



General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/HRC/S-2/SR.2
18 September 2006

Original: ENGLISH

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

Second special session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 2nd MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Friday, 11 August 2006, at 1 p.m.

President: Mr. DE ALBA (Mexico)

CONTENTS

REQUEST OF THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF TUNISIA, ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF ARAB STATES AND THE GROUP OF THE ORGANIZATION OF THE ISLAMIC CONFERENCE, TO “CONSIDER AND TAKE ACTION ON THE GROSS HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS BY ISRAEL IN LEBANON, INCLUDING THE QANA MASSACRE, THE COUNTRY-WIDE TARGETING OF INNOCENT CIVILIANS AND THE DESTRUCTION OF VITAL CIVILIAN INFRASTRUCTURE” (continued)

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent within one week of the date of this document to the Editing Section, room E.4108, Palais des Nations, Geneva.

Any corrections to the records of the public meetings of the Council at this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

GE.06-13774 (E) 130906 180906

The meeting was called to order at 1.10 p.m.

REQUEST OF THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF TUNISIA, ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF ARAB STATES AND THE GROUP OF THE ORGANIZATION OF THE ISLAMIC CONFERENCE, TO “CONSIDER AND TAKE ACTION ON THE GROSS HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS BY ISRAEL IN LEBANON, INCLUDING THE QANA MASSACRE, THE COUNTRY-WIDE TARGETING OF INNOCENT CIVILIANS AND THE DESTRUCTION OF VITAL CIVILIAN INFRASTRUCTURE” (continued)

1. Mr. ABU-KOASH (Observer for Palestine) said that his delegation associated itself with the statements made at the previous meeting by the representatives of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Group of Arab States. Since 12 July 2006, Lebanon had been the victim of a brutal onslaught by Israel, which had led to the wanton killing, injuring and displacement of thousands of Lebanese civilians. Such gross violations of human rights further smeared Israel’s human rights record. The second massacre in Qana, where civilians seeking refuge had been killed in cold blood by Israeli air strikes, and the aerial bombardment of a funeral for victims of Israeli assaults were symptomatic of Israel’s disregard for international humanitarian and human rights law. The deliberate destruction of infrastructure, including bridges, roads, airports, schools and hospitals, also constituted a war crime. Israel’s attacks would continue unabated unless an immediate ceasefire was achieved.

2. Israel must be held accountable for the tragedies it had inflicted. He therefore hoped that the draft resolution before the Human Rights Council concerning the dispatch of a high-level commission of inquiry to Lebanon would be adopted by consensus. Regrettably, the fact-finding mission established pursuant to the resolution adopted by the Council at its first special session on the human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory had so far been unable to carry out its mandate in the absence of a response from the Israeli authorities.

3. Israel and its supporters must come to terms with the fact that Israel’s continued occupation of Arab territory was the root cause of instability in the Middle East and had disastrous spillover effects worldwide.

4. Mr. EGUIGUREN (Observer for Chile) said that his delegation deplored Israel’s disproportionate military operations in Lebanon that had resulted in hundreds of civilian casualties and its deliberate and indiscriminate destruction of bridges, roads, residential buildings and other types of infrastructure that were essential for the well-being of the population and the effective enjoyment of human rights. The displacement of almost 1 million people and shortages of food, medicine and other basic necessities had brought about a rapid deterioration of the humanitarian situation. Chile was concerned about the long-term impact of the material and economic damage sustained by Lebanon, particularly with respect to the population’s enjoyment of human rights and economic and social rights.

5. Chile also strongly condemned the attacks by Hezbollah that had killed and injured civilians in northern Israel, caused material damage and led to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people.

6. The parties to the conflict were required by international human rights and humanitarian law, particularly the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of

War, to take all necessary precautions to avoid inflicting undue suffering on the civilian population. He stressed the need for an immediate ceasefire and urged the parties to take all necessary steps to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian relief and to guarantee the safety of United Nations and Red Cross personnel and other humanitarian workers. Chile would continue to respond to requests for humanitarian assistance to alleviate the grave humanitarian situation in Lebanon, and it supported all multilateral efforts within the framework of the United Nations to achieve a lasting peace in the region.

7. Mr. OBEID (Observer for the Syrian Arab Republic) said that the entire statement made by the representative of Israel at the previous meeting had been merely an attempt to cover up its crimes and its ongoing occupation of Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese territory in violation of a whole series of United Nations resolutions.

8. The current special session of the Human Rights Council was the second that had had to be convened since its establishment to examine Israel's gross and repeated violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. The Council should follow the example of the Security Council and schedule a regular monthly meeting to discuss the situation in the Middle East and Israeli human rights violations in the occupied Arab territories.

