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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 4th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Wednesday, 1 February 1989, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. BOSSUYT (Belgium)

CONTENTS

Question of the violation of human rights in the occupied Arab territories,
including Palestine (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE OCCUPIED ARAB TERRITORIES, INCLUDING PALESTINE (agenda item 4) (continued) (E/CN.4/1989/2, 4, 5 and 6; E/CN.4/Sub.2/1988/38; A/43/694, 806)

1. Mr. QIAN Jiadong (China) said that the past year had been marked by a very encouraging shift, in the international situation, from confrontation to dialogue. Thanks to concerted efforts by the Palestine Liberation Organization, the Arab countries and all other countries desirous of peace in the Middle East, there was growing hope for a political settlement of the Palestine issue. At its nineteenth special session, the Palestine National Council had adopted the Declaration of Independence and Political Statement and had proclaimed the founding of the State of Palestine; it had also proposed the convening of an international conference on the Middle East on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), thus further demonstrating the PLO's realistic and flexible approach and its sincere desire for a political settlement, which had earned the international community's broad sympathy and support.
2. Resolutions adopted by an overwhelming majority at the General Assembly's forty-third session recognized the State of Palestine and requested the Security Council and the Secretary-General to consider how to facilitate the convening of an international conference. The substantive dialogue begun in the meantime between the United States and the PLO was a first positive step towards peace in the Middle East.
3. Regrettably, those mainly responsible for the problem, the Israeli authorities, had shown total indifference to the PLO's efforts and remained stubbornly hostile and expansionist, refusing to recognize the PLO and to withdraw from the Arab territories they occupied, intensifying their suppression of the Palestinian and other Arab peoples in those territories and violating their human rights ever more unscrupulously.
4. The report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Population of the Occupied Territories (A/43/694) gave details of the unabated killing of Palestinian people, mostly youths but also including infants and old people, and to the continued violation of other fundamental freedoms such as those relating to religion, the press, education and the right of assembly. The inhuman treatment included beatings, demolition of homes and curtailment of public services, exorbitant taxation and arbitrary arrest, from which even pregnant women had not been spared.
5. Such treatment, including Israel's continued policy of expulsion and settlement in defiance of world opinion, ran counter to the Charter, the relevant human-rights instruments and United Nations resolutions and the 1949 Geneva Convention on the Protection of Civilians in Time of War, the Fourth Geneva Convention, to which Israel was a State party. Its obdurate policy of aggression and expansion constituted the fundamental obstacle to a solution of the Middle East question.
6. The Palestinians had waged a long, unremitting struggle to restore their national rights; their uprising in December 1987 against Israeli occupation continued and was still expanding. Until the Palestinian issue was solved,

there could be no peace and stability in the Middle East. The Chinese Government and people had consistently supported the Palestinian and other Arab peoples in their just struggle and opposed Israel's policies of aggression and expansion.

7. Israel must end its oppression of the peoples in the Arab territories it had occupied since 1967 and must withdraw from them. The Palestinians' legitimate national rights, and other human rights and fundamental freedoms, must be restored, including the rights to self-determination, to return to their homeland and to establish their own State. Only on that basis could Israel enjoy its right to independence and peaceful coexistence in the Middle East.

8. His Government hoped that the Israeli Government would face reality and recognize the Palestinian State; Israel should endorse the trend towards relaxation of the world situation and join the PLO and the Arab countries in seeking a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Middle East problem through the convening of an international conference.

9. Mr. FRAMBACH (German Democratic Republic) said that the question of Palestine had remained unresolved for over 40 years and required action to bring about a settlement that would live up to the hopes and aspirations, including due respect for the human rights, of the peoples in the Middle East. For several generations, the Palestinians had been exposed to policies and practices of aggression and terror and had been denied the right, enshrined in the Charter, to self-determination. Such policies, including attempts to change the legal status, geography and demography of the occupied territories, had been resolutely rejected and denounced by the General Assembly at its forty-third session and in the resultant relevant resolutions.

