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AGENDA ITEM 30

**Question of Palestine: report of the Committee on the
Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian
People**

1. The PRESIDENT: I call on the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

2. Mr. FALL (Senegal), Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (*interpretation from French*): On 24 November 1976 the General Assembly at the conclusion of its debate on the question of Palestine adopted resolution 31/20 by a very large majority. With that resolution the General Assembly took a major step towards the restoration, of the rights of the Palestinian people and endorsed the recommendations contained in the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People¹ as a basis for the solution of the question of Palestine.

3. Thus, for the first time since the emergence of the question of Palestine in the United Nations, the General Assembly adopted a detailed programme for giving effect to the rights of the Palestinian people.

4. Hence, in paragraph 5 of its resolution 31/20, it authorized the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to exert all efforts to promote the implementation of its recommendations and to report thereon to it at its thirty-second session.

5. That mandate of the General Assembly brings me today the honour of introducing, as Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the report of the Committee issued as document A/32/35. The report faithfully describes the activities of the Committee over the year 1977 in, on the one hand, seeking to promote the implementation of the recom-

mendations of the General Assembly on the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and, on the other, disseminating as widely as possible information concerning those recommendations.

6. Following the adoption of General Assembly resolution 31/20, the Committee set itself the target of discharging as faithfully as possible the new mandate assigned to it.

7. In this regard it has worked according to the same principles and the same methods as the previous year, namely, first, by extending an open invitation to all States Members of the United Nations and observers, including Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization [PLO], the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, to make their contribution in the form they chose to the work of the Committee, and, secondly, by producing realistic and balanced work likely to advance the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

8. In order to give effect to the General Assembly recommendations, the Committee first of all embarked upon an analysis of the trends which had emerged during the course of the General Assembly debate on Palestine.

9. In that regard, it noted that the views there expressed coincided with the fundamental considerations presented in its own report. Thus it noted that an overwhelming majority of delegations agreed that the question of Palestine was the central element of the Middle East conflict and that, accordingly a just and lasting peace in the region was possible only if the rights and lawful aspirations of the Palestinian people were taken into consideration.

10. Similarly, the Committee noted that the majority of speakers emphasized that a satisfactory and equitable solution of the question of Palestine cannot be achieved except in the context of a comprehensive settlement of the Middle East problem.

11. In view of those trends, and on the basis of the terms of reference given to it by the General Assembly, the Committee made various approaches to different bodies of the United Nations, in particular the Security Council. In resolution 31/20, the General Assembly not only endorsed the recommendations of the Committee, but also expressed its wish to see them implemented. Thus in paragraph 4 of resolution 31/20 the Assembly urged the Security Council:

“...to consider once again as soon as possible the recommendations contained in the report, taking fully into account the observations made thereon during the debate in the General Assembly at its thirty-first session, in order to take the necessary measures to implement the above-mentioned recommendations... so as to achieve

¹ See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-first Session, Supplement No. 35*.

early progress towards a solution of the problem of Palestine and the establishment of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East”.

12. Furthermore, the implementation of most of the recommendations requires the active assistance of the Security Council. In any case, that body has played a cardinal role in the past in its attempts to resolve the Middle East question. I shall confine myself here to recalling the important role played by the Security Council in the solution of the Middle East problem by referring to its resolutions 237 (1967), 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

13. Thus the Committee made all the necessary efforts to ensure that the reconsideration by the Security Council of its recommendations would take place under the most favourable conditions and would lead to the adoption of positive and just measures to solve the Palestinian question. I have spoken of reconsideration, because the recommendations of the General Assembly had already been submitted to the Security Council last year. Nevertheless, although they received the support of the majority of delegations, it was not possible to adopt them at the time because of the negative vote of a permanent member of the Security Council. On that occasion, the Committee was criticized for having confined itself in its recommendations to one element only of the Middle East question and of having neglected the other two elements, namely, the question of boundaries and the right to existence of all the States of the region.