9. Israel's barbarous and indiscriminate military operation in Lebanon had already claimed the lives of more than 1,000 innocent civilians. Israel had breached customary and conventional international law, committing war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide that had been universally condemned and were punishable under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. The massacres perpetrated by Israel in Qana, Al-Qaa, Chiyah, Marwaheen, Al-Duweir, Al-Bayadah and Ghazieh, whose victims had been not only Lebanese but also Syrians and other foreigners, constituted flagrant breaches of the Fourth Geneva Convention and the First Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions. As the contracting parties were required "to respect and to ensure respect" for the Conventions, any State that failed to compel Israel to respect international humanitarian law was in breach of its obligations.

10. He called on all members of the Council to adopt the draft resolution on the subject.

11. Ms. POITEVIEN CABRAL (Observer for the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that Israel's indiscriminate military attacks on Lebanon were not only serious violations of human rights but also gross breaches of international humanitarian law and jus cogens and crimes against humanity. Venezuela was a sponsor of the draft resolution before the Council, which provided for the establishment of a commission of inquiry to investigate targeted attacks on civilians, the types of weapons used and the impact of the attacks on human life, property, infrastructure and the environment.

12. Venezuela had sent more than three tons of food as humanitarian assistance to Lebanon and had helped to evacuate more than 600 people to other countries. The Venezuelan Government had also launched a national solidarity campaign with the people of Lebanon. Although it was very important to alleviate the consequences of Israeli aggression and to provide assistance to the victims, it was even more important to bring about an immediate ceasefire. Unfortunately, responsibility for that decision lay with the Security Council, which was supposed to maintain international peace and security but whose hands were tied. She nevertheless urged the Security Council to seek an immediate solution to the conflict.

13. Mr. TICHENOR (Observer for the United States of America) said that the United States was deeply concerned about the suffering of innocent Lebanese and Israeli civilians, extensive damage to civilian infrastructure and the displacement of hundreds of thousands of persons, and was working round the clock with other members of the Security Council to bring a sustainable end to the violence. The United States was also working with the Governments of Lebanon and Israel and others to address the humanitarian situation in Lebanon.

14. The special session of the Human Rights Council was potentially counterproductive to the Security Council's efforts to address the complex issues involved in the conflict and to reach a durable settlement. The Human Rights Council must act responsibly, in a spirit of impartiality and non-selectivity.

15. The draft resolution before the Council failed to acknowledge the fact that the crisis had been precipitated by an unprovoked attack on Israel by Hezbollah and the kidnapping of two soldiers, and that Hezbollah had fired more than 3,000 rockets into Israel, killing dozens and injuring hundreds of innocent civilians.

16. Israel had the right under international law to defend itself against Hezbollah's continuing attacks. When exercising that right, however, it was bound to comply with its obligations under the laws of war. Where there had been incidents of concern, the Israeli Government should undertake a thorough and transparent investigation and hold those responsible for any wrongdoing to account.

17. There was no moral equivalence between Israel and Hezbollah, which had adopted a policy of endangering civilians in both Lebanon and Israel. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights had recognized that Hezbollah's tactic of concealing itself and its weapons within civilian areas in Lebanon must be taken into account in any legal assessment of Israel's actions. The draft resolution unfairly condemned Israel while ignoring Hezbollah's egregious actions. It contained unsubstantiated factual allegations and conclusions of law that were not supported by the facts. He urged the Council to refrain from taking any unbalanced action that could undermine the Security Council's efforts.

18. Mr. AL-BAKILI (Observer for Yemen) said that his delegation associated itself with the statements made on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the Group of Arab States and the Group of African States. Yemen vehemently opposed Israel's scorched earth policy in Lebanon on the pretext of self-defence. Israel could not invoke self-defence when the conflict was rooted in its occupation of Arab territory in Palestine, the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon. If Israel truly aspired to a lasting peace in the region, it would take steps to end the occupation. A peace initiative had been adopted at a summit of Arab States in Beirut in 2002; however, instead of accepting it, Israel had laid waste to Beirut.

19. The Council should strongly condemn the Israeli aggression that had destroyed Lebanon and its civilian infrastructure. He urged the Council to adopt the draft resolution before it by consensus.

20. The Security Council and its credibility were currently being scrutinized by public opinion. Instead of acting to preserve international peace and security, the Security Council was clearly applying double standards, as evidenced by its failure to adopt a resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire and its failure to insist on compliance with the resolutions that it had been adopting against Israel since 1948. In the Security Council, the veto had been exercised repeatedly against draft resolutions condemning Israel, most recently in connection with the second Qana massacre.

