflict.

17. On the other hand, the Palestinian people are required to profoundly review their strategy for achieving self-determination, since the murder of entirely innocent civilians does not provide a way out of the situation and only increases the tension in the region. In this connection, Malawi urgently calls on the United Nations and on the international community in the most decisive terms to condemn acts of violence carried out in the region irrespective of who carries them out and in the name of what. Malawi calls on both sides to show restraint and to achieve the most rapid possible settlement of the situation in the interests of achieving a lasting peace and stability in the entire region. The delegation of Malawi also declares its support for all proposals aimed at resolving the Palestinian question through negotiations.

18. **Mr. Faisal al-Zayani** (Bahrain) said that the report of the Special Committee gives evidence of the deteriorating situation in the occupied territories, in particular of the dangerous escalation of Israeli repression and the deterioration of the situation in the area of human rights. In their testimony, witnesses appearing before the Special Committee have made reference to the tragic fate of the Palestinian people and the seriousness of the humanitarian and economic situation on the occupied territories as a result of the Israeli policy of annexation and the construction of settlements, which violates a series of resolutions of the United Nations. These resolutions declare the illegality of the Israeli policy of settlement construction on the occupied territories, including Jerusalem, which is a serious obstacle on the road to peace. The Security Council has also declared null and void the decision taken by Israel on expanding its jurisdiction and administrative governance on the occupied Syrian Golan Heights.

19. The report of the Special Committee mentions the fact that in preparing the report difficulties arose that were connected with the fact that members of the Committee did not have the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the situation of the population of the occupied territories and with the opinions of the occupying power. As indicated in the report, Israeli repressions have taken on an arbitrary and uncontrolled character. In addition to the use of excessive force, in

particular from tanks, military helicopters and aircraft, Israel continues to destroy residential homes and to destroy the infrastructure of agriculture. It also continues to implement a policy of collective punishment and to blockade the territories. The report also mentions the fact that Israel makes use of human shields and has also made use of representatives of the Red Cross and Red Crescent for this purpose. The report also contains numerous examples of Israeli policies on the territory of the Syrian Arab Golan Heights, in particular such policies as the attempts to create economic ties to one of the occupied Syrian villages — to force it to sell its goods on the Israeli market so as to make it dependent on Israeli companies. The report also mentions the policy of settlement construction, territorial expansion, the exploitation of natural resources, and the destruction of the Arab cultural heritage.

20. An orientation towards international peace reflects a strategic choice. In the Millennium Declaration, the heads of state and of governments emphasized the necessity of achieving a just and lasting peace in the entire world. They also especially noted the right of self-determination of peoples suffering under foreign occupation. In this regard, for achieving a lasting, just, and comprehensive peace, the complete implementation of the resolutions of the Security Council is required. It will only be possible to put an end to the sufferings of the Palestinian people after the Israeli occupation and Israeli activities in constructing settlements are halted.

21. **Mr. Hassan** (Sudan) said that the Special Committee is the only body that is objectively monitoring and registering the crimes committed daily with regard to unarmed civilians. A reduction in the effectiveness of the work of the Special Committee and the constriction of its role will evidently lead to an ongoing escalation of violence on the part of Israel. The Committee was instituted by the General Assembly at its 41st session, but Israel has refused to cooperate with it from the moment of its creation. Therefore, in order to collect information, the Special Committee has been required to work under very difficult circumstances. The position taken by Israel is a serious violation of international law.

22. During the last year, there have been a wide-scale military occupation and “cleansing operations” in cities on the West Bank and in the Gaza sector. Campaigns unprecedented in their scope to destroy homes and

massive bombardments have been carried out. Such practices have had the purpose of expelling Palestinians and other Arabs from the land that belonged to their ancestors, and to make them into refugees and displaced persons. Sudan calls on the international community not to close its eyes at similar crimes against humanity and to put an end to these barbarities, which represent a real threat to peace and security both on the regional as well as on the international level. Incomprehensible and at the same time unacceptable is the fact that Israel is violating 29 resolutions of the United Nations, but the international community does not take the appropriate measures.

23. **Mr. Tierno Sow** (Senegal) said that despite the efforts of the international community to achieve a settlement of the Palestinian crisis through negotiations, it continues to encounter serious obstacles, giving rise to feelings of helplessness, bitterness, and despair. All communications, whether they come from departments of the United Nations, humanitarian organizations, or nongovernmental organizations, testify to the serious deterioration of the situation in the area of human rights on the occupied Palestinian territories. Israel continues to construct and expand settlements, to spread Jewish influence in East Jerusalem, to confiscate and destroy the property of Palestinians, to restrict the freedom of movement and the freedom of the press, and torture, interrogation methods using force, and long-term detention of persons without food have become the daily practice of the Israeli forces.

24. Arab land has been confiscated not only for creating new settlements but also for constructing roads connecting settlements with each other and with Israel. As a result of this, the occupied territories have been splintered into small parts, thus simplifying the control of them by military means. On the occupied Syrian Golan Heights, Israeli forces continue to annex land and to control access to water resources for the benefit of settlers.