14. In reply to this criticism, the Committee said that its mandate was not to deal with the question of the Middle East as a whole, but to seek ways and means of enabling the Palestinian people to exercise their inalienable rights. In other words, the Committee's task is, above all, to correct the fundamental imbalance which has always characterized the various approaches of the United Nations to the Palestinian question. Far from being the advocate of partiality, therefore, the Committee has endeavoured above all to correct this unfortunate imbalance and to place the Palestinian question in its proper context and its true light.

15. Those were the considerations that I had to explain to certain members of the Security Council who had not supported the recommendations of the General Assembly in the course of the representations that I made to them on behalf of the Committee.

16. On that occasion I sought to learn their views on the question of Palestine, while making them aware that the sole objective of the Committee was to contribute constructively, within the framework of its mandate, to the solution of the problem which is now at the very heart of the Middle East conflict. I also explained to them that what we were doing was in the interests, properly understood, of the State of Israel, because failing the recognition of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, Israel's own right to live in peace with its neighbours would be constantly endangered.

17. Finally, I drew their attention to the dangers of picking and choosing among the resolutions of the United Nations. For any Member State to ignore a body or a decision of the United Nations on the pretext that it had

not voted for the relevant resolution is a dangerous attitude which could even, if one is not careful, hamper the very functioning of the United Nations. The fact is that certain members of the Council have sought to justify their lack of co-operation with our Committee on the grounds that they did not vote for the resolution which established it. I should like to stress, however, that, while those I spoke to were not able to accept all my ideas, the fact remains that I met with an attitude of attentive understanding on the part of each of them.

18. As a supplement to those direct contacts with members of the Security Council, and with the same aim of creating better mutual understanding, various missives were addressed to the Security Council expressing the views of the Committee on the basic principles which have guided its work and on the need for the Security Council to back its activities. These various steps, exchanges of view and explanations on the Committee's part were prompted solely by the Committee's desire to facilitate the work of the Security Council with a view to the adoption of a positive approach which could lead to the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

19. At the request of the Committee, the Security Council on 27 October last² began a reconsideration of the report and the recommendations adopted by the Assembly on 24 November 1976 in its resolution 31/20. Unfortunately, the Security Council has still not taken a decision on this question, despite the support of the majority of its members for the decisions of the General Assembly. Certain members of the Security Council feel that it would be untimely to take an immediate decision on this question.

20. The members of the Committee appreciate, of course, their keen desire not to hamper the peace efforts now under way. However, that should not be in any way a pretext for indefinitely immobilizing the Security Council. On the contrary, the recent progress achieved respecting recognition of the rights of the Palestinian people should serve as an incentive and should encourage positive action on the part of the Council, particularly since the recommendations submitted to the Council by the Committee ask only for the implementation of decisions and resolutions already adopted by the United Nations and accepted at some point by each of the parties directly or indirectly concerned in the Middle East crisis.

21. The members of the Committee, for their part, expect that the Council will resume its debate on the recommendations of the General Assembly as soon as circumstances allow, with a view to assisting their implementation.

22. I have expatiated at some length on the actions of the Committee in relation to the Security Council because the adoption of those recommendations by the Council is one of the Committee's main objectives. However, the Committee has also made various approaches to other competent organs of the United Nations. Those bodies have been invited to stand ready to apply the recommendations of the Committee and to take the necessary transitional measures to avoid any delay in the implementation of those recommendations.

² See *Official Records of the Security Council, Thirty-second Year*, 2041st meeting.

23. Furthermore, in conformity with paragraph 6 of General Assembly resolution 31/20, the Committee took steps to ensure the greatest possible dissemination of information on its work and on the various aspects of the problem posed by the implementation of the General Assembly's recommendations.

24. The Committee felt it was necessary to demonstrate to broad sectors of the world's public that its goal was to concern itself in an equitable and objective fashion with the problem of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, which, until recently, had appeared to be a matter of indifference to much of world public opinion.