21. Mr. AL MAHRI (Observer for the United Arab Emirates) said that his delegation associated itself with the statements on behalf of the Group of Arab States and the Organization of the Islamic Conference. Israel was waging a disproportionate war against Lebanon and breaching international human rights and humanitarian law, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention and the First Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions, by routinely killing innocent civilians and using prohibited weapons. The massacre of children and women in Qana had been a particularly barbarous act. During the past month, more than 1,000 people had been killed, over 3,000 injured and 1 million displaced. The basic rights of the Lebanese people, such as the right to life and the right to food, were being violated. The destruction of infrastructure had created conditions conducive to a humanitarian disaster. International humanitarian organizations operating in Lebanon had reported that they were unable to deliver humanitarian relief on account of the Israeli bombardment.

22. Israel's crimes on the pretext of national security, and the imposition of its will by brute force, aroused hatred and thwarted the international community's efforts to bring peace and security to the region. He urged the Council and the international community to take all necessary steps to bring about an immediate ceasefire and to dispatch a high-level commission of inquiry to Lebanon to investigate the targeting of civilians, the types of weapons used and the scale of the damage to human life and property, and to report its findings to the Council.

23. Mr. ALEINIK (Observer for Belarus) said that Belarus was deeply concerned at the escalation of hostilities in the Middle East, whose principal victims were civilians, including women and children. Apart from armed conflicts authorized by the Security Council, all conflicts should be resolved peacefully through political and diplomatic negotiations. Unfortunately, arbitrary military incursions into the territory of sovereign States had become increasingly common in recent times, undermining the credibility of the international security regime.

24. Belarus extended its deep condolences to the families of the victims of the bombardment of residential buildings in Qana. Such acts were gross violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, particularly the right to life.

25. The international community should take all necessary steps to bring about an immediate ceasefire, secure a peaceful settlement and address the human rights and humanitarian situation. Belarus therefore supported the draft resolution before the Council.

26. The President of Belarus had launched a humanitarian initiative aimed at rehabilitating children from the worst affected Lebanese families in Belarus. The Government was also planning to dispatch humanitarian relief to Lebanon.

27. Mr. OULD MOHAMED LEMINE (Observer for Mauritania) said that his Government condemned the dangerous escalation of Israeli military operations in Lebanon, the large number of civilian casualties, particularly children, women and the elderly, and the deliberate large-scale destruction of Lebanese infrastructure. Mauritania reiterated its solidarity with the Government and people of Lebanon.

28. In her introductory statement, the High Commissioner for Human Rights had called for a firm response. The Council should therefore apply its full moral weight to bring about an immediate and lasting ceasefire. Adoption of the draft resolution by a large majority would send a strong message consistent with the Council's mandate to promote and protect human rights throughout the world.

29. The Lebanese Government had demonstrated its goodwill and determination to shoulder its responsibilities in a seven-point plan aimed at averting the risk of any future outbreak of hostilities in the region. The current crisis drew attention to the urgent need to tackle the root causes of the Arab-Israeli conflict by returning to the negotiating table to work out the details of a just and lasting settlement. Only when Israel withdrew from all the Arab territories that it had occupied in 1967 and when the Palestinian people were able to exercise their legitimate right to establish an independent State with its capital in Jerusalem would the region cease to be a source of instability for the rest of the world.

30. Mr. TOMASI (Observer for the Holy See) said that the vicious circle of human rights violations, insecurity and conflict in the Middle East could be broken only when reason and goodwill prevailed and commitments were implemented. Such an ethical approach in line with international legal norms required an immediate ceasefire. The recent violence was destroying a promising model of national coexistence based on dialogue and cooperation among communities of very different religious convictions. Pope Benedict XVI had repeatedly called for an immediate ceasefire, the opening of humanitarian corridors to enable suffering communities to exercise their right to life, food, health, water and housing, and the initiation of negotiations to bring an end to situations of injustice in the region. The Lebanese people had the right to the integrity and sovereignty of their country, the Israeli people had the right to live in peace in their own State, and the Palestinian people had the right to a free and sovereign homeland.

31. The international community could not remain indifferent to the current situation in the Middle East. Solutions determined by conquest and the use of force would entail the defeat of civilization and international law and set a bad example for the region and the world as a whole. The Holy See was deeply convinced that no just and lasting solution could be reached through recourse to terrorism or armed conflict. Peace could be achieved only through dialogue and the safeguarding of human rights.

32. Mr. ALFARARGI (League of Arab States) said that Israel had violated every norm of international human rights and humanitarian law by killing defenceless civilians, destroying civilian infrastructure, emptying whole towns by terrorizing their inhabitants, imposing collective punishment, committing massacres such as that in Qana, displacing almost a quarter of Lebanon's population, obstructing the delivery of humanitarian assistance, and preventing the Lebanese Government from exercising sovereignty over the country.

