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**GENERAL
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SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE
33rd meeting
held on
Wednesday, 23 November 1977
at 3 p.m.
New York

S/SPC/32/SR.33
SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 33rd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. BLACKMAN (Barbados)

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AFFECTING THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE POPULATION OF THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES (continued)

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Distr. GENERAL
A/SPC/32/SR.33
28 November 1977

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

77-58334

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The meeting was called to order at 3.45 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 57: REPORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE ISRAELI PRACTICES AFFECTING THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE POPULATION OF THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES (continued) (A/32/284, A/32/308; A/SPC/32/L.12, L.13, L.14 and L.16)

1. The CHAIRMAN drew the Committee's attention to the draft resolution on Quneitra (A/SPC/32/L.16) which had just been circulated.
2. Mr. MEERZA (India) thanked the Chairman and members of the Committee for the sympathy they had expressed for the victims of the devastating cyclone in the southern part of India.
3. The task of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Population of the Occupied Territories had been made particularly difficult by Israel's denial of access to the territories under its occupation. However, the facts remained as contained in the Special Committee's objective report (A/32/284) and no matter what denials were made, the excesses committed were there and the inhuman acts perpetrated by Israel could not fail to be condemned by all peace-loving nations respecting human rights. He appealed to Israel, which also believed in the Creator, to stop committing atrocities, because those indulging in such practices would ultimately realize that divine justice would punish those who did not respect human rights. Israel should create an atmosphere of peace in which matters could be settled by peaceful means and should vacate the territories which had been forcibly occupied so that Moslems and Arab Jews could live together as they had before 1948. He also appealed to all nations to ensure that the United Nations resolutions adopted during the past decade were implemented.
4. The International Committee of the Red Cross in its report for 1976 had stated that some 3,000 persons had been detained for security offences during that year and that conditions of overcrowding in the gaols were alarming. While there had been no evidence of deportations during the current year, Israel continued to deny the right to return to thousands of civilian refugees who had fled their homes in the occupied territories during and after the 1967 hostilities. Another aspect of serious concern was the increasing number of Jewish settlements established in the occupied areas. The Israeli press spoke of various long-term and short-term plans for the establishment of residential and agricultural settlements in all parts of the occupied territories and of the planned construction of 18,000 apartments in the Arab part of Jerusalem. Those measures were in clear violation of the fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War and of the principles of international law and could not facilitate the negotiation of an enduring and just peace.
5. The root of the problem continued to be Israel's refusal to withdraw from the areas occupied by it during the 1967 conflict. Israeli occupation had assumed the characteristics of colonial rule. Military occupation did not confer any authority

(Mr. Meerza, India)

to alter the status of occupied areas or to administer them as if they were territories of Israel. Sovereignty over the occupied Arab lands still legally remained with the Palestinian Arab people, who were entitled to national independence and to exercise their inalienable rights. It was to be hoped that a just and lasting peace on that basis would soon be achieved.

6. Mr. FONSEKA (Sri Lanka), speaking in particular as a member of the Special Committee, said that he hoped to confine his statement to the report and to avoid politics and polemics as far as possible. The Special Committee, which had received its mandate from the General Assembly and had carried out its task to the best of its ability over a period of years, had always been a controversial committee on a controversial subject.

7. Most members of the Special Political Committee who had expressed their views during the discussion of the item had endorsed and sometimes expressed appreciation of the work of the Committee. As one delegation, that of Israel, had however challenged and criticized the work of the Special Committee, much of his statement would be concerned with answering those criticisms and challenges. He fully recognized that the representative of Israel was himself doing a difficult task and hoped that he would concede that the task of the Special Committee too had not been easy.

8. During the Israeli representative's first statement on the item, a point of order had been raised by the representative of Oman concerning what the former meant by the administered territories and Judaea and Samaria. He himself could recall no answer having been given but a news report published in the Israeli newspaper Maariv on 28 September 1977 might provide one. It also had a bearing on parts of the report of the Special Committee.