10. The Special Committee's report (A/43/694) contained a wealth of irrefutable and appalling evidence of gross violations of human rights, including particularly the use of force to quell the intifadah - the popular uprising which showed that the Palestinians' desire for peace and freedom had not been quenched even after 20 years of occupation. As stated in the letter of transmittal of that report (sixth paragraph), the accumulated frustrations resulting from Israel's policy of annexation and colonization had been bound to provoke the oppressed civilians into violent reaction; the restrictions imposed in the framework of the "iron-fist policy" since 1985 and the increasing determination of the younger generation of Palestinians to oppose the arbitrary rules set by the occupants had prepared the ground for such a confrontation. That policy was not conducive to peace; nor was Israel's systematic violation of human rights in the Golan Heights and southern Lebanon. As the General Assembly had emphasized on various occasions, the Fourth Geneva Convention was fully applicable to the occupied territories.

11. A commitment to peace in the Middle East must be matched by deeds. Delaying tactics were all the more incomprehensible in the light of the PLO's display of realism and readiness to compromise, which the overwhelming majority of States had welcomed. It was Israel's turn to match that display; but the signs were that, whenever it came to promoting the peace process - for example, when the State of Palestine had been proclaimed and the General Assembly had unanimously endorsed the decisions adopted at the Palestine National Council's nineteenth session - the occupation measures were merely tightened.

12. His Government had welcomed the Palestine National Council's decisions and had supported the relevant General Assembly resolutions, believing that conflicts anywhere in the world must be solved exclusively by peaceful means and that the time had come for the relevant decisions to be given effect. An international conference on peace in the Middle East, on the United Nations auspices, on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the relevant General Assembly resolutions, would be the best way to a comprehensive, just and lasting solution. The Arab States, the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people, Israel and the permanent members of the Security Council should take part in the conference, which should be mandated to consider all the region's interrelated problems and seek constructive solutions, having regard to the legitimate interests of all involved, including recognition of the Palestinians' right to self-determination and of Israel's right to exist.

13. Israel's use of force in the occupied Palestinian and other Arab territories not only violated the human rights of individuals and groups but denied an entire people's inalienable right to independence and statehood. It was the duty of the Commission to adopt decisions which would help to end those violations and bring about a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Middle East conflict. The German Democratic Republic would not relax its solidarity with the peoples of the Middle East, including the Palestinians and their sole legitimate representative, the Palestine Liberation Organization.

14. Mr. UR-RASHID (Bangladesh) said that the fact that the current item had been on the Commission's agenda for over 20 years was a constant reminder of how a single entity - Israel - could flout world opinion and continue with virtual impunity to violate people's basic rights.

15. Recent positive developments had, however, raised hopes of progress. The Palestine National Council's historic proclamation of Palestine's independence had paved the way for real negotiation; its courageous decision to seek a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) had demonstrated its spirit of moderation and pragmatism; and its rejection of all forms of terrorism, including State terrorism, had demonstrated its sincere desire for peace. Those actions had been universally acclaimed; and its spirit of moderation, viewed against Israel's continued intransigence, left no doubt as to who was obstructing the peace process.

16. The United States Government's decision to establish direct contact with the PLO, the Palestinians' sole legitimate representative, had widened the prospect of renewed international effort to deal with the main issue - the Palestinians' inalienable right to self-determination - in order to restore peace to the region.

17. The Commission had a duty to acknowledge and encourage those positive developments, and it could not but deplore Israel's failure to reciprocate. That failure amounted to self-deception on the part of Israel, which could impede progress towards a negotiated settlement, the prospect of which had been opened by recent initiatives of the PLO and the United States as well as the welcome recent initiatives of European Governments to engage in negotiations with the Chairman of the PLO and the Israeli authorities.