33. He wondered whether Israel, which claimed to seek peace and to be the only democracy in the region, had read the First Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions or had heard the appeals from international humanitarian organizations to refrain from targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure. Although Israel claimed to have issued warnings to civilians who were crushed beneath the rubble of their homes, even those who left their homes continued to be targeted.

34. The Israeli Government must be reminded of its responsibility under international law and of the personal criminal responsibility of commanders and perpetrators of war crimes and crimes against humanity. The international community also bore responsibility under common article 1 of the Geneva Conventions to ensure respect for the provisions of international humanitarian law. He reminded the States members of the European Union of their duty to apply the human rights provisions of the Union's Association Agreement with Israel.

35. If the Human Rights Council failed to fulfil its mandate to safeguard human rights in Lebanon, its credibility would be seriously undermined.

36. Ms. HELLE AJAMAY (Observer for Norway) said that Norway was seriously concerned at the escalating conflict and deteriorating humanitarian situation in Lebanon. Urgent measures were needed to stabilize the situation, avert a humanitarian disaster and halt the unacceptable loss of civilian lives. Norway strongly deplored the repeated attacks on civilians, especially on children.

37. Indiscriminate attacks on civilians, excessive use of force and the locating of military objectives within or near densely populated areas were serious violations of the Geneva Conventions. Norway urged Hezbollah and Israel to respect international humanitarian and human rights law. It condemned Hezbollah's attacks on Israel and its population and was deeply concerned at the broadening of Israeli attacks on Lebanon. Negotiations, and not armed conflict, were the key to peace in the Middle East.

38. Norway supported the call for an investigation provided that it covered the actions of all concerned. The Security Council should adopt a resolution as a matter of urgency calling for a full cessation of hostilities and should seek to lay the foundation for a long-term solution.

39. The parties to the conflict had a clear obligation under international humanitarian law to ensure unhindered access for humanitarian relief organizations. Norway was appropriating US\$ 25 million for humanitarian assistance and was prepared to assist in the long-term reconstruction of Lebanon in close cooperation with the United Nations.

40. Norway was also deeply concerned at the suffering being inflicted on civilians as a result of the continuing violence in Gaza and the West Bank.

41. Ms. FORERO UCROS (Observer for Colombia) expressed deep concern at the civilian suffering and loss of life in Lebanon caused by the bombardment, the destruction of civilian infrastructure and the large number of displaced persons. Colombia also condemned acts of terrorism and kidnapping.

42. She extended condolences to the United Nations on the loss of four observers during the conflict and called for respect for United Nations staff and installations.

43. Colombia, which had a large Lebanese community, also extended its sympathy to the families of the victims of the conflict in Lebanon and to the Lebanese people. The Government had decided to dispatch humanitarian aid in the form of medicines and surgical equipment.

44. She called for an end to the violence and the immediate resumption of political dialogue with a view to achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace.

45. Mr. APITONIAN (Observer for Armenia) said that Armenia deplored the loss of civilian lives on all sides in the current conflict and was seriously concerned at the heavy civilian toll caused by the escalating Israeli military operations in Lebanon. It denounced the disproportionate use of force, which constituted a form of collective punishment and destroyed vital civilian infrastructure, and the targeting of residential areas, which resulted in a high civilian casualty rate, particularly among children. Almost one third of the Lebanese population had been displaced, and a humanitarian disaster was looming. Armenia had sent medical supplies to the Lebanese Government and would closely follow the humanitarian situation with a view to alleviating the suffering of the population.

46. Armenia called for the immediate and unconditional cessation of hostilities and the opening of humanitarian corridors in order to ensure the safe distribution of relief. It also called for the early adoption by the Security Council of a resolution acceptable to all parties to the conflict.

47. Ms. GRANGE (Human Rights Watch) said that the Council's pronouncements would lack credibility if they failed to address the well-documented violations of international humanitarian law by both parties to the current conflict, Israel and Hezbollah. Israel's aerial bombardment and artillery shelling had killed over 700 Lebanese civilians, and Hezbollah's rockets had killed 39 Israeli civilians. According to her organization's research, Israel had violated the laws of war by consistently launching attacks with limited or dubious military gain but excessive civilian cost and by repeatedly striking civilian structures or vehicles. Human Rights Watch also had evidence that Hezbollah had stored weapons in or near civilian homes and placed rocket launchers within populated areas or close to United Nations observers, which also constituted serious violations of international humanitarian law.

