



# General Assembly

Distr.: General  
12 July 2010  
English  
Original: French

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## Human Rights Council

### Ninth special session

#### Summary record of the 1st meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Friday, 9 January 2009, at 11 a.m.

*President:* Mr. Uhomoibhi ..... (Nigeria)

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*The meeting was called to order at 11.05 a.m.*

**Opening of the session**

1. **The President** declared open the ninth special session of the Human Rights Council convened following the request made by 32 States members of the Council to hold a special session on the grave violations of human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory including the recent aggression in the occupied Gaza Strip. He reminded everyone of the need to be dispassionate, responsible and professional in their statements, considering the dire situation prevailing in the region. The thousands of innocent civilians, particularly the children, women and older persons who were caught up in the unacceptable conflict, needed all the help they could get to assuage their suffering. In fulfilment of its mandate, the Human Rights Council could and must make a contribution to an immediate ceasefire, the cessation of hostilities and the establishment of lasting peace and help to protect and promote the fundamental rights of all the peoples living in the region.

**Introductory statement by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights**

2. **Ms. Pillay** (United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights) said that she welcomed the special session of the Council on the situation in the Gaza Strip. The recent reports of attacks across the border between Israel and Lebanon compounded the alarm regarding an escalation of violence in the region. The ceasefire called for by the Security Council must be implemented immediately, and violence must stop.

3. She wished to stress that the three cardinal principles of international humanitarian law, namely proportionality, distinction, and precaution, fully applied in the context of the present conflict, as they did in any other war situation, and that international human rights law applied in all circumstances and at all times. While indiscriminate rocket attacks on civilian targets in Israel were unlawful, Israel's responsibility to fulfil its international obligations had nothing whatever to do with Hamas's compliance with its own obligations. States' obligations, particularly those related to the protection of civilian life and civilian objects, were not subject to reciprocity. Harm to civilians caused by rockets fired into Israel was unacceptable, and Israeli forces must cease their retaliatory air strikes. In the same way, action on the part of Israel's opponents that deliberately put civilians at risk in the Gaza Strip, including the use of people as human shields, was prohibited under international law.

4. She joined the Secretary-General in deploring Israel's totally unacceptable strikes against clearly marked United Nations facilities, where civilians had been taking shelter. United Nations relief operations in the Gaza Strip had had to be suspended the previous day when humanitarian workers had been killed. The ceasefire called for by the Security Council must be given effect in order to allow the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the civilian population in the Gaza Strip, where food and medicines were running short, and the parties to the conflict must fulfil their obligations to rescue, care for and evacuate the wounded and to protect and respect health workers, hospitals, medical units and ambulances. The absence of basic services and civilian infrastructure was putting a growing proportion of the population in jeopardy. Such a situation constituted an egregious violation of basic human rights, including economic rights, which a three-hour suspension of hostilities allowed by Israel could not remedy.

5. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) had accused Israel of failing to meet its obligations to help wounded civilians in Gaza City and of preventing ICRC and the Palestinian Red Crescent from providing assistance to the wounded. Furthermore, the World Health Organization had reported that several medical workers had been killed. Violations of international humanitarian law might constitute war crimes for which individual criminal responsibility might be invoked. Accountability must be ensured for

violations of international law. Credible, independent, and transparent investigations must be carried out to identify violations and establish responsibilities. Equally crucial was upholding the right of victims to reparation. It was therefore necessary to deploy human rights monitors in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory and to ensure that special procedures mandate holders were granted unrestricted access to Gaza and the West Bank. Likewise, the press and non-governmental organizations should be allowed access into the affected areas. In that respect, she welcomed the recent decision by the Supreme Court of Israel to allow certain foreign journalists to enter the Gaza Strip.

6. Human rights must be upheld under all circumstances. Trusting that the ninth special session of the Council would provide the basis for opening a much-needed discussion among all parties concerned, who must hold human rights at the centre of any discussion, she offered to facilitate such discussion which, due to its importance, urgency and necessity, should be placed above politically charged, partisan considerations.

**Request of the Permanent Representative of Egypt as President of the Arab Group and Coordinator of the African Group, the Permanent Representative of Pakistan as Coordinator of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Permanent Representative of Cuba as President of the Non-Aligned Movement to convene a special session of the Council to consider “the grave violations of human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory including the recent aggression of the occupied Gaza Strip” (A/HRC/S-9/1, A/HRC/S-9/G/1, A/HRC/S-9/NGO/1-10)**

7. **Ms. Rossbacher** (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights), speaking on behalf of Mr. Falk, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, said that, in accordance with the mandate received from the Council, the Special Rapporteur’s comments would be confined to issues associated with Israel’s obligations as the occupying Power to respect international humanitarian law. Denied entry to Israel on 14 December 2008, the Special Rapporteur had been detained for some 15 hours in a holding cell at Ben Gurion Airport and then expelled. He had therefore been unable to observe first-hand the humanitarian situation in Gaza that had existed before the Israeli military operations. It was to be hoped that the Government of Israel could be persuaded to reconsider its policy towards him.

8. The use of force by an occupying Power against the security threats emanating from a population under occupation was permissible within the constraints set by international law. Israel claimed that its military campaign was reasonable and necessary given the scale and severity of the rocket attacks, attributed to Hamas, directed at the Israeli civilian populations of Sderot and Ashdod. It should be pointed out unambiguously that there was no justification for firing rockets at civilian targets. Such behaviour was a violation of international human rights law and of the right to life and constituted a war crime. At the same time, the offence must be put in the context in which it occurred, including the ceasefire that had been disrupted by the lethal Israeli attack on Palestinian militants in Gaza on 4 November 2008, leading to increased frequency of rocket attacks from Gaza. Furthermore, Hamas had repeatedly offered to extend the ceasefire, even up to 10 years, provided that Israel lifted its blockade – a diplomatic channel, as far as could be assessed, not explored by Israel. The blockade in effect for 18 months had been unlawful and had constituted a form of collective punishment, contrary to articles 33 and 55 of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

9. The question of proportionality was raised by the major campaign mounted by the Israeli military, with its reliance on modern weaponry in situations where Israel’s military dominance had been largely uncontested, against an essentially defenceless society already gravely weakened by the blockade. There had been allegations by qualified observers of Israeli reliance on legally unacceptable targets (including schools, places of worship,

hospitals and ambulances) and legally dubious weaponry that violated the prohibition of weapons and tactics that were cruel or caused unnecessary suffering (phosphorous gas in shells and missiles, dense inert metal explosives and depleted uranium associated with so-called bunker-buster bombs), causing severe burns, maiming, cancer and radiation sickness.