18. The Palestinians' intifadah had proved beyond doubt that their national aspirations could not and would not be extinguished by brute force. The people of his country saluted their indestructible spirit of freedom and dignity which had convinced the world of the urgent need for international effort towards a just and permanent solution of the problem. Israel's intensified measures of oppression and intimidation had even gone so far as to include aggression against Tunisia, where Khalil Al-Wazir, the PLO leader, had been murdered.

19. The reports of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Population of the Occupied Territories (A/43/694) of the Secretary-General (A/43/806) and of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (A/43/35) gave horrifying details of Israeli atrocities in the occupied territories during the year under review; the former's findings had been corroborated not only by other international bodies but also by the Israeli press. The Special Committee had worked commendably, despite the occupying Power's failure to co-operate, and its report would surely help all concerned to appreciate the gravity of the situation.

20. His Government and people, which were deeply shocked by the continued violence against unarmed civilians in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, strongly condemned the Israeli occupation forces' atrocities and voiced their solidarity with the Palestinian people's struggle to assert its legitimate right to a sovereign independent State in its own homeland, under the leadership of its sole legitimate representative, the PLO. Bangladesh's early recognition of the State of Palestine, and its according of full embassy status to the PLO mission in Dhaka, testified to that solidarity.

21. The root cause of the problem could not be removed unless the Palestinians' inalienable rights were ensured; the United Nations in general, and the permanent members of the Security Council in particular, had a special role to play in that regard. To that end, his delegation fully supported the convening of an international conference on the Middle East, under United Nations auspices, with the participation, on an equal footing, of all the parties directly concerned, including the PLO. It commended the Secretary-General's untiring efforts in that regard, and hoped that preparatory work would begin without further delay.

22. It was time that the positive developments he had mentioned were acknowledged, and the Commission should do everything possible to make the recalcitrant party recognize the strong trend throughout the world, including Palestine, towards reconciliation, peace and justice; it should act to bring pressure upon Israel to abandon its self-deception and respect reality and world opinion by ending its policy of brute force against the Palestinian people of the occupied territories. It should state clearly that the greatest service Israel could render itself lay in withdrawing from the occupied territories, restoring the Palestinians' inalienable right to self-determination and conforming to international law and the norms of civilized behaviour.

23. Mr. AZIKIWE (Nigeria) said that the numerous resolutions adopted by the Commission on Human Rights, the General Assembly and the Security Council aimed at ending the Israeli occupation and, in particular, the violation of the human rights of the population of the occupied territories continued to be treated with disdain and defiance by the Israeli authorities.

24. At the Commission's previous session, his delegation had drawn attention to Security Council resolution 465 (1980) and had warned that Israel's use of "iron-fist" methods to break the Palestinian struggle for self-determination would not succeed. Intensified violence and anarchy had become the order of the day in the occupied territories, especially in the West Bank and Gaza, as the Palestinians continued to insist upon their rights and the Israeli authorities tried in vain to counteract their actions through harsh repression.

25. The extensive range of human-rights violations which included arbitrary arrest, unwarranted detention, demolition of Palestinian houses, excessive use of force, and expulsion of Palestinians, were an affront to human dignity. The unrestrained and deplorable use of plastic bullets against stone-throwing demonstrators showed how desperate the Israeli authorities were.

26. The resolve of the Palestinians was strengthened by their legitimate aspirations for, and sacred right to, a homeland and, on 15 November 1988, the Palestine Liberation Organization had proclaimed the creation of the State of Palestine. His Government welcomed the PLO's proclamation, which it regarded as a significant development that could contribute to the resolution of the conflict in the Middle East. Nigeria's recognition of the State of Palestine was in accordance with its policy of support for the principles of self-determination and peaceful co-existence.