9. The report, which he read out, quoted a briefing, which had been read and amended by the Israeli Prime Minister, and was to be distributed through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to all Israeli embassies and consulates abroad, to information agents and other Israelis going abroad, and was designed to clarify the basic concepts of the Israeli policy. It called on information agents not to be deterred from refuting the myth of a homeless Palestinian people which allegedly existed separately from the Arabs living in the land of Israel, or that such a people was different from the one living east of the Jordan River and stressed that Judaea, Samaria and Gaza were part of the historical patrimony of the people of Israel and that Israel had the right of possession over those areas even from the viewpoint of international law. A special chapter on semantic remarks said that the terms "West Bank" and "administered territories" should be banned and replaced by "Judaea and Samaria" and that the term "annexation" should be banned when referring to the inclusion of those areas in the State of Israel, because it was only possible to annex lands which belonged to others. The term "inclusion" or "application of the law of Israel", depending on the context, should be used instead. Whatever the semantic exercises in which they indulged, the occupying authorities were obviously making the occupation permanent. The news item showed that there was a definite policy of annexation and that a new terminology must be devised to justify it to the international community. It was interesting to note in the English translation of the summary record of the statement by the Israeli representative that he often used the expression "administered territories" which, according to that news item, was banned.

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(Mr. Fonseka, Sri Lanka)

10. The Israeli representative had said that the Special Committee had been established as a consequence of the three "Noes" of the Arab meeting at Khartoum in September 1967. That might be chronologically true but the Special Committee had in fact been established as a result of Israel's refusal to accept a second Security Council fact-finding mission under Mr. Gussing, the representative of the Secretary-General.

11. The representative of Israel had also asserted that the news items summarized in the Special Committee's report (A/32/284, paras. 32-226) had been designed to achieve a particular objective. Any member of the Committee who read the report carefully would realize that that was far from its intention. As the Special Committee had been denied access to the occupied territories by the occupying Power, it had had to devise other means of carrying out its mandate, one of which was monitoring newspapers published in Israel itself. It had tried to put the news items together in order to show the sequence of events, and not to evaluate the facts. It was obviously impossible to reproduce every news item in full but it was not difficult to see that events which were relevant to the Special Committee's mandate had occurred in the occupied territories as a result of the Israeli occupation.

12. In reply to a point of order, the Israeli representative had remarked that the Special Committee could not claim to have a monopoly of objectivity. It made no such claim but aspired to objectivity within the limits of human frailty.

13. The Israeli representative had referred to events in Deir-Abu-Mash'al where villagers had been subject to harassment to which five witnesses brought before the Special Committee had referred. The incident was mentioned in paragraph 180 of the report and the conclusions of the Special Committee were contained in paragraph 248.

14. The Special Committee could not agree with the Israeli representative's contention that the incidents in the occupied territories were just ordinary demonstrations such as those occurring in different places throughout the world. The Special Committee fully realized that life must go on in the occupied territories as the Israeli representative had said, but the situation was one of constant tension and the incidents were the direct consequence of the military occupation. The Israeli representative had also referred to Hebron as a place which was sacred to the Moslem, Christian and Jewish religions. However, although persons of the other religious faiths had access to it, it was still part of the territory occupied by Israel.

15. The need for Arabs and Jews to be able to live together had been mentioned in the Special Political Committee and by Israeli leaders at various times, the most recent being the statements by the Israeli Foreign Minister in the general debate at the current session. Yet the Chairman of the Settlement Department of the Jewish Agency had said that it would be better for the two communities to live separately (A/32/284, para. 51).

(Mr. Fonseka, Sri Lanka)

16. The Israeli representative's statement that the Special Committee had quoted only part of the speech by the Israeli Foreign Minister because it had a bearing on one of the main issues, namely the settlements in the occupied territories, had been eloquently dealt with by the representative of Kuwait at the Committee's preceding meeting.
17. Examination of the summary records showed that the representative of Israel had devoted a great deal of time to the evidence presented to the Special Committee by Mr. Payot, and to questioning Mr. Payot's credentials. In fact, the evidence from Mr. Payot had not been given undue attention in the report. The Special Committee had heard his evidence and taken note of what it considered to be relevant. It was for the Special Political Committee to assess the value of that evidence.
18. In the past, the report of the Special Committee had contained references to the practice of torture in the occupied territories. Over the past year, however, the Special Committee had received evidence which merited greater attention. Allegations of torture were a serious matter, and the Special Committee would have no value if it were summarily to dismiss such accusations.
19. Much of the Special Committee's findings were based on a report which had appeared in the Sunday Times of London in June 1977. That article had attracted great attention, being widely read and widely contested. The Special Committee had examined the two reporters who had written the article: the proceedings of that open hearing were available in document A/SPC/32/L.12, and made it perfectly clear that the two reporters had treated the article as an ordinary assignment. The reply to the article by the Attorney General of Israel was set out in document A/SPC/32/L.13. He did not ask the Special Political Committee to accept the Special Committee's report: members should read the case for both sides and make up their own minds.
20. Turning to the question of the destruction of Quneitra, he pointed out that the question had been raised in the past. The Special Committee had received authorization to undertake a survey of the damage caused, and had sent five experts to spend five months studying the scene. Those experts, who had had no intrinsic interest in the affair, had come to the conclusion that the destruction of Quneitra had been a deliberate action, and not the result of military activity. Of the 4,080 ruined buildings the experts had examined, 50 bore the signs of damage incurred during military activities, and 50 appeared to have fallen through simple old age.
21. When an area was damaged during fighting, damage was widespread. When a building stood in ruins, but the trees, lawns and boundary walls around it were all intact, and there were no signs of either fittings or furniture within the ruins, it was clear that that building had been destroyed deliberately. Moreover, the experts had reached the conclusion that the Golan hospital had been used for military exercises, and had not been destroyed by military fire.