10. The Special Rapporteur recommended that the Council should request that access to the occupied Palestinian territories be restored to the Special Rapporteur so that he could exercise his essential monitoring role for the United Nations; request the General Assembly to take initiatives to investigate allegations of war crimes; propose a long-term truce based on the cessation of rocket launchings from Gaza and the unconditional lifting of the blockade; and request an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice to assess the legal status of Israeli control in Gaza after its disengagement in 2005.

11. **Mr. Leshno-Yaar** (Observer for Israel) said that he was also speaking on behalf of the 1 million Israeli citizens living within range of daily Hamas missile attacks. In August 2005 Israel had left Gaza, which had been a courageous step towards peace. Hamas, for its part, had chosen violence. Operation Cast Lead was therefore a necessary measure, in line with Israel's right of self-defence and its responsibility to protect its civilians from the scourge of terror.

12. Masquerading as a legitimate Government, Hamas used the Palestinian population as human shields, considering civilians as nothing more than a sophisticated and efficient method of warfare and defence. Hamas was supported by the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Syrian Arab Republic and Hizbullah, which supplied it with a vast arsenal of weaponry. It was therefore hard to dispute that the war was not only Israel's war and that Hamas posed a threat to any moderate society in the region and beyond.

13. The Government of Israel had repeatedly stated that Hamas, not the Palestinian population in Gaza, had been targeted. Israeli forces warned Palestinian civilians prior to launching operations. The Israeli military was running a humanitarian coordination centre in close cooperation with international humanitarian organizations and had facilitated the entry into Gaza of more than 540 trucks, delivering more than 10,000 tons of humanitarian supplies. Palestinian patients, some injured by Hamas, received treatment in Israeli hospitals, and a daily suspension of military operations had been established to allow Palestinians to acquire basic supplies.

14. The draft resolution would further erode the barely remaining objectivity and credibility of the Human Rights Council. Notwithstanding the inflammatory statements that would likely be heard condemning Israel's actions, negotiations had always been and would always be Israel's preferred path. He hoped that in the aftermath of the unavoidable military operation in Gaza a new and peaceful reality would prevail and bring a better future for both peoples.

15. **Mr. Khraishi** (Observer for Palestine), reviewing the toll that Israel's latest military campaign against the Gaza Strip had taken, said that the Israeli war machine, relentlessly on the move for the previous 14 days, had ruthlessly killed civilians, women and children, who did not belong to either Fatah or Hamas, and had wounded 3,000 persons, decimating entire families. Ambulances, humanitarian workers, schools, universities, mosques, residences and animals had been targeted. Even a school bearing the United Nations emblem had been shelled, causing the death of 42 persons – men, women and children who had not been Hamas combatants. A journalist had been killed together with his wife and children. The West Bank had not been spared, with 2 persons recently killed and more than 200 wounded.

16. He asked the Council, with the principal human rights official of the United Nations in attendance, whether all that was not enough to awaken the world's conscience. Referring to the Fourth Geneva Convention and the Charter of the United Nations, he wondered whether Israel was above the law and if its operations could ever contribute to

strengthening peace and security in the world. Despite all the suffering, bloodshed and obstruction endured by Palestinians, they were determined, for their part, to continue to abide by international law.

17. He commended Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) and the Arab initiative led by President Mubarak. It was very important to end Israeli aggression and the rocket attacks, which had killed four Israelis. It was also necessary to put an immediate end to the blockade of Gaza, which was depriving the people of electricity, water, medicine and food, and to provide protection to the civilian population. As occupation was the worst form of human rights violation, the Israeli occupation must cease and the Palestinian people must be able to exercise its right to self-determination and right of return and to create an independent Palestinian State with Al-Quds as its capital.

18. He urged the High Commissioner for Human Rights to make every effort to uphold human rights in Palestine, including the right to life, and to compel Israel to abide by international humanitarian law. He hoped that the Council would adopt the draft resolution before it by consensus, for the safety of the Palestinian people, who had shown its determination and considerable resilience.

19. **Mr. Badr** (Egypt), speaking on behalf of the Group of Arab States, said that if Israel had abided by Security Council resolutions and taken up the peace initiatives to establish an independent Palestinian State, the Human Rights Council would not have had to hold four special sessions on Palestine. Israel clearly considered itself above the law and was carrying out a policy of annexation and occupation of Arab lands, without any regard for the international community and in blatant violation of the basic rights of Arab peoples, including the right to self-determination. The occupying Power of Palestinian territories for more than 40 years, Israel did not distinguish between civilians and combatants. The Group questioned the moral conscience of the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention who had been allowing Israel to attack innocent people for more than 13 days and wondered how much more blood must be spilled before the international community acted. Unless the Council wished to have its credibility called into question by its inaction, it must adopt the draft resolution under consideration by consensus. The Group called for an immediate ceasefire, safe border crossings and an international fact-finding mission on the situation in Gaza, including the bombing of a school under the auspices of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

20. **Mr. Akram** (Pakistan), speaking on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), said that the Council had celebrated the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights less than a month before, yet it was currently witnessing the massacre of a defenceless people in Gaza. The people of Palestine had been under foreign occupation for many decades and were deprived of their basic rights, including the right to self-determination. In the past 13 days, more than 700 people had died, more than 200 of them children. According to a Vatican official, Gaza resembled a big concentration camp. Its people were incarcerated, deprived of the most basic human necessities and relentlessly pounded with high explosives from the air, sea and land.