27. In a recent dramatic and historic statement, Yasser Arafat, the PLO leader, had not only recognized the State of Israel and its right to exist in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), but had also rejected terrorism and reiterated his call for the holding of an international conference under the auspices of the United Nations. That statement had been well received throughout the world, but had been arrogantly and promptly dismissed by Israel, which had rejected the call for a conference, although it was ill-advised to obstruct such a golden opportunity of achieving peace, a peace which Israel needed just as much as the Arabs.

28. His Government, which had always advocated the settlement of conflicts through peaceful means, not only welcomed the PLO move but also strongly supported Yasser Arafat's call for an international conference. The PLO's recognition of the State of Israel was a landmark in Arab-Israeli relations and could be regarded as the most important single development to date.

29. His delegation also welcomed the dialogue between the PLO and the United States and United Kingdom, which it considered to be eminently constructive. It hoped that all those who had influence with Israel would prevail upon it to co-operate with the international community in the search for a peaceful solution. To that end, his delegation called on the Commission once again to put its full weight behind a political settlement of the situation in the occupied Arab territories, through an international conference held under the auspices of the United Nations.

30. Mr. GOKCE (Observer for Turkey) said that over the years, his Government had steadfastly pursued consistent policies with regard to the question of violation of human rights in the occupied Arab territories, including Palestine, and had actively supported efforts aimed at the establishment of a just and durable peace which would guarantee full respect for human rights in the region.

31. Since the end of 1987, Palestinian resistance in the occupied territories had been in the forefront of developments in the Middle East. The Palestinians had risen in protest against the Israeli occupation and had met with extremely harsh repressive measures. The information provided by the Commissioner-General of UNRWA, the report of the Secretary-General (A/43/806 and the Special Committee's report A/43/694) drew attention to the plight of the Palestinians.

32. The deportation of Palestinian civilians from the occupied territories by Israel, the invasion of Palestinian homes to beat their civilian occupants, the imposition of curfews on refugee camps in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the desecration of holy places, the prevention of food distribution and various other economic and political measures mentioned in United Nations documents could not be tolerated and constituted a violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention. It was clear that such measures had contributed to the escalation of tension in the territories.

33. In view of the tragic loss of life and human suffering, his Government had repeatedly denounced the arbitrary Israeli practices and had called on Israel to refrain from all acts of violence against the civilian population.

34. The plight of the Palestinians was a political problem requiring a political solution. Priority had to be given to the negotiation of such a settlement, and measures to alleviate the suffering of the civilian population should not be allowed to become a substitute for an urgent solution of the underlying political problems.

35. The intifadah was a direct result of the stalemate in the search for a peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. It was an expression of the long-standing frustration of the Palestinian people and their desire to achieve their national aspirations, but it was also a constant reminder to all those concerned, including Israel, and the world at large, of the urgent need to find a just and lasting solution. Such a solution could be achieved only on the basis of Israel's withdrawal from the Arab territories occupied since 1967, recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinians, including their right to establish an independent State, and acknowledgement of the right of all parties in the region, including Israel, to live within secure and recognized boundaries.

36. One encouraging sign had been the decision by Jordan to sever its administrative and legal ties with the West Bank. Another had been the proclamation of an independent State of Palestine by the Palestinian National Council; his Government's recognition of the State of Palestine was a natural outcome of its policy on the issue. His Government also welcomed the constructive decisions of the PLO to accept United Nations Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and to reject terrorism. Lastly, it regarded the initiation of a dialogue between the United States and the PLO as a very important development for the peace process.

37. However, for the realistic and constructive attitude adopted by the PLO to be meaningful, it was important that Israel should take the steps expected of it by the international community and respond to the Palestinians in the same spirit. His Government was prepared to support and to contribute to all efforts to that end and would welcome the convening of an international peace conference.

38. Mr. ADJABI (Observer for Algeria) said that, while the year 1985 had marked the fortieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the same year had also marked the beginning of a lengthy Israeli enterprise involving the appropriation of Arab lands and constantly increasing violations of the most elementary human rights.