48. Israel had ordered civilians to evacuate southern Lebanon and had warned that it would target any vehicle south of the Litani river. Under international law, however, only civilians directly participating in hostilities lost their immunity from attack. Most of the 2,500 rockets fired by Hezbollah into northern Israel had been directed deliberately and indiscriminately at civilian areas. International humanitarian law required attackers to distinguish at all times between combatants and civilians.

49. She called on the Security Council to demand that both sides to the conflict abide scrupulously by the laws of war and requested the Secretary-General to establish an international commission of inquiry to investigate violations of international human rights and humanitarian law by all parties to the conflict. All parties should ensure safe passage for humanitarian relief and for evacuations, protect civilians from arbitrary displacement, ensure the safety of displaced

persons and establish conditions that enabled them to return safely to their homes. Furthermore, all parties should cooperate with the four special rapporteurs who had announced plans to travel to Lebanon and Israel.

50. Mr. SPLINTER (Amnesty International) said that the members of the Council should apply the principles of impartiality, objectivity, constructive dialogue and cooperation in addressing the crisis in Lebanon. They should resist the temptations of political advantage and help to end the current violations of human rights and humanitarian law being committed by both Israel and Hezbollah.

51. The Israeli forces had killed over 800 civilians and injured thousands. A quarter of the Lebanese population had fled their homes and thousands remained trapped in their villages with limited access to basic necessities. Daily bombardments hampered the distribution of humanitarian assistance. His organization's on-site investigations revealed that Israeli forces had routinely violated both the principle of distinction between civilians and military targets and the principle of proportionality. Such violations constituted war crimes.

52. Hezbollah appeared to have deliberately targeted many of its rocket attacks at residential areas in northern Israel. At least 39 civilians had been killed and several hundred injured. Tens of thousands of residents had fled. Direct attacks on civilians or indiscriminate attacks constituted war crimes.

53. He called on the Council to condemn the abuse of international human rights and humanitarian law by all parties, demand that the parties should respect their obligations under international law and encourage States Members of the United Nations to take steps to ensure that the parties fulfilled their obligations. The Council should further request the Secretary-General to provide for an investigation of all credible reports of violations of international human rights and humanitarian law by all parties, propose effective measures to bring the perpetrators to justice and help to provide a remedy and reparations for the victims.

54. Mr. HERMAN (World Jewish Congress) drew attention to the one-sided nature of the agenda of the current session of the Council and pointed out that the convening of a special session of a subsidiary body of the General Assembly while the Security Council remained seized of the matter under discussion was a violation of Article 12 of the Charter of the United Nations.

55. He had travelled from London the previous day amid a security alert triggered by an attempted mass terrorist attack against international flights. The entrenched terrorist army in southern Lebanon, Hezbollah, was one of the terrorist movements funded and directed by State sponsors of terrorism, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Syrian Arab Republic. Those two countries should be held accountable for the targeting of civilians in Israel and the use of human shields in Lebanon. By calling for Israel's annihilation, the Islamic Republic of Iran violated the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

56. By focusing on just one State Member of the United Nations, the Council awarded impunity to dozens of repressive regimes and granted legitimacy to States that used terrorism and abused religion to undermine free societies. Judaism, like Islam, was based on the sanctity

of human life and human dignity, principles that also applied to the million Israelis living in bomb shelters to escape from the thousands of Hezbollah rockets designed to maximize civilian casualties.

57. The World Jewish Congress would continue to advocate meaningful efforts to promote and protect the human rights of all. The Council, however, was focusing on Israel as if it was the primary violator of human rights in the world, while ignoring the bulk of alleged ongoing human rights emergencies elsewhere.

58. Mr. HOWEN (International Commission of Jurists) said that protecting the lives of civilians in Lebanon and Israel could not be delayed until the outcome of international negotiations in New York. The International Commission of Jurists supported the convening of the special session of the Human Rights Council, which could address violations not only of human rights law but also of international humanitarian law.

59. The launching of rockets by Hezbollah into civilian areas in northern Israel and the holding of Israeli soldiers as hostages could not justify, under international law, Israel's disproportionate response. Similarly, that response could not justify Hezbollah's targeting of civilians in Israel or its holding soldiers as hostages.

60. The credibility of the Council would be seriously undermined if it failed to address the violations of international law by both sides. Its aim was not to be politically balanced but to assess a situation impartially, identify violations and take action with a view to preventing and halting them.