21. OIC was opposed to all violations of human rights and called on all parties to respect human lives, especially the lives of innocent civilians, women and children. Between 2005 and 2007, 11 Israelis had been killed by rocket attacks, while the Israeli armed forces had killed 1,290 Palestinians in Gaza, in defiance of the internationally accepted principle of proportionality.

22. The unrestrained use of force, the scale of destruction, the killing of innocent civilians, the violation of United Nations safe havens and the collective punishment of an entire people constituted war crimes and crimes against humanity.

23. The Human Rights Council added its voice to the Security Council to end the hostilities. The Security Council's call for a ceasefire should be immediately implemented. The international community must pledge to end the Israeli aggression against the Gaza Strip, to protect the Palestinian people, to secure a ceasefire and to compel Israel, the occupying Power, to lift its blockade, open the crossings and ensure unhindered supplies of international humanitarian aid.

24. The root cause of the violence and instability in the region was Israel's occupation. Israel should not undermine a peaceful settlement of the Palestinian issue based on Security Council resolutions, the Quartet road map and the targets outlined at the Annapolis conference. In dealing with the tragic situation in Gaza, Council members must rise above political and ideological considerations and adopt the draft resolution under consideration by consensus.

25. **Mr. Fernández Palacios** (Cuba), speaking on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, said that while the whole world had been celebrating the end of 2008, hundreds of Palestinians had been dying under Israeli military fire. Massacring an entire people was a criminal act that must be repudiated. Given Gaza's high population density, no weapon could distinguish between combatants and civilians. Israeli forces targeted not only military objectives but also mosques, United Nations schools and hospitals. A veritable humanitarian disaster had been occurring since 27 December 2008, in addition to the effects of the two-year blockade that had been imposed and the consequences of Israel's brutal colonial occupation of almost 40 years.

26. The Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement in New York had adopted two declarations, on 29 December 2008 and 5 January 2009, respectively, strongly condemning the Israeli military aggression. In particular, the Non-Aligned Movement condemned the escalation of the Israeli military aggression, in flagrant defiance of the calls by the international community for a cessation of military activities and of the regional and international diplomatic efforts to resolve the crisis. Israeli military aggression was unacceptable and constituted a grave breach of international law, including humanitarian and human rights law. It fuelled the cycle of violence and threatened international peace and security. The Movement called for a cessation of military activities and for the implementation of an immediate ceasefire. On 6 January 2009, the Movement, OIC, the Group of Arab States and the Group of African States had made an official request for a special session of the Council to discuss the tragic events endured by the Palestinian people. Convinced that the response of the Council to the humanitarian crisis must be strong and determined, the Movement hoped that the draft resolution under consideration would be adopted by consensus. There was no military solution to the conflict. The time had come to build peace in the Middle East and to allow the Palestinian people to live in a free, independent and sovereign State, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

27. **Mr. Badr** (Egypt), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, said that the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories since 1967 and its denial of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination remained the root causes of the problems in the Middle East. The Group reaffirmed its solidarity with the Palestinian people and its support for the independence of Palestine. It strongly condemned the Israeli military operations in Gaza, which had claimed the lives of more than 700 civilians and left more than 3,000 persons wounded, not to mention the bombing of schools protected by the United Nations and the rampant destruction of property and infrastructure. The operations constituted a flagrant violation of human rights and international humanitarian law, in particular the Geneva Conventions. The right of self-defence could not justify such a violation.

28. The Group welcomed President Mubarak's initiative to stop the violence and bloodshed in Gaza. It called for an immediate ceasefire and urged Israel to lift its blockade of Gaza. It called on both parties to the conflict, particularly Israel, to respect their

obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law and to refrain from targeting civilians. A three-hour truce was not enough to address the dire humanitarian situation. Israel must permit humanitarian corridors to be established so that the civilian population could receive humanitarian assistance.

29. The Group requested the Human Rights Council mechanisms to examine the situation in Gaza, to provide the Council with periodic reports documenting human rights violations and to put forward recommendations on the means of protecting Palestinians and ensuring respect for their basic rights. The High Commissioner for Human Rights must remind Israel to abide by its obligations under international law. The Council must respond without delay to the cries for help of innocent civilians and mobilize the efforts of the international community to be a catalyst for justice and freedom. The Council's credibility would depend on its capacity to respond rapidly to the humanitarian emergency and to improve the human rights situation on the ground. Impunity would not be tolerated, whatever the identity of the offenders. The Council must show its determination to bring peace and justice to the region and to uphold the Charter of the United Nation and the highest standards of human rights.

30. **Mr. Husák** (Observer for the Czech Republic), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the Union was deeply concerned at the human rights and humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip, where the suffering and anguish of the civilian population had escalated dramatically over the previous days. The European Union was concerned at the current fighting and deeply deplored the significant civilian casualties caused by the Israeli military incursion and by the firing of rockets by Palestinian militant groups. The Union was profoundly disturbed by the loss of civilian life at schools in Gaza, including the United Nations school in Jabaliya, and by the tragic death of two United Nations staff members that had resulted from Israeli military action. It wished to express its sincere condolences to the families of the victims.

31. The Union welcomed the adoption of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), which should contribute to a durable ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and southern Israel. It called on all parties to respect fully the provisions set out in the resolution and provide humanitarian assistance to the civilian population in the Gaza Strip. The Union called for an immediate and permanent ceasefire. It also called on all parties to respect fully international humanitarian law. Militant Palestinian groups must cease their rocket attacks on Israel immediately, and Israel must put an end to its military action. The cessation of the fighting should allow for the lasting opening of all border crossings, as provided for in the 2005 Agreement on Movement and Access. The basic human rights and humanitarian needs of the Palestinians must be taken into account. The European Union would make every effort to stop the violence and welcomed the initiative of President Mubarak and President Sarkozy.