39. Ignoring all universally accepted standards, the Israeli occupation authorities were pursuing a policy of terror which spared no aspect of daily life in the occupied Arab territories. They were systematically persecuting the Arab population. All those years of aggression, humiliation, suffering and colonization had inevitably led to the heroic intifadah of the Palestinian people, who were more than ever determined to regain their national rights, first and foremost their right to self-determination and to the exercise of sovereignty over their occupied territories.

40. Having paid tribute to the Special Committee for its excellent reports, despite the refusal of the Israeli Government to co-operate with it, he said that the information in the latest report (A/43/694) confirmed that the human-rights situation in the occupied territories had dramatically deteriorated since the beginning of the popular uprising and required urgent action on the part of the international community to put an end to the tragic events imposed by the Israeli occupation forces.

41. With regard to the violations committed against the Arab populations in the occupied territories, he referred to the statement in the report that the situation in the occupied territories was characterized by a level of violence and repression never reached before in the course of the 21 years of occupation (para. 610). The report went on to say that the determination to resort to political violence against demonstrators had resulted in a heavy toll of casualties: several hundreds of civilians had been killed and thousands had been injured in the course of the uprising, including small children, women and old people (para. 613).

42. The list of crimes perpetrated by the occupation forces since the beginning of the intifadah clearly revealed the scope of the drama that the heroic Palestinian people was undergoing. Despite repeated condemnation by the international community and the International Committee of the Red Cross, Israel was continuing to deport Palestinians in flagrant violation of article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

43. The policy of dispossession and depersonalization was part of a strategy methodically implemented since the establishment of Israel and aimed at forcing the Arab populations into exile. In that connection, one could hardly be surprised at the statement made by the Israeli Prime Minister that Jerusalem, Samaria, the plain of Sharon Galilee and the Golan Heights were one entity and that it was a dangerous illusion to say that the people of Israel would ever cut itself off from those areas.

44. The acts of genocide being committed against the Palestinian people would not achieve their goal or halt the heroic intifadah. Only a just and comprehensive settlement of the problem of the Middle East would restore peace in the region. A first step towards that objective had been the meeting of the nineteenth special session of the Palestine National Council at Algiers in November 1988, the resolutions of which had been favourably received throughout the world, except in Israel.

45. As stated in the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly at its forty-third session, peace in the Middle East could not be achieved without the holding of an international conference under the auspices of the United Nations and with the participation of all the parties concerned, including the Palestine Liberation Organization and the five permanent members of the Security Council.

46. In conclusion, it was the duty of the Commission to condemn the systematic violations of fundamental freedoms and rights by Israel in the occupied Arab territories and to take all necessary steps to put an end to the unprecedented repression taking place there.

47. Mr. VARGAS (Observer for Nicaragua) said the resolutions of the General Assembly and the Commission, particularly General Assembly resolution 3236 (XXIX), clearly established that a just and lasting peace in the Middle East could be achieved only when the Palestinian people was guaranteed the full exercise of its inalienable rights and when Israel withdrew totally and unconditionally from all the occupied territories.

48. Referring to the proclamation of an independent State of Palestine by the Palestine National Council on 15 November 1988, he noted that the Palestinian State had been recognized by most members of the international community.

49. His delegation shared the view, expressed in the first two sentences of paragraph 611 of the Special Committee's report (A/43/694), that the illegal occupation of the occupied territories in itself constituted a violation of human rights. His Government condemned, therefore, the Israeli presence in those territories and fully supported the fundamental rights of the Palestinians to their self-determination and to the liberation of their illegally occupied territories. It believed that the solution to the Middle East problem could be achieved only through the recognition by the various States of the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to exercise sovereignty over its own territory and the right of all States in the region to exist within secure and internationally recognized frontiers. It therefore supported the holding of an international conference on the Middle East under United Nations auspices, with the participation of the five permanent members of the Security Council and of the States concerned.