25. What we had to do was to demonstrate that the question of Palestine was not a new question but, on the contrary, that the United Nations had indeed already made many pronouncements on the subject. The United Nations has adopted various resolutions on the matter whose implementation must now be ensured. Those resolutions, taken as a whole, give a clear view of all the rights of the Palestinian people, as well as of the principles on which those rights rest.

26. In this context, the Committee, with the collaboration of the United Nations Office of Public Information, made radio broadcasts explaining the purposes and objectives of the Committee and giving information on the recommendations adopted by the General Assembly on the question of Palestine. The Committee proposes to step up its activities in this field, making further radio and television broadcasts, and to supplement this with the publication of pamphlets on certain aspects concerning the dimension and the place of the Palestinian question in the over-all context of the Middle East crisis.

27. Much progress has been made with regard to the question of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, notwithstanding the many obstacles which have been created over 25 years of forgetfulness and incomprehension. Recently, the leaders of States playing an important role in the Middle East have made statements which our Committee has found most encouraging. First, there was the joint United States-Soviet Union statement issued on 1 October, which said:

"The United States and the Soviet Union believe that, within the framework of a comprehensive settlement of the Middle East problem, all specific questions of the settlement should be resolved, including such key issues as withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the 1967 conflict; the resolution of the Palestinian question, including ensuring the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. . . .

" . . .

"The United States and the Soviet Union believe that the only right and effective way for achieving a fundamental solution to all aspects of the Middle East problem in its entirety is negotiations within the framework of the Geneva Peace Conference, specially convened for these purposes, with participation in its work of the representatives of all the parties involved in the conflict, including those of the Palestinian people. . . ."

28. On 26 September last, Mr. Simonet, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belgium, speaking from the rostrum of the General Assembly on behalf of the States members of the European Economic Community, stated:

"The nine countries also continue to believe that a solution to the conflict will not be possible unless the legitimate right of the Palestinian people to give effective expression to its national identity becomes a reality. This would take into account, of course, the need for a homeland for the Palestinian people." [7th meeting, para. 51.]

29. In August 1976, the Fifth Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries, meeting in Colombo, approved our Committee's report and affirmed:

" . . . the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination, including the right of return and the right to national independence and the establishment of its independent, sovereign State in Palestine, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations".³

This position was again reaffirmed by the extraordinary meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Non-Aligned Countries, held in New York on 30 September last [see A/32/255-S/12410].

30. All these statements of position demonstrate the constantly growing recognition in the international community of the importance of the question of Palestine and of the implicit acceptance of basic facts and considerations on which our Committee's activity is founded. Unfortunately, these positive trends are gravely threatened by Israel's policy of establishing settlements in the Arab territories it occupies. Such a policy can only build up frustrations and make the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people even more difficult. In this regard, our Committee reacted by sending, on 28 July 1977, to the President of the Security Council, a letter expressing its profound concern at the decision of the Israeli Government to approve the establishment of three colonies at Camp Kadum, Ofra and Maale Adumin.⁴ In the Committee's opinion, that decision of the Israeli Government is incompatible with the recommendations of the General Assembly.

31. The United Nations has never considered the question of the Middle East in such favourable circumstances as those now prevailing. The state of mind of the various belligerents, as well as the present development of the international situation, affords a glimpse, beyond what had appeared to be insurmountable obstacles, of an evolutionary process which would appear to justify a relatively confident optimism. Thus, our General Assembly should grasp this opportunity and once again issue an appeal to the Security Council to approve without delay the recommendations conveyed to it by the Committee and to regard them as a basis for a solution of the question of Palestine. In so doing, the Security Council will increase considerably

³ See document A/31/197, annex IV, NAC/CONF.5/S/RES.10.

⁴ *Official Records of the Security Council, Thirty-second Year, Supplement for July, August and September 1977, document S/12377.*

the chances of a peaceful settlement in the Middle East and thus mark its loyalty to the historic message addressed to the world over three decades ago by the founding fathers of our Organization who assigned themselves the noble task of saving "succeeding generations from the scourge of war".