(Mr. Fonseka, Sri Lanka)

22. The Special Committee had no wish to conduct a propaganda campaign against Israel, or to engage in a political vendetta. It had made criticisms only where it had had cause to do so, and had made every attempt to be as objective as possible.

23. Referring to draft resolution A/SPC/32/L.16, he said that the Special Committee would like to receive directions on how to undertake the task set out in operative paragraph 5. It was also likely that the Secretariat would require additional financial resources for the completion of the survey mentioned.

24. Mr. MORSHED (Bangladesh), speaking on a point of order, requested that the statement by the representative of Sri Lanka should be included in the records of the Committee in extenso, and circulated to all members of the Committee.

25. Mr. NAJAR (Israel), speaking on a point of order, requested that his statement to the Committee at the 23rd meeting of the Committee should also be reproduced in extenso.

26. Mr. SIBAHI (Syrian Arab Republic), also speaking on a point of order, requested that the statement made by the representative of his delegation at the 27th meeting of the Committee should similarly be reproduced in extenso.

27. The CHAIRMAN recalled that, by a decision taken at a plenary meeting of the General Assembly at its current session, the Special Political Committee was authorized to obtain, on special request, transcriptions of the debate of some of its meetings or portions thereof. If he heard no objection, therefore, he would take it that the Committee approved the requests made by the representatives of Bangladesh, Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic.

28. It was so decided.

29. Mr. NAJAR (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that it was clear that the report of the Special Committee and the continuing debate in the Special Political Committee were part of a psychological war being waged against Israel. The mechanism used by totalitarian propaganda was well known: it alleged an unjustified occupation, followed by rebellion by the original population of the occupied area, which in turn led to increasingly cruel repression by the occupying forces, and so on. That process, described in the report of the Special Committee, did not correspond to the facts.

30. It should not be forgotten that the situation in the occupied territories was the result of three successive violent wars against Israel. The population of those territories knew that the situation would not be resolved until peace came to the region; meanwhile, Israel was making every effort to establish and maintain conditions in which Jew and Arab could live peacefully together, side by side. A great deal of progress had been made in improving conditions in the area since 1968, and, while mere physical improvements did not constitute a solution, they at least represented a significant contribution which could be made until peace was established.

(Mr. Najjar, Israel)

31. In any country in which the press was free, it was possible to accumulate accounts of unrest and isolated incidents which together could suggest that repression was taking place. The report of the Special Committee represented just such an accumulation. It was also worthy of note that the report and the newspaper articles it purported to reflect did not always agree. Such discrepancies might be caused by a lack of objectivity on the part of people who worked for the Special Committee and supplied materials to its members, since the latter occupied important positions and presumably did not have time to do all the work relating to the Special Committee themselves.
32. Turning to the right of detained persons to communicate with the outside, he said that the period during which any person could be detained without contact with the outside world was from 18 to 30 days, which was entirely in keeping with the provisions of the fourth Geneva Convention. After that time, all detainees could exercise their full right to free communication.
33. With regard to the articles mentioned in document A/SPC/32/L.12, he noted that the last article in the series, published on 18 September, constituted the final position of the two journalists. He had referred to that article in his statement at the 23rd meeting and what he had said then was in no way affected by the remarks in document A/SPC/32/L.12. In the last article, two journalists stressed that the events in question had taken place in 1974, in other words, three years previously. They recognized that the statement made by the delegate of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) denying the existence of torture was probably true with regard to the situation after 1974. Obviously, they had been trying to save the results of their inquiry.
34. Referring to the credibility of the events reported, he said that no normal person could have survived the ghastly treatment mentioned. It should be pointed out that the so-called tortured persons were now perfectly fit and engaged in their normal occupations. A careful and honest reading of the article of 18 September would make it clear that the authors of the series had been forced to beat a complete retreat regarding their original accusations. The article also contained a statement by the ICRC delegate to the effect that while there might be isolated cases of ill treatment, there was no evidence of systematic torture authorized and approved by the Israeli administration. That statement was decisive. However, in paragraph 255 of document A/32/284, the Special Committee made no mention of it. The Special Committee's position in that regard was thus totally indefensible. How could the Special Committee think that it was entitled to give credence to journalists seeking to create spectacular journalism? That question remained unanswered. He had brought the matter up in his statement at the 23rd meeting, but the representative of Sri Lanka had chosen not to reply to it.
35. His delegation was entitled to demand that the Special Committee should explain how it could endorse the defence concocted by the Sunday Times to the effect that there was collusion between ICRC and Israel aimed at concealing or