50. Mr. MTANGO (Observer for the United Republic of Tanzania) said that the tragedy and agony of the Palestinian people was unprecedented. The Special Committee's report (A/43/694) and the report of the Secretary-General (A/43/806) revealed a horrifying litany of atrocities and other forms of repression committed by Israel against the Palestinian and Syrian populations.

51. In its blind pursuit of occupation and expansionism, Israel had not only committed acts of aggression against other countries in the region but had also violated international humanitarian law, as expressed in the Fourth Geneva Convention, by failing to accord physical and legal protection to the population in the occupied territories.

52. Israel must realize that there had been an extraordinary development in the acceptance of human rights as an international standard for the behaviour of Governments, and that the excuses it had used in the past to justify denying Palestinians their human rights were no longer valid in the light of the recent major developments. The sole authentic representative of the

Palestinians, the PLO, had accepted Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and renounced terrorism. It was unfortunate that the response of the Israeli Government had been so negative and that it continued to be complacent despite the strong tide of world public opinion in favour of peace through meaningful negotiations under the auspices of the United Nations.

53. The Commission could give impetus to peace in the Middle East if it drew inspiration from the concluding words of Yasser Arafat, the PLO Chairman, in his recent address to the General Assembly, namely that the voices supporting the olive branch, peaceful co-existence and international détente should be heard. It was his delegation's hope that the voices supporting the olive branch, which included members of the Government, Parliament and intelligentsia in Israel, would soon triumph over the forces obsessed by the arrogance of power.

54. Mr. Omar (Observer for the Libyan Arab Jamahariya) said that, according to a letter from the Permanent Representative of Palestine detailing Zionist crimes against the Palestinian people during the period from 8 December 1987 to 10 January 1989, 560 Palestinians had been killed, 40,000 had been injured and 6,400 had been disabled for life. The Israeli authorities had arrested 49,000 people, some of whom had been subsequently released; of the 29,000 people still under arrest, 5,000 were at Ansar 3 camp and 8,000 were being held in administrative detention. Fifty Palestinians had been deported.

55. In addition, 840 houses had been demolished and 8,000 olive and citrus trees had been uprooted by the Israeli occupation forces as a form of collective punishment. There had been 1,600 cases of miscarriages among Palestinian women who had been severely beaten or subjected to tear-gas. During the academic year 1987-1988, 67,000 university students and 300,000 school children had been deprived of education owing to the closure of institutes and schools or as a result of the imposition of curfews and the sealing off of cities and towns considered as military zones.

56. Other criminal activities of the Israeli occupation authorities included the burying alive of civilians, the physical and mental torture of detainees, the desecration of places of worship and armed attacks on worshippers. A report from occupied Jerusalem recently published in the Los Angeles Times had revealed that hundreds of Palestinians had been threatened with death because hospitals had refused to admit them for treatment, on the recommendation of the Zionist authorities. The Israeli Army's practice of using rubber bullets was by no means humane, since there was no difference between real and rubber bullets; rubber bullets could kill or cause very serious injuries. The Israeli newspaper Ha'aretz had reported that an Israeli officer had been completely appalled at what he had seen during a visit to Ansar 3 camp.

57. Israel was waging a semi-economic war of attrition with a view to exerting economic pressure on the Arab population. Convoys of foodstuffs had been prevented from entering the territories, electricity and water supplies to some Palestinian towns and villages on which curfews had been imposed had been cut off, and trade between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip had been restricted. The Special Committee's report (A/43/694) provided new evidence of collective punishment and collective vengeance by the Israeli occupation authorities. Flagrant violations of international humanitarian law were also taking place in the occupied Golan and in southern Lebanon. The sole objective of the Israeli occupation authorities was the physical destruction of the Palestinian people.