61. His organization had called on the Secretary-General to establish a commission of inquiry to investigate violations of international human rights and humanitarian law by all parties to the current conflict. The International Commission of Jurists had decided to establish an expert legal inquiry. Five renowned international humanitarian law jurists and former senior military officers with operational experience would travel to the region to investigate the air war carried out by Israel and the Hezbollah rocket attacks. They would undertake a considered legal analysis to establish what violations had occurred and who was accountable. If a credible high-level impartial United Nations inquiry was established, his organization would make available the results of its fact-finding and legal analysis to that body.

62. Mr. THERY (International Federation of Human Rights) said that the international community could not stand idly by as almost 1 million Lebanese were displaced from their homes, and over a thousand civilians had been killed and more than 3,500 injured. The Israeli army was intensifying its attacks on the whole of Lebanon, destroying infrastructure and leaving the country increasingly isolated.

63. The parties to the conflict should abide fully by the Geneva Conventions. The International Federation of Human Rights strongly condemned Israel's military bombardment of towns and villages, as well as Hezbollah's rocket attacks against Israeli civilians. The killing of civilians was a grave violation of article 3 of the Fourth Geneva Convention and constituted a war crime under customary international law. The bombardment had led to the destruction of

Lebanese civilian infrastructure, including food production enterprises, electric power stations, hospitals and fuel storage plants, and threatened to create a humanitarian crisis. Such collective punishment violated article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

64. He urged the Council to adopt a resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire and the immediate withdrawal of Israeli forces from Lebanese territory; setting up an independent international commission of inquiry to investigate violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in Lebanon and Israel; condemning grave violations of international humanitarian and human rights law; calling for the prosecution of the perpetrators of such violations, the compensation of victims and the reparation of civilian infrastructure; and urging the Israeli and Lebanese authorities to respond favourably to the request for a visit submitted by four United Nations human rights mandate holders.

65. Mr. NETTER (B'nai B'rith International) said that B'nai B'rith International supported negotiations in the Security Council and elsewhere to end hostilities, return abducted persons and disarm Hezbollah as required by Security Council resolution 1559 (2004). However, the current session of the Human Rights Council damaged United Nations reform and the human rights system as a whole without contributing to a viable settlement of the conflict.

66. The draft resolution before the Council failed to recognize the right of a sovereign country to self-defence. Israel was responding to a terrorist group dedicated to destroying its people. While Israel sought to destroy military targets, Hezbollah targeted civilians with thousands of rockets, some containing ball bearings and other lethal materials. Although the Security Council had recognized in 2000 that Israel had fully withdrawn from Lebanon, Hezbollah continued to commit border provocations. The blatantly one-sided draft resolution ignored the breaches by Hezbollah, the fact that it was represented in the Lebanese Government, and the Lebanese Government's obligations under Security Council resolution 1559 (2004). Members should reject the draft resolution in order to avoid bringing discredit on the Council.

67. Mr. SCHECHLA (Habitat International Coalition) said that Israel's current invasion of Lebanon was a continuation of Israeli policies that combined the destruction of habitat with dispossession and population transfer. Israel claimed that its war of aggression had been triggered by the kidnapping of an Israeli soldier by Hezbollah; however, Israel itself had been holding Lebanese hostages for over a decade.

68. Impunity for international criminal acts by States would always engender resistance and further conflict. The Security Council was losing credibility, largely owing to the sadistic dalliance of one permanent member. What was needed was a United Nations human rights policy that addressed the causes of violations and not just their symptoms. The Human Rights Council should call for effective preventive and remedial measures, in particular an immediate ceasefire by all sides in Lebanon and Gaza; the full and immediate withdrawal of belligerent forces from all foreign waters and territory, including the Shebaa Farms; the creation of a demilitarized zone in northern Israel and southern Lebanon; an increase in the United Nations observer presence in the demilitarized zone; an assessment of material and moral damage; the return of Lebanese civilians to their homes, with full reparations; exercise of Palestinian refugees' right of return to their homes in the Israeli part of the demilitarized zone; an exchange of hostages/prisoners; an investigation of killings and disappearances during Israel's occupation of Lebanon; and the establishment of a war crimes investigation and tribunal.

69. Mr. HASSAN (International Association of Democratic Lawyers) said that a month had passed since the start of Israel's massive aerial bombardment of Lebanon without any action on the part of the Security Council, which was held hostage by the veto power of one State. As a result, hundreds of Lebanese civilians had died unnecessarily and the country's infrastructure had been destroyed. The newly reformed and depoliticized Human Rights Council therefore bore a heavy responsibility to uphold international human rights law in the face of the latest Israeli aggression against Lebanon and its people.

70. While the international media had made much of the responsibility of third-party States that allegedly financed and armed Hezbollah in its resistance to Israeli occupation, they neglected to mention the responsibility of third-party States that financed and armed the Israeli military, which continued to violate Security Council resolutions by occupying Arab land and preventing Palestinian refugees from returning to their homes in Israel. Those who actively facilitated illegal occupation were accomplices to the war crimes committed in the name of that occupation.