25. The international community must redouble its efforts, increase its vigilance, and display still greater determination with the goal of activating the peace process. For its part, Senegal emphasizes the urgent necessity of a complete and immediate implementation of the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly regarding the Palestinian question, as well as the provisions of the Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949. The delegation of

Senegal urgently calls on the members of the Special Committee to actively cooperate with the peace process and to complete such an important task as defending the rights of the civilian population on all occupied territories until the ideals of peace, justice, and solidarity triumph in the interests of all countries of the region, including that of Israel.

26. **Mr. Kanaan** (Organization of the Islamic Conference) said that Israel is ignoring the will of the international community and international documents in the area of human rights. Israel, which is an occupying power, continues to carry out its policy of an indiscriminate application of excessive force against the Palestinian civilian population, who have resisted the Israeli occupation and who have defended their inalienable national rights. Israel continues to have recourse to illegal, cruel measures and practices with regard to the Palestinians, including violations of international law and international humanitarian rights. Among these are the intentional directed murder of Palestinians, the construction and expansion of illegal settlements, the confiscation of Palestinian land, the destruction of homes and property, the destruction of crops, the closing of territories, the instituting of curfews in Palestinian cities and villages, the exploitation and theft of Palestinian natural resources, and the detention in Israeli prisons of thousands of Palestinians.

27. The Israeli occupying forces regularly use tear gas not only for dispersing demonstrations but also as a means of punishing and persecuting the Palestinian people. The form of apartheid which Israel is using in connection to the Palestinians entirely corresponds to the elements of the crime of apartheid in accordance with the international convention on preventing the crime of apartheid and setting out punishments for it. Accelerating the planned process of spreading Jewish influence in the city of Jerusalem, thus changing its legal status and demographic character, Israel has seized and occupied Palestinian institutions in the occupied East Jerusalem and surrounding areas, and it has also closed several Palestinian organizations in Jerusalem. These illegal measures are a crude violation of the letter and spirit of agreements signed by both sides in the context of the peace process, which the current Israeli government is continually and wilfully violating.

28. The Organization of the Islamic Conference has consistently spoken out in support of the Palestinian

people and its struggle for an end to the Israeli occupation and for the realization of its inalienable national rights. The Organization has consistently also affirmed its support for the position of the Lebanese government with respect to its demand for a complete withdrawal of Israeli troops from its territory and the release of Lebanese citizens held in Israeli prisons. It once again affirms that the Israeli policy of annexation and the construction of illegal settlements as well as the expansion of existing settlements on the occupied Syrian Golan Heights are crude violations of international law, the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, and all relevant resolutions of the United Nations.

29. The main cause of the current conflict in the region is the continuation of the illegal Israeli military occupation of Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem, and of Arab territories occupied since 1967. The foreign occupation has been and will continue to be the fundamental factor giving rise to terror until it is completely liquidated.

30. **Mrs. Abdelhadi-Nasser** (Observer for Palestine), speaking in accordance with the right of response, said that despite the declaration made the day before of the Israeli Government, the Special Committee continues to assert its relevance. As stipulated by the General Assembly, the mandate of the Committee will lapse when the Israeli occupation and the human rights violations by Israel cease. The Palestinian delegation looks forward to that day more than any other people. For the present, however, Israeli statements regarding the uselessness of the Committee are insulting. Information brought forth in the reports of the Committee confirm the statements made by many other organizations both within the United Nations as well as outside of it. More eloquently than anything, this information is confirmed by an immediate familiarity with the real situation on the ground. It is difficult to agree with the assertion of the Israeli government that Israel always tries to keep to a minimum the damage caused to the civilian population, considering the numbers of killed and wounded. For this reason, the only thing that can explain the Israeli position regarding the question at hand is the current conviction within Israel of its own superiority and its justification for suppressing the Palestinians.

31. It is necessary to view the existing situation through the prism of the existence of the Israeli occupation, which is the source of all evils during this

more-than-30-year period. In many respects, it has made possible the phenomenon of suicide bombers, whose appearance is a result of the occupation and not its cause. Nevertheless, the Palestinian Authority has repeatedly and very clearly condemned the actions of suicide bombers in Israel, and it is saddened by the victims among the civilian population. In this regard, the distinction is important between the actions of suicide bombers in Israel and the situation on the occupied Palestinian territory. Resistance is a legal right of an oppressed people, and must never be confused with acts of terror. Israel does not succeed in justifying its cruel violations of international humanitarian rights by reference to its attempts to destroy “the terrorist infrastructure.” Those participating in military crimes must be called to account.

32. **Mr. Fallouh** (Syrian Arab Republic), speaking in accordance with the right of response, noted that the presentation the previous day of the Israeli representative was filled with disinformation. The attacks of Israel on the Special Committee are unpersuasive; Israel approves only of the authorities that speak for Israeli interests. For this reason, it has refused to cooperate even with a fact-finding group, which the Security Council created in its resolution 1405 (2002).