32. The Union was deeply concerned at the seriousness and deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Gaza. Immediate humanitarian action was required. The Union had dispatched an urgent field mission to provide immediate relief, in cooperation with the United Nations and non-governmental organizations. The European Commission was coordinating humanitarian aid provided by European Union member States and international donors. The restrictions on movement in Gaza and at border crossings could only aggravate the humanitarian situation. Immediate action must be taken to allow the delivery of food, medical aid and fuel, the evacuation of injured persons and unhindered access of humanitarian workers. The Union called on all parties to respect the humanitarian corridor, even if the establishment of a corridor was not sufficient. Humanitarian agencies must have safe access to all parts of Gaza, and the civilian population must be able to collect aid from distribution centres in safety. Normalization of economic and social life in the Palestinian territories was an important factor in the peace process.

33. The Union was committed to supporting the efforts of the Palestinians and Israelis to achieve a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement to the Middle East conflict, to realize the objective of two States living side by side in peace and security, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions and the road map of the Quartet. As there could be only a political solution to the current crisis, the Union called for stepping up the peace process, as requested by Security Council resolution 1860 (2009).

34. **Mr. Portales** (Chile), speaking on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, said that the Group condemned any act of violence against civilians and deplored the hundreds of deaths and thousands of casualties among the civilian population, including women and children, caused by the attacks on the Gaza Strip, in particular the bombing and excessive and disproportionate use of force by Israel. It was unacceptable that the Palestinian civilian population was subjected to armed aggression on such a scale. The Group also condemned the acts of violence that caused Israeli civilian casualties. It expressed its solidarity with all the innocent victims and expressed its deep concern over the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip, the closing of the border crossings, the obstruction of access to humanitarian aid, including food and medicines, and Israel's reduction of deliveries of fuel and electricity.

35. The Group called on all parties concerned to put an immediate end to the hostilities and violence. Convinced that a military solution would not lead to the peace to which Israelis and Palestinians were entitled, the Group called for a ceasefire to guarantee access to humanitarian aid. It urged the international community to support United Nations activities in the Gaza Strip, in particular those of UNRWA. It also considered it essential to resume the work of repairing and rebuilding infrastructure.

36. Council members had a primary responsibility for protecting the human rights of the civilian population of Gaza and must respect and ensure respect for the rules of international humanitarian law in all circumstances, in accordance with article 1 of the four Geneva Conventions. Universally recognized human rights must be respected during armed conflicts. Under the Geneva Conventions and other provisions of international humanitarian law governing the conduct of hostilities, the parties were required to respect the principles of proportionality, distinction and protection of victims.

37. The Group expressed its full support for any international initiative to reinvigorate the peace process in the region through constructive dialogue. It was the only means of achieving a negotiated solution to enable the peoples of the region to live in peace and harmony.

38. **Mr. Al-Dosari** (Qatar), associating himself with the statements made by the Arab Group, OIC and the Non-Aligned Movement, said that Israel had flouted every international human rights commitment and instrument and used disproportionate military force. Everything had become the target of the Israeli war machine. In defiance of the calls of the international community, Israel was waging deliberate aggression comparable to the aggression against Lebanon in 2006 and was ignoring the call of an entire people whose only concern was to live in freedom. Israel was using the rocket attacks on its territory as a pretext for carrying out war crimes. On 4 January 2009, the Emir of Qatar had declared that the killing of innocent civilians would bring peace neither to Israel nor Palestine. If the Human Rights Council did not wish to lose all credibility, it must bring pressure to bear on Israel to install an immediate ceasefire, end its occupation and permit the establishment of an independent Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital. Qatar urged Council members to adopt by consensus the draft resolution under consideration and to send a fact-finding mission into the field to investigate, among other things, the attack on an UNRWA school that had provided shelter. In general, Qatar called for schools and hospitals to be considered as safe havens and be free from all military attack.



39. **Mr. Puja** (Indonesia), associating himself with the statements made by the representative of Pakistan on behalf of OIC and the representative of Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, said that Indonesia deplored Israel's recent military attack on the Gaza Strip, a fresh example of the excessive use of force that had claimed countless innocent victims. That collective punishment meted out to the civilian population since 27 December 2008, had exacerbated the already serious humanitarian crisis caused by the blockade.

40. The international community could not stand idly by in the face of such a situation. Indonesia therefore welcomed Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), which called for a durable ceasefire leading to the full withdrawal of Israeli forces. It urged Israel to lift the blockade once and for all and to allow the delivery of humanitarian aid, which was desperately needed by the Palestinian population. For its part, Indonesia had contributed \$1 million to the relief efforts. Indonesia also called on Israel to authorize a visit by the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 and by the other mandate holders concerned. It also supported the request to send a rapid response team to the Gaza Strip and called on the High Commissioner to carry out a thorough assessment of the human rights situation and to submit a report to the Council at its next session.

41. Indonesia urged Council members to support the draft resolution under consideration, as it would send a clear message to the international community that the conflict that had lasted for more than 40 years could not be resolved through violence.

42. **Mr. Mattéi** (France), associating himself with the statement made by the Czech Republic on behalf of the European Union, said that France was increasingly concerned by the intolerable humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip, especially sanitary conditions. It deplored the use of disproportionate force by Israel, including the bombing of civilian buildings such as schools, and equally condemned the Hamas rocket attacks on Israel. The Israeli civilian population must not be targets, and the Palestinian civilian population must not serve as human shields. Both parties to the conflict must cease flouting international humanitarian law and human rights.

43. France was making every effort to find a solution to the current situation. It had decided to allocate 3 million euros to UNRWA, the World Food Programme and local non-governmental organizations to help them to respond to the humanitarian crisis and had supported the adoption of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), which called for an immediate and durable ceasefire and the sustained delivery of humanitarian aid. Secure borders were also necessary to prevent arms dealing in Gaza, while Israel must reopen its border crossings with a view to lifting the blockade. France and the European Union stood ready to facilitate international monitoring of those various measures, which were crucial for the resumption of the political negotiation process. There was no military solution to the conflict.