32. The PRESIDENT: I now call on the Rapporteur of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to present the report of the Committee.

33. Mr. GAUCI (Malta), Rapporteur of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People: Mr. President, belatedly, but no less sincerely, I warmly congratulate you on your election to the presidency of this Assembly. I compliment you also on the beauty of your country, rich in its diversity and dedicated in its pursuit of peace and co-operation among nations. I have been able to see this for myself since, for several weeks, I have been attending the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, which your counterparts in Belgrade are so ably organizing in the new Sava Centre. As your national holiday approaches, my colleagues and your people there are enjoying a deserved respite from their arduous labour. I preferred to forsake that holiday and to join you here over the next few days for several overriding considerations. I will only mention a few.

34. The first is that what we are about to discuss here—the question of Palestine as the core of the Middle East problem—casts a long and menacing shadow over security and co-operation in Europe, indeed throughout the world. The second is that the accent which is being put on human rights at that Conference by many participants applies equally to the questions being discussed here, and the rights of the Palestinian people should be among the foremost to be defended, since they have been persistently denied for so long. The third and perhaps the most important is that each one of us has a very heavy responsibility to respond to the appeal made by the Palestinian people through their representatives in this forum. They have come to seek the guidance and support of this Organization in securing redress of their legitimate grievances. I repeat today what I said when I introduced the first report of the Committee before the Security Council last year:

"The peaceful significance of this approach deserves emphasis. . . . But they want responsive and responsible action; tangible progress, not continued frustration, in their search to achieve their rights as individuals, as a people and as a nation."⁵

I also added then that no objective observer, no champion of human rights, no advocate of peace, could deny that the present predicament of the Palestinian people called for redress. As Rapporteur of the Committee, therefore, and since these aspirations remain unfulfilled, I felt I had a special duty to come before the Assembly and to let it know what the Committee has felt able to do over the past 12 months in furtherance of its task.

35. It is a customary courtesy when introducing a report to praise the Chairman and other officers of the Committee concerned. I do not propose to follow that pleasant

practice. I believe all members very well know the dedication, eloquence, impartiality and leadership with which Ambassador Fall of Senegal makes his mark on our work. I myself certainly owe him a deep debt of gratitude for his unfailing encouragement and enthusiasm.

36. The main task of the Committee was accomplished last year when it presented several recommendations for consideration which the Assembly at its thirty-first session was good enough to endorse overwhelmingly as a basis for the solution of the Palestine question. It was an honest, impartial and straightforward report. The details of the recommendations should by now be familiar. No doubt they can be varied and improved upon. But they had been firmly geared to securing two fundamental objectives—justice and peace—within a reasonable time-table, gradually utilizing the untapped potential of the United Nations to help us secure this elusive goal. The recommendations remain unchanged in our present report, their validity undiminished. But the first steps in the envisaged time-table have not yet been taken. We should rectify this omission.

37. The pace of progress in international conference diplomacy is undoubtedly slow. It took our Organization nearly 30 years before it gave the Palestinian question the objective and urgent attention it merited. But we have now reached an important phase: either we keep moving forward objectively along our selected path for progress, or else we may have to suffer the consequences of our irresolution. The Committee prefers the first option

38. Accordingly, and in brief, in my modest role as Rapporteur of the Committee I feel our main task now requires us mainly to keep open the forum for discussion; to consolidate the base of the support already received; to convince the remaining doubters; to make better known the realities of the question; to encourage all positive efforts towards the achievement of a just and lasting peace in the region; to strengthen the awakening hopes; to maintain the emphasis on a peaceful negotiated solution which would satisfy legitimate aspirations while allaying genuine pre-occupations; and to encourage all competent bodies of the United Nations to be ready to contribute their efforts as and when required.