33. Defining as “terrorism” all forms of resistance on the part of Arabs, Israel at the same time itself practices terrorism more actively than anyone in the world. It actually defends its policy of occupation and aggression under the pretext of self-defence. In addition, everyone knows that it was Israel that attacked Arab countries in 1967 and that it has occupied their territories for 35 years, creating there its settlements and expelling from there the Arab population. It has been 11 years since the beginning of the Madrid peace process, but Israel continues to kill Palestinians and to subject them to incarceration. It is paradoxical to hear about Israeli attacks on the population and leadership of the countries of the region, especially since many Israeli leaders should be brought to justice for their military crimes. The logic which was followed by the Israeli representative in his presentation is exactly what has prevented the achieving of peace. The means for achieving it are known: implementing the international resolutions, the principle of “land for peace”, and the Arab peace initiative, adopted in March 2002 in Beirut.

34. **Mr. Mekel** (Israel), speaking in accordance with the right of response, expressed regret at the fact that in many presentations in the sessions of that day and the day before the truth has been distorted. Clearly anyone who follows the events in the world through any of the mass media knows the true situation. As regards the Special Committee, Israel will never cooperate with it. Israel is not aware of any other body which is so consciously directed against one or another country. At one of its recent sessions, a speaker noted that the public opinion regarding the United Nations is not the most positive. The existence of the Committee is one of the reasons why this is so. Closing it will permit resources that are used in its behalf to be diverted to something useful.

35. In his presentations, the observer from Palestine confused cause with effect. In 1993 in Oslo, agreements were signed which, it seemed, worked for a certain time. Two years ago at a meeting in Washington, the prime minister of Israel attempted to take the far-reaching step of presenting a proposal leading specifically to the creation of a Palestinian state on almost the entire territory of the West Bank and Gaza sector. The Palestinian leadership chose to say “no” and unleashed a terror campaign. This is the cause of the sad events of recent years, which have cost the lives of more than 650 Israelis.

36. As for the presentation of the Syrian representative, it is necessary to remember that in 1967, the neighbours of Israel decided to settle accounts with the Jewish state, but the latter was able to resist. At that point the Golan Heights were occupied. From that point on, Israel made all sorts of attempts to reconcile with the Syrian Arab Republic. Thus, an extensive Israeli proposal was presented by the American President Clinton in Geneva to the late Syrian President Assad. But all these proposals were rejected, and now the Syrian representative affirms that his country wants peace. By the way, in Damascus are located the headquarters of a series of Palestinian terrorist organizations, which have the complete support of the Syrian regime.

37. Inasmuch as Lebanon has been mentioned in the sessions, it must be recalled that, as everyone knows and as the General Secretary himself has confirmed, Israel has completely withdrawn from the territory of Lebanon. However, Lebanese and Syrians continue to insist that Israel is still there. But they themselves support an organization such as Hezbollah, which is

constantly looking for confrontations with Israel and is trying to involve the Beirut government in them.

38. Israel has always striven for peace and has achieved some success in this; it lives in peace with two of its neighbours, Egypt and Jordan. It hopes that it will be able to achieve peace with the other neighbours, the Syrian Arab Republic, Lebanon, and the Palestinians. It is possible to achieve this around the negotiation table, but fruitless debates and useless committees are of no help.

39. **Mr. Soufan** (Lebanon), speaking in accordance with the right of response, noted that Israel is not justified in subjecting the Special Committee to attacks, inasmuch as the Committee was founded for altogether substantial reasons. As concerns the reproaches of the Israeli representative directed at the United Nations, which supposedly has done little to move the peace process forward, the question arises: does it really not want the United Nations to act within the structure of international law? The peace initiative, which the Arab leaders recently put forward, was met by Israel with an escalation of violence, the worst of which was directed at the Jenin camp. The international community condemns not only terrorism but also the occupation of foreign territories, and among the members of the United Nations, Israel is the only one with the status of occupying power. The core of the Near-East problem lies in the Palestinian question, but its essence in turn lies in the occupation and the refusal to allow the Palestinians to form their own state. Here the question arises regarding the Shebaa strip. It is now occupied not by Lebanese or by Syrians, but by Israel. Israel continues to occupy this territory, which belongs to Lebanon. Lebanon strives for peace on the basis of the resolutions of the United Nations and of the Arab peace initiative.

40. **Mr. Fallouh** (Syrian Arab Republic), speaking in accordance with the right of response, noted that hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, expelled from their homeland, have found shelter in fraternal countries, including the Syrian Arab Republic. The Israeli representative has made negative statements regarding this Palestinian presence. However, as long as these people can not return to their native hearths, there will be no where else for them to go. In the meantime, they have a complete right to express their opinion, including through their information agencies — and in the present circumstances we are speaking precisely about them. Israel has not

withdrawn from all occupied territories; as before, for example, it occupies Syrian and Lebanese land. The talk of the Israeli representative regarding peace is laughable, because Israel has rejected the efforts of the United Nations for a just and comprehensive settlement of the Near-East problem, and its response to the Arab peace initiative was a raid on Palestinian cities on the West Bank.

41. **Mr. Wilkinson** (Secretary of the Committee) directed attention at a technical error in the text of the report of the Special Committee (A/57/207). From item 2 of the accompanying notes of the General Secretary (title page), it is necessary to delete the reference to document A/57/421/Add. 1, since there is no such document. There is only one periodic report (A/57/421).

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.