58. At its fortieth session, the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities had, in resolution 1988/10, condemned Israel for its gross violations of international law. The Commission on Human Rights would have to face up to that painful situation in a manner commensurate with the severity of the human-rights violations. In the light of the crimes being perpetrated in the occupied Arab territories, including Palestine, all delegations should review their positions and adopt an attitude which demonstrated their support for human rights in general and for the right to self-determination in particular.

59. Mr. HAWKES (Observer for Ireland) said that the use of brutal force by the Israeli security forces to suppress the Palestinian uprising in the occupied territories had, in the past year, resulted in the deaths of more than 300 civilians and the injury of thousands more. The loss of life involved was the result of a clearly excessive use of force in dealing with civilian demonstrations. Only in the most extreme circumstances could the use of lethal force against civilians be justified. Sad to say, the evidence pointed to a growing and calculated use by the Israeli security forces of firearms, plastic bullets, tear-gas and beatings, so that the increase in the number of casualties was inevitable. It was particularly distressing that lethal force was being regularly used against children.

60. The Israeli apparatus of repression in the occupied territories regularly and systematically violated a wide range of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of the Palestinian people. Those violations included such practices as the expulsion of Palestinian civilians from the territories, administrative detention without charge or trial and the imprisonment of Palestinians outside the territories. Other serious human-rights abuses included collective punishments, such as punitive curfews, the threat to cut off essential supplies, the demolition and sealing of houses and the uprooting of productive trees. Such practices, which had been publicly criticized by the International Committee of the Red Cross as clear breaches of Israel's obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention, were intolerable violations of basic human rights since they were carried out in pursuance of Government policy.

61. One of the many disturbing aspects of Israeli practices in the occupied territories was the denial of the right of Palestinian children to education. The Israeli occupation forces' continued practice of denying Palestinian children their rights by closing down schools and other educational institutions as a form of collective punishment was particularly striking on the thirtieth anniversary of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child. Such blatant disregard for the rights of young Palestinians to badly needed education could not be justified. Because of the close links between the University of Bethlehem and academic institutions in his own country, his delegation was particularly concerned at the action taken against that institution.

62. Israel's illegal occupation of the territories constituted an ongoing violation of the rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination, and his delegation urged the Government of Israel to recognize that its existing policies towards the occupied territories were untenable. The opportunity offered by the current favourable international climate should be seized in order to achieve a lasting political settlement, which would both satisfy the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and guarantee the

existence and security of the State of Israel. The most suitable framework for such a settlement was an international conference held on the basis of General Assembly resolution 43/176, at which the indispensable negotiations between the parties directly concerned could take place.

63. Mr. ROMARE (Sweden) said that the human-rights situation in the occupied Arab territories was an issue that had been on the Commission's agenda for more than 20 years, and there were no signs of any improvement. On the contrary, since the beginning of the uprising (intifadah) in December 1987, the situation had gravely deteriorated. His delegation was particularly concerned at the fate of children in the territories. Many children under the age of 16 had been killed, and thousands of children had been so badly injured that they had had to seek treatment.

64. His Government had, on many occasions, expressed its deep concern about such serious violations of the Fourth Geneva Convention and the general lack of respect for human rights in the occupied territories. It deplored the policies and practices of Israel which violated the human rights of the Palestinians in the occupied territories and, in particular, condemned the use of fire arms, which resulted in the killing, wounding and maiming of Palestinian civilians. Sweden did not condone acts of terror, whether Arab or Israeli, and called upon the Government of Israel to reconsider its current policies and show full respect for human rights. In particular, it urged that Government to acknowledge the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention to the occupied territories and to abandon all policies and practices, especially deportations, which violated the Convention.

65. The violations of human rights in the occupied territories were the result of an unresolved political conflict. The basic needs of the Palestinian people could be fully met only through a political settlement which guaranteed the exercise of their inalienable right to self-determination, including the right to establish their own State. In order to resolve the conflict, it was necessary to begin negotiations, with due regard for the legitimate rights of all the parties concerned.

The meeting rose at 5 p.m.