44. **Mr. Attar** (Saudi Arabia), associating himself with the statements made by the Arab Group, OIC and the Non-Aligned Movement, said that Israel was flouting every value, every principle of international law and the most basic provisions of international agreements by waging its cruel war against an unarmed population. By invoking self-defence as a pretext, Israel expressed scorn for years of occupation and blockades. It also disregarded the Arab countries' peace efforts, in which Saudi Arabia had played a large part. Several international authorities, including the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, had called attention to the gravity of the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip. The holding of the ninth special session of the Council also confirmed the urgency of the situation. The Council must salvage whatever was left. It should remind Israel that it must protect civilians, put an end to aggression and the blockade, open the

border crossings and cease its collective punishment. The Council's tolerance of or failure to respond to the situation would be tantamount to encouragement and fraught with consequences.

45. **Mr. Doualeh** (Djibouti), associating himself with the statements made by the Arab Group, OIC and the Non-Aligned Movement, said that Djibouti was deeply concerned at the human tragedy and humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip caused by Israel's brutal military aggression. That massive and disproportionate attack constituted a flagrant violation of international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Israel claimed that its strategic objectives were essentially military, but acts such as the deliberate killing of civilians and bombing of a school showed clearly that its real intention was to inflict collective punishment on an already traumatized innocent civilian population. It would be wrong for the international community to be taken in by those futile attempts to justify the unjustifiable by manipulating international law and the principle of proportionality. It must condemn those barbaric acts in the strongest possible terms. Robust, collective action was needed now more than ever before to help the ravaged Palestinian population. Djibouti therefore called for an immediate cessation of military activities and a durable ceasefire. It supported the proposal by the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 to develop a new approach to the genuine protection of the Palestinian people, including with the assistance of the Human Rights Council and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. It also supported the draft resolution before the Council and hoped that it would be adopted by consensus without pointless contentious discussion.

46. **Ms. Berset** (Switzerland) said that her Government deeply deplored the hostilities in the Gaza Strip, which had brought about an appalling situation. A great many victims, most of them civilians, lacked access to medical care and humanitarian aid. The population also lacked foodstuffs, drinking water and energy supplies as a result of the blockade, which had already aggravated the social and economic situation and had severely undermined the basic rights of the Palestinians. Switzerland called on the parties to the conflict to put an immediate end to the hostilities, including the Israeli military operation and the rocket attacks on Israel, and to allow for the flow of humanitarian aid. It urged the parties to implement Security Council resolution 1860 (2009). It also called for respect for international law, particularly the principles of precaution, proportionality and distinction, for the maximum order to protection of the civilian population and of property. Those measures were only the first steps, however, and must be followed up with a political process and dialogue with a view to reaching a lasting agreement that would make for peaceful coexistence between the State of Israel and a Palestinian State. The current conflict could not be resolved by military means. Switzerland also called for an impartial investigation into the allegations of violations of international law in the Gaza Strip, particularly concerning the attacks on two schools operated by UNRWA.

47. **Mr. Radhi** (Bahrain), associating himself with the statements made by the Arab Group, OIC and the Non-Aligned Movement, said that the killing of innocent civilians in the Gaza Strip by the Israeli war machine constituted a crime against humanity that could only lead to an escalation of violence and extremism, far short of the objective of peace and security that Israel, the occupying Power, claimed to be pursuing. That aggression, which had claimed numerous victims, including women, children and older persons, and destroyed schools, homes and mosques, was a blatant violation of international law, humanitarian law and the Geneva Conventions. Bahrain called on the Council to assume responsibility for protecting the rights of civilians and to adopt the draft resolution under consideration by consensus, with a view to alleviating the suffering of the Palestinian people. It also called on the international community to put pressure on Israel to lift its siege, which was suffocating the population of Gaza, and to authorize the delivery of

humanitarian aid. An end to Israeli occupation was the only way of restoring its rights to the Palestinian people and establishing a viable and independent Palestinian State.

48. **Mr. Badr** (Egypt) said that his Government condemned in the strongest terms the Israeli military operations in the Gaza Strip, which had decimated entire families and left some 800 persons dead and 3,000 wounded, including many children. From the outset of the aggression Egypt had endeavoured to obtain a ceasefire and to protect civilians. President Mubarak had brought his political relations into play and proposed an initiative that included the following: firstly, an immediate ceasefire and the secure delivery of humanitarian aid; secondly, a meeting of the parties to look into the causes of the conflict and develop measures to prevent the situation from recurring; thirdly, the lifting of the blockade and reopening of the crossing points with assistance from the international community; and, fourthly, a call on Palestinian groups to reach a common understanding of how best to address the challenges facing the Palestinian cause. Egypt had facilitated the delivery of 500 tons of relief supplies to the Gaza Strip and opened the Rafah border crossing so that the wounded could have access to Egyptian hospitals. Hundreds of tons of medical supplies had been delivered in the same way, whereas other relief, including foodstuffs, were transited through Al-Auja and Karm Abu Salem. The Egyptian authorities had done their utmost to organize those crossing points, but they were not equipped for the transit of large humanitarian convoys. It was therefore essential for Israel to open secure humanitarian corridors.

49. Egypt welcomed the adoption of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), which supported the efforts that Egypt had made for decades to defend the Palestinian cause, and called on all parties concerned to implement it.

50. **Mr. Do Nascimento** (Angola), associating himself with the statements made by the representative of Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Group of African States, said that he welcomed the holding of the ninth special session of the Council, which was an opportunity to remind the parties to the conflict of their obligations under international law.

51. Civilians in the Gaza Strip and certain civilians in Israel were victims of acts of indiscriminate violence, in defiance of international law and human rights. The ninth special session was also an opportunity to remind the international community of the tragic situation of the Palestinian population, which had failed to react expeditiously and with one voice to the crisis at its very inception. It was not the first time that the Council had taken up the matter. Several resolutions on the human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory had already been adopted, without bringing any change for the better. Quite the opposite, the negotiation process had stalled and the prospects for peace seemed increasingly dim. Angola was appalled by the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip and by the slow and ineffective way in which the international institutions in charge of peace and security in the world had reacted. It was time for all actors concerned, in particular the other countries of the region, to enter into fresh, serious peace talks and adopt a new, more realistic approach, while taking into account the existing relevant Security Council resolutions. They must learn from the current crisis and find a peaceful solution to the conflict so that the Palestinian people might at last lead a normal life on its own land, in peace with its Israeli neighbours.