(Mr. Najjar, Israel)

attenuating allegations of torture. That argument was put forward in the report of the Special Committee.

36. In Israel, ICRC followed its usual procedure. In its interviews with detainees, it heard complaints about methods of interrogation and conditions of detention and transmitted that information to the competent authorities. An Israeli officer was invited to hear the accusations. The proceedings were conducted on a confidential basis without any publicity. That normal procedure was described in the Special Committee's report as constituting collusion between the Israeli authorities and ICRC, an accusation based on the reports of the Sunday Times journalists.

37. Those who guided the work of the Special Committee had contacted only Arabs linked to the PLO and the military wing of the Communist Party in Samaria and Judaea. The Special Committee had made full use of the freedom of movement and association existing in Israel but had deliberately refrained from interviewing the qualified representatives of the administration in Israel. Furthermore, the Special Committee had prepared its report on the basis of information provided by such persons as Mrs. Tsemel, who was a militant Communist and bent on destroying Israel and Zionism, consequently Israel had rejected the report for the reasons he had already given.

38. His delegation's position concerning the applicability of the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 was well known. He had tried to show in his statement at the 23rd meeting that his Government ensured broader rights to the people in the territories than those mentioned in the Convention. The Convention would apply only if the people concerned enjoyed fewer rights than those afforded under it. However, his Government had gone beyond the provisions of the Convention.

39. With regard to the future, his Government intended to negotiate with the parties with whom it had been in conflict, not with the General Assembly. There could be no negotiations between the General Assembly and Israel. The role of the General Assembly was to promote negotiations. Referring to the question of Israeli settlements in the territories, he recalled the statement made by his Minister for Foreign Affairs in the General Assembly in October 1977 to the effect that the criticism directed against Israel in respect of the establishment of settlements in Judaea and Samaria was unfounded, that the settlements were legal and that no Arab inhabitants had been displaced by the establishment of those Jewish settlements. His Foreign Minister had further said that, above all, it was unacceptable that Jews should be prohibited from living in any part of their ancestral land.

40. It was ridiculous to claim that the demographic composition of the territories was being altered. It was merely a question of a few thousand Israelis who were symbolically settling among more than 1.2 million Arabs. As the Israeli Foreign Minister had said, the settlements were not an obstacle to peace because if they were, peace would have been achieved years ago.