39. To the extent that these combined objectives depend on the Committee, I feel I can honestly say that we have not overlooked any single one of them. Our forum has at all times remained open; indeed, we have more than once gone out of our way to seek the views of any party directly involved or having a contribution to make. We took great pains accurately to analyse any observations made on the first report of the Committee, and in this respect, while maintaining our original recommendations unchanged, we explained in writing, instead of verbally as had been the case at the previous session, why we felt that we should give adequate stress to only one side of the complex equation—that part which is unfulfilled and which represents the sole mandate within the Committee's competence. We sought to maintain close contact with our Secretary-General and with the members of the Security Council, since we held, and still hold, that all sectors of the United Nations system should act in concert if we are to make progress on this delicate, dangerous and intolerable situation. Although the Security Council has not yet taken decisive action, its potential contribution remains a valuable asset at hand.

⁵ *Ibid.*, *Thirty-second Year*, 1924th meeting.

40. The details of our endeavours are all provided in this, our second report, which is before the Assembly [A/32/35]. The Chairman of the Committee has already outlined the most important ones. I need not repeat them. Nor do I need to remind this Assembly that the recommendations of the Committee are morally and legally founded on the innumerable resolutions of the United Nations concerning the question now before us. Perhaps I could add that on more than one occasion, before both the Security Council and the General Assembly, we also asked for any additional constructive suggestions for broadening and strengthening the recommendations the Committee had devised. No suggestions were forthcoming, and therefore none have been incorporated in the report. To the verbal observations that were made we have submitted written replies which are reproduced as annexes to this report. Finally, the Committee severely censured additional illegal acts in the occupied territories which instead of facilitating a solution do the opposite.

41. And so once again we come before the Assembly as it takes upon itself the responsibility for reviewing the question of Palestine and the plight of its people. As I said last year,⁶ their past is on our conscience, their future is our concern. From the theoretical point of view, the question of Palestine has now come full circle, and there is undoubtedly reason for some encouragement. Influential voices from many important countries are now laying great stress on the central role of the Palestinian issue within the grave Middle East situation. That recognition, sad in itself, must nevertheless be noted with relief, even though it is long overdue, because it is a factor of fundamental importance, for it now represents a universal consensus.

42. Important as recent statements on the legitimate right of the Palestinian people to a homeland undoubtedly are, so much emphasis is being placed on Security Council resolution 242 (1967) that, by way of an example, I prefer to quote an opinion which goes back to January 1977, because in my view it represents a well-considered and knowledgeable contribution on this question. One of the main architects of resolution 242 (1967), a diplomat who needs no introduction here and who served in the area when it was under the British Mandate, Lord Caradon, after consultations with leaders of most of the countries in the region, wrote an article in *The Times* of London under the heading "Why the Palestinians see the Holy City as a Gateway to Peace". He said:

"One main conclusion is the clearest of all. The Palestinians want a State of their own on the West Bank of Jordan. They long for a homeland in which they take their own decisions and shape their own destiny and regain their self-respect by practical, constructive endeavour."

Later he added: "Moreover, international backing for the objective of a Palestinian State is overwhelming." Later still he wrote:

"It is no longer looked upon as a wildly idealistic conception that the security of Israel and the peace of the

whole Middle East must depend not on arms or on territory or on the domination of one side over the other, but on agreement and on peaceful coexistence, with Palestinians too having a right to self-determination and security in their own homeland."

I need hardly add that, with few exceptions, all nations recognize the PLO as the legitimate representatives of the Palestinian people. It is clear that none but the Palestinians themselves can determine who are their representatives, and it is known that efforts have been made to make the Palestine National Council as widely representative of all Palestinians as possible. Certainly no lasting solution in the area can be envisaged if one of the principal parties does not consider itself to have been adequately represented when its future is being determined.