52. **Mr. Jordan** (Argentina) said that his Government considered the military actions carried out by Israel since 27 December 2008 to be altogether excessive and disproportionate. Israel must take all the necessary precautions to protect the civilian population in accordance with its obligations under international law and international humanitarian law. Argentina particularly condemned the attacks on the UNRWA schools and called for an international investigation into the matter. It also condemned the attacks by Palestinian factions against Israel, which had claimed innocent civilian lives. Argentina

welcomed with satisfaction Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) calling for an immediate ceasefire. However, so long as a ceasefire was not in effect the civilian population would remain vulnerable and the humanitarian situation dire. Urgent action was therefore necessary. Argentina had planned to send significant humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip, but such efforts and the efforts of the international community would be useless if relief could not reach the thousands of Palestinians who needed it.

53. Cultural and religious diversity was not an obstacle but rather a source of enrichment for society. Argentina therefore called on the parties to the conflict to renounce violence and resume dialogue to find a peaceful solution in accordance with international law, international human rights law, international humanitarian law and the Charter of the United Nations. The new crisis showed how urgent it was to restore lasting peace to the region and establish a democratic and viable Palestinian State existing side by side with Israel in peace and security, in accordance with Security Council resolutions, the principle of land for peace and the Arab peace initiative.

54. **Ms. Sinjela** (Zambia), associating herself with the statements made by the representative of Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Group of African States, said that Israel's supposedly surgical strikes against such a densely populated area as the Gaza Strip served no purpose other than to cause the loss of civilian life. Israel must protect human lives first and foremost and lift its blockade, which was putting the population in a desperate situation that, in turn, could only increase discontent and the determination to fight against the occupation. Zambia supported the ceasefire initiative proposed by Egypt and France and called on the parties to the conflict to do likewise with a view to ending the hostilities and allowing the displaced Palestinian and Israeli populations to return to their homes. Zambia also endorsed Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) and hoped that it would be implemented.

55. **Mr. Loshchinin** (Russian Federation) said that his country was extremely concerned at the escalation of violence in the Middle East and the significant share of women and children among dead and wounded Palestinians. The rocket attacks on Israel were also unacceptable. The humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip, including the shortage of food, drinking water, medicines and fuel, had prompted ICRC to condemn Israel for violating international humanitarian law. The international community must assist the civilian population and prevent the economic situation from deteriorating further, which would result in making the humanitarian crisis even worse. The Russian Federation welcomed the initiative of the Egyptian and French Presidents, which had already enjoyed the support of all countries and facilitated the adoption of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009). Every effort must now be made to implement the resolution immediately.

56. The virtually unanimous adoption of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) was an encouraging sign for States members of the Human Rights Council. He hoped that the draft resolution under consideration, which the Russian Federation and European Union member countries had helped to prepare, would be adopted by consensus.

57. **Mr. Baah-Duodu** (Ghana), associating himself with the statements made on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of African States by the representatives of Cuba and Egypt respectively, said that he joined those who had expressed their deep concern at the situation in the Gaza Strip. Ghana was shocked and appalled by the suffering caused by the Israeli military attacks on Gaza, the images of innocent and defenceless civilians trapped in ruins and the extent of the damage to infrastructure. While all States had the right to self-defence, international instruments regarding the use of force must be duly observed. The Government of Ghana was just as saddened by the civilian casualties on the Israeli side.

58. Ghana welcomed the diplomatic efforts currently being deployed by several world leaders, in particular President Mubarak and President Sarkozy, to put an end to the bloodshed and suffering of the Palestinians. It also welcomed the adoption, albeit late, of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009). No lasting solution could be found in the Middle East unless the international community redoubled its efforts to achieve a just and comprehensive peace through negotiation and dialogue. Ghana therefore urged the Human Rights Council to call on the Security Council to intensify its efforts in that regard. The root causes of the conflict must be addressed so that an independent and viable Palestinian State could coexist peacefully with an Israeli State with secure borders.

59. **Mr. Cafarov** (Azerbaijan), associating himself with the statement made by the representative of Pakistan on behalf of OIC, expressed his Government's deep concern at the escalation of violence in the Gaza Strip and the deaths of hundreds of innocent civilians. The international community must allow the Palestinian people to exercise its right to establish a sovereign State. Azerbaijan was in favour of a just, peaceful and lasting settlement of the conflict and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State coexisting peacefully with Israel.

60. There must be an immediate ceasefire and cessation of military operations in order to create the conditions needed to normalize the situation. The international community must engage actively in preventing violence and other undesirable acts, including by taking practical measures in the conflict zone. Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) must be implemented immediately and unconditionally. Civilians must be protected and everything must be done to prevent further civilian casualties.

61. Azerbaijan hoped that the draft resolution under consideration would be adopted by a very large majority if not by consensus.

62. **Ms. Anizan Siti Hajar** (Malaysia) said that she endorsed the statements made by the representatives of Cuba and Pakistan on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and OIC respectively and commended the Council on the unity and solidarity it had shown by recognizing the urgent need to convene a special session to consider the persistent human rights violations and deteriorating humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip.

63. Malaysia was disappointed that the situation on the ground in occupied Gaza continued to worsen despite of the adoption of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009). Sadly, the resolution had not been adopted in time to avoid the deaths of more than 700 persons and prevent thousands of others from being scarred for life. Gaza continued to be attacked and its population to suffer even now. The occupying Power had shown open disdain for international law by attacking clearly identified humanitarian aid convoys and vehicles, thus compelling UNRWA to discontinue its operations. It was also preventing ICRC and other humanitarian organizations from reaching victims.

64. Malaysia hoped that the Human Rights Council could, at the very least, agree to reinforce the message that the violence in Gaza must end. The occupying Power must understand that, faced with a war in which a significant share of victims were defenceless women and children, the entire world would not remain silent.

65. Malaysia firmly maintained its position that there was no justification for the excessive, disproportionate and indiscriminate use of force in Gaza or elsewhere in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. It completely rejected Israel's collective punishment of the Palestinian people. By invading Gaza, Israel had once again defied international law and violated the Charter of the United Nations. That action constituted a war crime and a crime against humanity, and those responsible must be held accountable.