41. At the 23rd meeting he had said clearly that his delegation was prepared to support a decision to carry out a full study of the human rights situation in all the Member States of the Organization. He stressed that members were living in a real world, not an imaginary one. There were many countries which set themselves up as Israel's judges but in which there existed serious violations of human rights. In that connexion, he noted that the Tamils, who constituted less than 20 per cent of the population of Sri Lanka, lived in conditions of discrimination and were severely repressed. The Ceylon Institute considered that the situation could lead to the elimination of that ethnic group.
42. The cause of peace in the Middle East was not served by slandering Israel and by adopting General Assembly resolutions consecrating such slander. The duty of the United Nations was to encourage peace.
43. With regard to the remarks by the Moroccan representative, he said that the Israeli people bore no enmity towards the Arab world. On the contrary, they sincerely wished for mutual understanding and progress. Their destinies were linked together. The only problem was to achieve peace and security in full dignity. That could be accomplished only through negotiation in a climate of goodwill, without extremism or partiality.
44. Mr. KAMEL (Observer, Palestine Liberation Organization), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, thanked the Special Committee for its report and for its impartiality. He also wished, on behalf of his organization, to thank the representatives who had expressed support for and solidarity with the struggle being waged by the Palestinian people for its inalienable national rights.
45. In his statements in the Committee, the Zionist representative had tried to falsify the facts and to divert attention from the main item under consideration to secondary questions and insignificant details in order to avoid replying to the specific facts mentioned in the report of the Special Committee. Therefore, he had made no mention of the occupation, of its illegality, of its incompatibility with the United Nations Charter, or of the Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, which had always condemned the acquisition of territories by force. He had resorted to old arguments which were no longer valid, such as accusing anyone who did not agree with Zionist practices and ideology as being anti-Semitic. The Zionist representative could not say the same about the Jews who defended human rights within the Zionist entity itself, such as the Chairman of the Israeli Committee on Human Rights and the lawyers who defended Arab and Palestinian detainees in the occupied territories. Consequently, he accused them of being Communists or enemies of Israel, as if that constituted a reason for discrediting their testimony. The Zionists claimed that Israel was a democracy. However, it was well known that a basic principle of democracy was that all human beings were equal irrespective of their colour, religion or political belief. Israel's accusations should therefore be seen for what they were. The Zionists did not like the fact that Israeli lawyers such as Mrs. Langer gave concrete information on the settlements in the occupied territories and on the number of buildings destroyed by the Zionist authorities.

(Mr. Kamel, Observer, PLO)

46. The Zionist representative had referred to what he called the mechanical majority in the United Nations in favour of the rights of the Arab people of Palestine. In that regard, his delegation wished to point out that there had indeed been a mechanical majority of colonialist and imperialist States in the 1940s when the United Nations, dominated by the Western imperialist forces and in the absence of the peoples of the third world, had adopted a resolution partitioning Palestine and another admitting the Zionist entity as a Member.

47. It was clear that what the Zionist representative called a mechanical majority in the United Nations was nothing more than a majority which championed and supported the very principles and Charter of the United Nations. That majority supported the rights of peoples to fight for self-determination and against foreign occupation, aggression and the violation of human rights. That majority was the expression of the free will of the majority of States, which were in favour of peace and justice and which defended the rights of all peoples oppressed by either apartheid or by racist zionism.

48. In an attempt to divert the attention of the world community, and in view of the growing condemnation of Israel for its violation of the human rights of the Arabs and Palestinians in the occupied territories, the Zionist representative had referred to the situation of Jews living in Arab countries. That was a trick, since no Arab country occupied what could be called Jewish territory. His organization believed that the mandate of the Special Committee should be expanded to investigate the violations committed against the Palestinian minority living under Zionist occupation since 1948. Those Palestinians had been subjected for nearly 30 years to a systematic Zionist policy of oppression and discrimination. Their property had been confiscated and their rights violated. The Zionist policies and practices in Palestine, which had been occupied since 1948, were in no way different from those applied in the territories occupied since 1967. They pursued the same objective: to evacuate the Palestinians from their lands and to make the country exclusively Jewish. The Zionist representative had sought to deny the historical and political existence of the Palestinian people. His own organization merely wished to point out in that connexion that Palestine had been an integral part of the Arab world since the seventh century and had known the same political, economic and cultural development as the other Arab countries which were currently independent and sovereign.

49. At the outset of the First World War, Palestine, like other Arab countries, had formed part of the Ottoman Empire. Following that War, Palestine and the other Arab countries had been placed under a United Kingdom mandate with a view to their preparation for independence. The only difference in the case of Palestine had been the existence of a colonial Zionist plan to transform the country by force - in violation of the basic rights of its people - into a Zionist State. If the Zionists had been able to achieve their objective, owing to the support of the imperialists, that could not and had not nullified the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people.

(Mr. Kamel, Observer, PLO)

50. With regard to the applicability of the fourth Geneva Convention to the occupied Arab territories, his delegation noted that no State shared the view put forward by the Zionists. Furthermore, serious legal studies by prominent international jurists had demonstrated the falsity of the Zionist arguments.

51. On more than one occasion, the Zionist representative had referred to collaboration between the occupation authorities and ICRC. However, he had said nothing about the accusation by both the Special Committee and ICRC that Israel did not allow ICRC representatives to be present during the interrogation of the detainees. Furthermore, at its recent congress, the Red Cross had not only supported the applicability of the fourth Geneva Convention to the occupied Arab territories but had also expressed great concern at the violations of the human rights of the Arabs under Israeli occupation.