43. However, now we have to go beyond theoretical progress. The critical moment of decision is before us. There are those who have the clear responsibility to transform theory into reality, in their own long-term interests and for the common good. We too—all of us—have a responsibility. Let us first save ourselves the embarrassment of the bitter and useless recrimination that characterized previous debates: justified though it may be, such recrimination serves no practical purpose. Let us consider simple, gradual, effective steps for progress. Let us not turn our backs on this historic opportunity, which may never recur. Let us not run the risk of a new generation of violence and bloodshed, devastation and human suffering too vast to imagine—much worse certainly than that which we have already witnessed in the past. Let us, therefore, for our part, without equivocation but with clarity, conviction and commitment, unanimously show in no unmistakable way wherein lies the path to peace in that region. In the best traditions of the great religions to which the region gave birth, let the message from this hall ring out loud and clear: dignity and nationhood for the Palestinian people, security in brotherhood for all States and people in the area, peace with justice in the Middle East.

44. As for the parties most directly involved, surely the generous first step should come from the temporary trespasser, not from the oppressed victims. This would be a combined contribution of tremendous significance, a real turning-point in the history of the region.

45. The PRESIDENT: The first speaker in the debate is the representative of the PLO, who will speak in accordance with resolution 3237 (XXIX). I call on Mr. Farouk Kaddoumi, head of the Political Department and member of the Executive Committee of the PLO.

46. Mr. KADDOUMI (Palestine Liberation Organization) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I should like first of all to express my gratitude and appreciation to Mr. Fall, the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, and Mr. Gauci, the Rapporteur of the Committee, for their very comprehensive and clear statements. They have in fact made it unnecessary for me to deal with many questions, since they have both spoken on them with objectivity, honesty and patience.

47. For four years—in other words, since we became observers at the United Nations—we have been participating

⁶ See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-first Session, Plenary Meetings*, 66th meeting, paras. 39-59.

in its work, drawing inspiration from its Charter and meeting representatives here each year at the same time in order to discuss with them our chronic problem, which has appeared on the agenda of this Assembly for the past 30 years, in order to arrive at a just settlement of the question within the framework of existing international instruments and legitimate political efforts.

48. Each time, after sketching an outline of the serious situation prevailing as a consequence of that problem and all its past and present ramifications, we offered proposals which could give an impetus to political efforts aiming at a peaceful settlement of this problem, which could well be translated into concrete practical realities.

49. This Assembly has witnessed the full support we have constantly received from its members. Israel and its ally, the United States of America, are the only members that did not join in the unanimous international support given to our proposals and those of our friends. The support this Assembly has given to the Palestinian initiatives, which were inspired by its ideas and efforts, is but proof of the desire of us all to serve the cause of international peace and to spare the international community the risks of war and its consequences. This Assembly it witness to the fact that the leaders of the PLO and the Palestine National Council, which is its highest body, have submitted to this international Organization more than one draft for the purpose of bringing about peace and justice. It is not we but our adversaries who have placed obstacles in the way of the implementation of those projects, because they run counter to their imperialist plans and expansionist aims to establish settlements in the region.

50. It is we, the leaders of the Palestinian people, who took the initiative of putting forward the historic proposal to settle the Palestinian question through the establishment of a democratic secular single State in Palestine where citizens, regardless of religion or ethnic origin, could coexist, within a society that would ensure equality of obligations and rights. That was stated in this Assembly by our brother Yasser Arafat in 1974,⁷ when he outlined his historic vision of an exemplary coexistence of all religious groups in Palestine. Similarly, our National Council in March 1976 adopted a plan accepting the creation of an independent Arab Palestinian State on Palestinian national land to be liberated by an armed struggle and by the pressure of world public opinion. We said that we accepted those terms within the context of international legality, the Charter of the United Nations and the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly. It is no secret that the PLO has supported more than one draft resolution submitted by different members of the Security Council with a view to achieving that noble objective. Unfortunately, those drafts were doomed to failure because of the United States veto. The report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, recently submitted to the Security Council, is but one of those many attempts that have moved the conscience of the world to seek a just and acceptable solution likely to ensure lasting peace in the area. In that connexion I must express our appreciation and gratitude to the Chairman and

members of that Committee who have spared no effort to enable the Palestinian people to exercise their national rights.