66. The only way of ensuring lasting peace, security and stability in the region was through peaceful negotiations. Malaysia called on all parties concerned to resume

negotiations without preconditions with a view to achieving a final, just and comprehensive settlement of the Palestinian question, with the realization of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace within secure and recognized borders based on the road map and the relevant Security Council resolutions.

67. **Mr. Bhattacharya** (Bangladesh) said that, with a great feeling of sympathy and solidarity with the Palestinian people, his delegation associated itself with the statements made by the representatives of Pakistan and Cuba on behalf of OIC and the Non-Aligned Movement respectively. He also appreciated the candid and constructive statement by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights concerning the emergency situation in Gaza and took note of the report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967.

68. The events currently unfolding in Gaza were appalling. More than 700 civilians, including a large number of children, had been killed by indiscriminate Israeli attacks. Neither schools, hospitals, dwellings nor places of worship were spared. Even at the present time, the spectre of death and destruction continued to loom over Gaza, where the majority of the population lacked food, medicines, electricity and running water.

69. The brutal and disproportionate use of force was a flagrant violation of human rights and international humanitarian law. The barbaric attacks violated the basic principles of international law, which required that civilian targets be distinguished from military targets. They were also severe and massive violations of the Geneva Conventions, in particular the provisions governing the obligations of the occupying Power and the requirements of the laws of war. There was no legal, political or moral justification for the inhumane acts that Israel was perpetrating against the Palestinian people and which could be described as crimes against humanity under international criminal law.

70. The population of the occupied Palestinian territories was already in a dire situation because of the blockade and closures imposed by Israel and the confiscation of land, destruction of houses and construction of separation walls. Construction of the Wall continued notwithstanding the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice. The 17-month siege had transformed Gaza into an open-air prison totally separated from the rest of Palestine and isolated from the rest of the world. Israelis continued to obstruct all movement of persons, including those in need of medical attention. The media were not allowed to enter the occupied territory. The so-called three-hour humanitarian corridor was a cruel joke. The previous day an attack on a United Nations convoy had resulted in the driver's death and the cessation of deliveries. How much more proof was needed to acknowledge that the world was witnessing a humanitarian disaster of unbelievable proportions? The international community should feel a sense of collective guilt for remaining silent and conveniently irresolute for too long.

71. Bangladesh welcomed the fact that Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) had been adopted by an overwhelming majority, and expected that it would be implemented immediately. It hoped that the ninth special session of the Human Rights Council would demonstrate the effectiveness of the Council in the face of flagrant and cynical defiance of international law. Swift action was needed to obtain an immediate ceasefire, ensure the delivery of humanitarian aid and begin the reconstruction of the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

72. The occupation of Palestinian land was at the heart of the conflict in the Middle East and must end. An atmosphere conducive to negotiations must be created for the achievement of a just, comprehensive and sustainable settlement. Only a political settlement could guarantee lasting peace and security in the region. He hoped that the current deliberations would contribute to that end.

73. **Mr. Nwosu** (Nigeria), associating himself with the statements made on behalf of the Group of African States, the Non-Aligned Movement and OIC, expressed Nigeria's sincere condolences to the Government and people of Palestine for the loss of lives resulting from the repeated military attacks on the Gaza Strip, including those of civilians, women and children, and for the enormous destruction of property and infrastructure. It strongly condemned the brazen disregard for the international community's calls for creation of a favourable environment for regional and international diplomatic efforts to end the crisis. It called for an immediate end to all military action and violence. All parties must abide by their obligations under international law, international humanitarian law, international human rights law and the relevant resolutions of the United Nations.

74. Nigeria strongly supported Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), adopted on 8 January, and called on the international community, through the Human Rights Council, to intensify its concerted efforts to end the crisis and to do everything necessary to mobilize financial, material and humanitarian support for the affected population. There was no military solution to the conflict, nor would there ever be. Only the peaceful coexistence of two States, Israel and Palestine, would make for the advent of lasting peace and security in the region.

75. **Mr. Cruz Toruño** (Nicaragua) said that his Government, which had fully supported the holding of the ninth special session of the Council, associated itself with the statements made by the representative of Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and the representative of Chile on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

76. Nicaragua wished to join its voice to that of its Palestinian brothers, who were once more victims of the terror spread by Israel, the occupying Power. Israel continued to cause the deaths of thousands of Palestinian civilians, including women and children, who longed only for peace, freedom, justice and the use of their territory. Nicaragua deplored the Security Council's inability to find consensus for the adoption of a resolution that would put an end to the barbarity to which the Palestinian people were subjected day after day.

77. The crimes committed against the Palestinian people throughout the Israeli occupation were crimes against humanity for which there must be no impunity and which were currently leading to a new holocaust.

78. Humankind had a long history of wars and conflicts; the time had come to realize that war was not the be-all and end-all of civilization. Civilization required everyone to be subject to a moral code, in conjunction with the obligations and rights relating to the primacy of law and the strict observance of human rights. The imposition of potential State terrorism must not be considered as a civilized response. Nicaragua therefore called on Israel to end its military attacks on the Palestinian people and to abide by its obligations under international law and international humanitarian law, including the Geneva Conventions and the relevant resolutions of the United Nations.

79. Nicaragua also called on the international community to cooperate effectively and urgently so that humanitarian aid reached victims without delay. It further called on members of the Human Rights Council to adopt the draft resolution under consideration by consensus.

80. **Mr. Vokouma** (Burkina Faso), associating himself with the statement made by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Group of African States, said that Burkina Faso was deeply pained by the new escalation of violence in the Gaza Strip, which thrust innocent civilian populations into appalling situations in which their basic rights were violated. It followed with dismay the images of devastation — of bloodshed and dead bodies and destroyed housing and public infrastructure — that had been broadcast by television stations since the beginning of the Israeli offensive in Gaza. Those acts, which constituted serious violations of human rights and the Geneva Conventions relating to

international humanitarian law, further aggravated the crisis in the region and made the prospect of peace and peaceful coexistence between Israelis and Palestinians even more remote. Burkina Faso called for the immediate cessation of hostilities and urged all parties concerned to renounce acts of violence, renew dialogue and facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza.