71. He urged the Council to call for an immediate ceasefire between the parties and to examine the legality of the provision of money and arms by third-party States to Israel in furtherance of its military campaign, which overwhelmingly targeted civilians and civilian infrastructure in Lebanon. Without the complicity of third-party States and the threat of the use of veto powers, the current atrocities could not be committed in Lebanon.

72. Ms. AULA (Franciscans International) said that the current conflict in Lebanon and northern Israel, with its numerous breaches of international human rights and humanitarian law, was particularly worrisome from the point of view of the future of the region. Her organization's representatives in Lebanon had reported that the Israeli army's aerial bombardment and land incursions had caused death and destruction, damaging homes and depriving people of electricity, water, food and medicines. It was also unfortunate that four United Nations human rights mandate holders, on internally displaced persons, extrajudicial killings, the right to health and the right to adequate housing, had been forced to postpone their joint mission. She hoped that the mission would be undertaken in due course and that Israel would also allow them to visit its territory and would cooperate with them.

73. The 500,000 migrant workers in Lebanon, of whom 140,000 were migrant domestic workers, were particularly vulnerable. Her own organization and others had opened centres to welcome migrants and displaced persons from southern Lebanon.

74. While Franciscans International recognized Israel's right to exist in security and to defend itself when necessary, and while it condemned terrorist attacks by extreme elements of Hamas and Hezbollah, it strongly deplored Israel's disproportionate military response, particularly its attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure, and called for an immediate cessation of hostilities and the release of detainees and kidnapped persons. Her organization supported the establishment of an international fact-finding mission and urged relevant regional and international actors to promote dialogue with a view to building a lasting peace in the region based on full respect for international human rights and humanitarian law.

75. Mr. RAJKUMAR (Pax Romana) said that five days previously the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights had adopted a Chairperson's statement expressing outrage at human rights violations in Lebanon, extending condolences to the victims of the war and their families and expressing the hope that the Security Council would act swiftly to bring about a settlement of the conflict in conformity with principles of justice and international law.

76. Lebanon and its civilian population were being subjected to a war of attrition with limited access to humanitarian assistance. The civilian population of northern Israel was also suffering. The indiscriminate and disproportionate use of force by the parties to the conflict was unacceptable. More rapid action and preventive diplomacy by the United Nations could have avoided untold suffering and casualties and breaches of international human rights and humanitarian law. He wondered how much longer efforts to bring an end to the war would be delayed.

77. His organization welcomed the decision in the draft resolution before the Council to dispatch a high-level commission of inquiry to Lebanon. Military action did not solve long-standing conflicts. Member States had a responsibility to end the barbarous killing of civilians and to attend rapidly to those who were in desperate need of humanitarian assistance. The Council must uphold the tenets of international human rights law and urge the Security Council to exercise its primary responsibility for the maintenance of peace and security.

78. Mr. SOTTAS (World Organization Against Torture) said that the Council had a duty to play a role that would lead to the achievement of concrete results and to avoid the rhetoric and unbalanced resolutions without follow-up that had discredited the Commission on Human Rights.

79. Violations of human rights and humanitarian law, particularly Principle 5 of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and common article 3 of the Geneva Conventions, had been committed during the current conflict. Grave violations perpetrated by both parties included Hezbollah's indiscriminate launching of rockets at densely populated civilian areas in Israel and Israel's bombardment of Lebanese towns and villages, which had claimed the lives of almost 1,000 civilians, as well as of United Nations observers. Both parties had also resorted to hostage-taking in violation of the Geneva Conventions. Hezbollah's capture of two Israeli soldiers had violated humanitarian law because of the goal of using the soldiers, who were no longer participating in the conflict, as bargaining chips. The bombardment of bridges, Beirut airport, power plants, hospitals and fuel reservoirs by Israel seemed disproportionate to the desired outcome. Moreover, the Israeli army had knowingly prevented humanitarian assistance operations and had bombed transportation routes in certain areas.

80. His organization called for the immediate cessation of all military operations and the establishment of a mission under the auspices of the United Nations to establish the facts, draw up a list of violations of human rights and humanitarian law, identify the perpetrators and initiate legal action against them, and identify the victims and the damages incurred and ensure full reparation.