51. The Zionists, with the support of the United States Government, have always opposed and continue to oppose firmly elementary human rights for the Palestinian people. They refuse even to recognize these rights; they have never recognized the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, to the right to return to their land and to enter their homes from which they were driven by force, their right to exercise sovereignty and independence over their national territory and their right to create an independent State. Under these conditions it is only natural that our people—and all peoples of the world—maintain a consistent position. No force on earth can make us accept any limitation of those legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.

52. Despite the bitterness felt by every Palestinian citizen following the failure of this international Organization to implement its resolutions relating to the Palestinian question, our people continue to have the greatest respect for it and strive hard to support it as the sole forum empowered to solve international problems and to spare men the evils of war. We know, as all the world knows, what the international situation would be if the plans of the Zionist enemy and its allies were to succeed in diminishing the role of the United Nations, as happened in the past with the League of Nations. We wish the world to guard against such a conspiracy and to remind you that the day that this Organization becomes incapable of preserving peace the spectre of the cold war will again haunt our planet. Despite all our bitterness, we declare that we do not despair of success in our efforts at this level and in this context to achieve a just solution capable of ensuring lasting peace in the Middle East. We also wish to state that we shall seriously participate in all political efforts likely to solve our problem peacefully, provided that our national aspirations, which this Organization has already approved and reaffirmed its support of, are realized.

53. But our position and our unremitting efforts, just like those of the United Nations, have unfortunately not prevented some, acting on their own behalf, from bypassing this Organization, paying little heed to its resolutions and attempting to impose solutions that have been rejected by the Palestinian people, the peoples of the Arab nation and all our friends because they do not grant us even the minimum rights to which we are entitled.

54. This Assembly a few days ago adopted an important resolution concerning the Middle East crisis wherein it condemned the Zionist position in respect of the establishment of settlements and Israel's criminal attempt to pillage Arab land again and to Judaize Palestinian territory on the West Bank of the Jordan. The General Assembly in that resolution requested the early convening of the Geneva Peace Conference on the Middle East with the participation of the PLO, the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people [resolution 32/20]. The report of the Committee in regard to Israeli violations of human rights in the occupied territories cites proof of the brutality of the Zionist occupation, which practises annexation, establishes settlements, tortures detainees, dynamites homes, expels

⁷ *Ibid.*, Twenty-ninth Session, Plenary Meetings, 2282nd meeting, paras. 3-83.

the population and changes the demographic nature of the Arab occupied territories in order better to entrench Israeli domination.

55. Before the adoption of the resolution there had already been talks, contacts and intensive efforts to break the deadlock in order to arrive at a just settlement. The Soviet-American statement of 1 October 1977 was an important turning-point in those political endeavours; we fully appreciated them and have noted their positive aspects.

56. Unfortunately, the American side very soon, under Zionist pressure, retreated from the position it had agreed to take in that statement. Thus Zionist arrogance and Israeli obstinacy have brought this positive action to a halt if not reversed it. This has brought the situation back to its starting-point and has created in the international community as a whole a sense of pessimism, which is reflected in the situation in the area.

57. Instead of seeing resistance to the Zionist position, supported by the United States of America, and a consolidation of the positive international position aimed at finding an honourable settlement to ensure peace and justice, we were taken unawares, as everyone was, by the dramatic step taken by the President of Egypt on 19 November 1977, when he visited occupied Jerusalem.

58. To say nothing of the feelings of bitterness and sorrow of the Arab people, the Arab nation and all our friends throughout the world, we adopted, in connexion with that visit, an objective position which led us to condemn it and to rise against it, for a series of reasons which we could list as follows.