81. Burkina Faso expressed its full support for the regional and international initiatives taken to resolve the crisis. It had high hopes of the Egyptian President's initiative and welcomed the fact that it had been favourably received by Israel and the Palestinian Authority. It also commended the adoption of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009).

82. Burkina Faso also hoped that the call by the current special session of the Council, the fourth such session on the Palestinian question, would be heard. It encouraged the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to follow up on the matter and assured her of its support.

83. **Mr. Gooderham** (United Kingdom) said that he fully supported the statement made by the representative of the Czech Republic on behalf of the European Union. The crisis in Gaza had been a sad reflection of the international community's failure over the past 60 years to resolve the Middle East conflict. The people of Gaza had suffered for too long, as had the people of southern Israel. The continuing Hamas rocket attacks were not acts of resistance. They were designed to provoke, to intimidate, to wound and to kill. Equally, Israel's military action would not end the violence and misery at the heart of the conflict; in many ways, they fuelled them. The United Kingdom therefore welcomed the adoption of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) and continued to affirm that there was no substitute for, in the first place, an immediate and permanent ceasefire, including an end to Hamas rocket attacks and Israeli military operations in Gaza; secondly, a framework to tackle the causes of the conflict, prevent the smuggling of weapons into Gaza, and open the border crossings in order to improve the dire humanitarian situation and allow the population to resume normal lives; and, thirdly, redoubled efforts by the international community in 2009 to put in place the long-term framework necessary for comprehensive peace.

84. The flow of illegal arms into Gaza was a serious threat to Israeli citizens and must be curbed. The international community must help all the countries of the region to develop the tools to deal with the trafficking in weapons by land and sea. That would be a complex and difficult task, but an essential one. The Palestinian Authority was right to recall the agreement reached in 2005 on the opening of crossings for people, goods and humanitarian aid. There was a need to open those crossings and re-establish the Palestinian Authority's control over them in order to help the residents of Gaza and curb smuggling.

85. The United Kingdom applauded the work being done by all the international agencies, including those of the United Nations, under very difficult circumstances, and deeply regretted the death of all civilians, including humanitarian workers. It had already made available \$10 million to help address urgent humanitarian needs and called for the unimpeded and safe flow of international aid.

86. The crisis proved again that the only way to restore security to Israel and dignity to the Palestinians was two States living in peace side by side and supported by the rest of the region.

87. **Mr. Han-taek** (Republic of Korea) said that he was deeply concerned at the heavy casualties in Gaza, including the deaths of women and children, the magnitude of the destruction of essential infrastructure and the negative implications that the crisis would have for peace and stability in the region. Leaving aside the arguments as to which side had triggered the current hostilities, it was clear that the indiscriminate attacks on civilians were



unacceptable and not only endangered the Palestinian and Israeli population, but would also provoke more distrust and hatred between the two peoples for years to come.

88. The Republic of Korea called on all parties to the conflict to refrain from any action that would lead to further casualties among innocent civilians, to respect international humanitarian law and international human rights law, to give humanitarian agencies access to the region and, above all, to put an immediate end to hostilities. It fully supported the diplomatic efforts made by Egypt and other countries and welcomed the adoption of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009). It hoped that that resolution would be implemented immediately by all parties concerned.

89. **Mr. Baodong** (China) said that his Government was deeply concerned at the escalation of violence and the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and urged all parties concerned to end all military operations immediately to avoid the further loss of life of innocent civilians and to create the conditions for the implementation of a political solution. The Government of China maintained close contacts with the concerned parties with a view to encouraging negotiations and reconciliation. It had already provided emergency humanitarian aid amounting to \$1 million and planned to make further contributions to the extent that its resources permitted.

90. Strongly determined to promote peace in the Middle East, the Government of China stood ready to collaborate fully with the international community in order to find a political solution to the conflict.

91. **Mr. Isomata** (Japan) said that his Government was greatly concerned at the continuing attacks by air and land on the Gaza Strip and the rocket attacks on Israeli territory despite repeated calls from the international community for a ceasefire. It deplored the recurring violations of the basic rights of innocent civilians, including a large number of women and children. It urged the parties concerned to resume negotiations, to take measures to avoid more civilian casualties and to make every effort to further the peace process. It applauded the mediation efforts made by Egypt, France and other countries and welcomed the adoption of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), which it was convinced would contribute to the implementation of a durable ceasefire.

92. Japan noted with deep concern that the human rights and humanitarian situation in Gaza continued to deteriorate, with violations not only of the right to life but also the right to food, housing, education and freedom of movement, among others. It therefore called on all parties concerned to permit the flow of aid and open humanitarian corridors. It was greatly saddened by the attack on a humanitarian convoy which claimed the lives of two UNRWA staff members. The security of humanitarian personnel must be guaranteed in all circumstances and no effort must be spared to do so. Japan was determined to continue to provide humanitarian aid to the Palestinian people and to support as best as it could the efforts to promote the peace process in the Middle East.

93. **Mr. Chander** (India), associating himself with the statement made by the representative of Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, said that India firmly defended the Palestinian cause and that its solidarity with the Palestinian people was well known. The Government of India, which was closely following the situation in the Gaza Strip, was greatly concerned at the large number of deaths and casualties, the majority involving innocent civilians. It had condemned the Israeli incursion into the Gaza Strip and called for an immediate ceasefire. It was providing humanitarian aid to the Palestinian people, including for capacity-building and national reconstruction. In response to the call by UNRWA, it had decided to allocate to it \$1 million for providing shelter and basic foodstuffs to the families worst affected, which would supplement the bilateral assistance programme that the Palestinian Authority already enjoyed.

94. India sought above all a long-term settlement to the conflict and was closely following the efforts made by several countries in the region to obtain an immediate ceasefire. Any use of violence could only postpone the realization of the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people.

*The meeting rose at 2 p.m.*