81. Mr. LITTMAN (World Union for Progressive Judaism) said that the close links between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Hezbollah and its leaders were well documented. His organization called on the Council to condemn the terrorist Islamic organization for its repeated calls for the genocide of all Jews, which constituted direct and public incitement to commit genocide in breach of article III of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

82. Hezbollah had initiated a border war with Israel and was firing up to 200 missiles indiscriminately at civilian targets each day. It must take full responsibility with its mentors, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Syrian Arab Republic, for the inevitable destruction of Lebanon. The time for words and warnings was past. It was now time for urgent action against the monstrous evil of terrorism.

83. Mr. PARY (Indian Movement “Tupaj Amaru”) said that the terrorist State of Israel, armed to the teeth by successive United States Administrations, was again waging a war of aggression against the sovereign State of Lebanon on the pretext of rescuing two of its soldiers captured by Hezbollah. Over a thousand people, of whom some 30 per cent were under the age of 12, had been killed by the Israeli bombardment and a third of the Lebanese population had been displaced. Barbaric acts of State terrorism, such as the massacre committed in Qana, formed part of the United States military strategy aimed at gaining control over the Arab world’s strategic resources.

84. The Zionist aggressor had also bombed electric power plants, oil storage facilities, food production plants, broadcasting towers, bridges, roads and Beirut international airport. With the military backing of the United States Government, Israel had acquired weapons of mass destruction.

85. The United States, with the complicity of the European Union, had blocked negotiations in the Security Council and was opposed to an immediate ceasefire and withdrawal of the Israeli forces from Lebanon until Hezbollah was liquidated. The international community should not allow an economic and military Power, on the pretext of fighting against terrorism, to continue arming and supporting a State that was occupying Arab territory.

86. He urged the Council to establish an independent commission to investigate the war crimes and acts of genocide committed by the Israeli armed forces against the peoples of Palestine and Lebanon.

87. Mr. NEUER (UN Watch) said that his organization regretted that the United Nations, instead of finding ways to fight worldwide terrorism, continued to attack the same familiar country. Article 12 of the Charter of the United Nations required the Council to refrain from intervening in a dispute before the Security Council. His organization had urged the Secretary-General to act on that provision before any resolution was adopted by the Human Rights Council, and it welcomed the recent statement by a spokesperson of the Secretary-General that legal advisers were looking into the matter.

88. By ignoring the sufferings of Israel, where dozens had been killed, thousands injured and more than 1 million persons displaced, the draft resolution was manifestly one-sided and violated the Charter of the United Nations and General Assembly resolution 60/251 establishing the Human Rights Council.

89. At a time when the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran had renewed his call the previous week for the destruction of Israel, a call echoed by Hassan Nasrallah, the Hezbollah leader, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination had revived the racist libel against Israel. Two members of the Committee had protested to no avail. A few days later, the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, which was prohibited from addressing country-specific human rights violations, had adopted a one-sided Chairperson's statement that made no mention of Hezbollah missile attacks on Israeli victims. The representative of the United Kingdom had warned against breaking the rules, but to no avail.

90. The Council was willing to run afoul of United Nations rules and give succour and support to Hezbollah, a terrorist organization, and its agents, the Syrian Arab Republic and the Islamic Republic of Iran, which were the enemies of peace. In June 2006, the Secretary-General had pleaded with the Council to refrain from disproportionately attacking Israel. Instead, it was another sad day for the Council and for victims of human rights violations worldwide.

Statements in exercise of the right of reply

91. Mr. SOUFAN (Observer for Lebanon), replying to the statement made by the observer for Israel at the previous meeting, mentioned as evidence of Israeli hypocrisy the fact that military aircraft had dropped leaflets on Lebanon calling on civilians to flee their homes; however, before the leaflets had been dropped, the roads and bridges leading to safety had been destroyed. Israel's murderous attacks on the civilian population for political aims were the epitome of terrorism. Its repeated massacres and its destruction of Lebanon constituted gross violations of international humanitarian law and war crimes. Lebanon would not allow its territory to be used to settle scores with the countries mentioned by the representative of Israel.

92. If its consequences were not so tragic, Israel's angelic pose while it continued to commit atrocities and use prohibited weapons against civilians would be comical.

93. Mr. OBEID (Observer for the Syrian Arab Republic) said that the representatives of the World Jewish Congress and UN Watch had displayed contempt for the Council and the Office of the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights by claiming that the conveners of the current session of the Council had violated Article 12 of the Charter of the United Nations. The Security Council was dealing with questions of international peace and security, while the Human Rights Council was considering Israel's violations of human rights.

94. He urged the speakers to take a closer look at the Charter, since they would find that Israel's occupation of Arab land by force and its acts of aggression were a flagrant violation of the Charter's provisions. Moreover, Israel was in breach of a whole series of Security Council resolutions that called on it to withdraw from the occupied Arab territories.

The meeting rose at 2.50 p.m.