52. The Zionist arguments concerning the legality of the colonial settlements established in the occupied territories had been not only rejected but condemned by the United Nations. However, the Zionists claimed that not a single Arab inhabitant had been displaced or made homeless as the result of those settlements. In that connexion, he fully supported the remarks made by the representative of Kuwait at a previous meeting. Who were the owners of the land and who had been expropriated? More than 2 million Palestinians had been displaced from their homeland and obliged by force in 1948 and 1967 to live in exile as refugees.

53. The Zionist representative had attempted to minimize the scope of the daily acts of resistance in the occupied territories. Those attempts were doomed to failure. The facts were self-evident. They showed that the Palestinian people and the Arab nation would never accept a policy of foreign occupation, racial discrimination and annexation of its territories by the Zionists.

54. In conclusion, he said that peace could be achieved only when the Arab people of Palestine, under the leadership of the PLO, regained its inalienable rights, in particular the rights to repatriation, self-determination, and the establishment of a sovereign and independent Palestinian State in Palestine.

55. Mr. FONSEKA (Sri Lanka), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that he would have preferred it if the representative of Israel had not referred in his statement to the political situation in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka, which was a multiracial society, did not claim that it was perfect, that it had no problems or that there was no discrimination there. Unlike Israel, Sri Lanka did not claim to be unique and it was willing to admit to its problems. There was hardly a country in the world where ethnic or language problems did not exist, and although Sri Lanka was not proud of its problems, it was proud of its efforts to solve them.

56. The representative of Israel had cast a deplorable aspersion on the Special Committee when he had insinuated that its report might have been written by other persons. The delegation of Sri Lanka took serious exception to the view that the three members of the Special Committee were incapable of hearing testimony and drafting their own report.

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(Mr. Fonseka, Sri Lanka)

57. Referring to the question of torture, the representative of Israel had quoted the chief delegate of ICRC in Israel as saying that systematic torture approved by the authorities did not exist in the occupied territories. The purpose of the Israeli representative had undoubtedly been to show that an independent authority such as ICRC supported Israel's contention that torture was not practised in the occupied territories. Document A/AC.145/R.120, however, containing information furnished by two British journalists, showed that ICRC maintained that the remarks made by its chief delegate in Israel should not be taken to represent the official opinion of the Red Cross, since ICRC was not permitted by the Israeli authorities to visit detainees under interrogation and was consequently not in a position to deliver any judgement on the methods used by the interrogators.

58. With regard to the case of Rasmiah Odeh, he urged the members of the Committee to read the relevant pages of document A/SPC/32/L.12, which contained the testimony given to the Special Committee by the two British journalists mentioned earlier, and the relevant section of the document circulated at the behest of the Permanent Representative of Israel (A/SPC/32/L.13). The members of the Committee would be able to draw their own conclusions regarding the facts of the matter.

59. Israel constantly complained that the Special Committee was biased and listened to only one side of the question. The Special Committee had, however, constantly endeavoured to gain access to the occupied territories, while Israel, for reasons of its own, persisted in its refusal to grant that request. The Special Committee was interested only in the truth. He therefore appealed to Israel to grant it access to the occupied territories.

60. Mr. NAJAR (Israel) said that the representative of Sri Lanka seemed to have misunderstood his earlier remarks concerning the report of the Special Committee, perhaps because of errors in the interpretation. He had never insinuated that the report had been drafted by others. He had merely observed that, as a general rule, when the members of a committee drafted a report, they often relied on other persons to assist them and that it was necessary, therefore, to monitor closely the methods used by such persons in gathering information.

61. In order to reach a conclusion on the substance of the matter, all that was necessary was to compare the full text of the article appearing in the Sunday Times of 18 September and the summary of that article contained in paragraph 255 of the Special Committee's report.

62. Mr. SAYEGH (Kuwait), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, noted that the Israeli Minister for Foreign Affairs had argued in a plenary meeting of the Assembly - and that argument had been reiterated earlier in the current meeting by the representative of Israel - that settlements were not the obstacle to peace, for, if they were, peace would have existed before the establishment of settlements. That argument was an example of intellectual legerdemain. It had

never been asserted that the settlements were the only obstacle to peace but merely that they were an obstacle to peace, one of several. There had been other obstacles before the establishment of the settlements and they had been the reason why peace had not existed.

63. The CHAIRMAN said that, in view of the lateness of the hour, the remaining delegation wishing to exercise its right of reply could do so at the beginning of the next meeting.

The meeting rose at 6.30 p.m.