59. First of all, the decision of the President of Egypt, as he himself recognized, was taken without consulting the Arab leaders, including the leaders of the front-line forces in the Israeli/Arab conflict as well as his partners in the October War: Syria and the PLO. Everyone knows that the decision was so serious and important for the fate of the Arab nation that it would have required consultation and prior agreement. Moreover, that measure sets the Egyptian President apart from the Arab community and is a challenge to the decisions taken at the Arab summit Conferences in Algiers, Rabat and Cairo.

60. Secondly, such a visit implied recognition of Israel, whereas the Arab nation has refused to recognize Israel because it does not recognize, but violates, Arab sovereignty and violates Arab soil and Arab rights including the land and the rights of the Palestinian people.

61. Thirdly, this measure is even more serious since the President of Egypt addressed the Israeli Knesset, thus implying that Jerusalem is the capital of Israel, something that the United Nations has refused to recognize. Even the United States of America refused to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, although it is the chief ally of the government of the Zionist entity.

62. Fourthly, the Arab split we are witnessing today as a result of that visit, something that was to be expected, will hamper, rather than assist, the early convening of the

Geneva Conference because the major parties involved in the existing conflict have refused to take part in the measure advocated by the President of Egypt. They have not supported it and see it as a departure from the course that might lead to the resumption of that Geneva Conference.

63. Fifthly, the negative aspects of that visit are compounded by the fact that it was carried out in very bad, complex conditions at a time when Israel persists more than ever in refusing to recognize the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, although those rights were recognized and affirmed by this Assembly. Thus, Israel refuses any participation by the PLO in any political effort that is made in order to arrive at a just solution. That is a violation of one of the most elementary rights of the peoples of the world, namely, the right to choose the persons who should represent them or speak on their behalf. This is in fact a violation of an Arab resolution adopted unanimously in Rabat declaring that the PLO is the sole representative of the Palestinian people. In fact, this is a defiance of the international community, which recognized and approved this fact by a majority.

64. That visit took place at a time when a group of fanatics and ultra-extremists has assumed power in the Zionist entity. These people are headed by the terrorist Menachem Begin, the hero of the Deir Yasin massacre, who calls the occupied Palestinian territories "liberated territories", and by Moshe Dayan who would wish to integrate the Palestinians in those places where they have sought refuge—not to speak of Ezer Weizman, who insolently declares that he can inflict a military defeat on all the Arab armies which would paralyse them for 10 years, and Ariel Sharon who takes measures to establish more Zionist settlements in our occupied lands in order to bring in 2 million more Jews.

65. Those are the reasons why we have condemned that visit and why we have rejected the arguments adduced to justify it. That visit was accompanied by a wide press campaign orchestrated by the Zionist and imperialist media in order to make it appear as a giant and realistic step leading to peace. We must, however, examine all its consequences and see whether those consequences are as they have been described or whether it is not the opposite that is true. What do we find?

66. First of all, the Arab split has become greater as a result of the visit, and that could lead to a polarization of the Arab nation as a whole, which would be divided into two camps. We do not believe—no one can believe—that such a serious situation would in any way help to consolidate peace efforts. Quite the opposite, such a situation is fraught with dangers of new explosions, all the more so since, as a result of that visit, extremism is taking over from the moderation, reason and wisdom which prevailed before the visit. No one can foresee what the consequences of those extreme positions might be.

67. Secondly, the Egyptian President's visit has freed the United States of America from its responsibility as regards the pressure exerted on Israel to renounce its position of obstinacy and defiance, a position that Israel continues to maintain in respect of the two most important aspects of

the settlement of the problem, that is, total withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories and the guarantee of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

68. Thirdly, as a result of this visit we see looming on the horizon possibilities of bilateral solutions. That is the aim pursued at all times by Israel in order to weaken the Arab position and to prevent the attainment of a complete and definitive solution which would put an end to Israel's well-known expansionist strategy and its continued slogans on settlements. It is obvious that such bilateral solutions would only serve to keep tension alive in our region, something that would continue to threaten the cause of peace.

69. Fourthly, the invitation addressed by the Egyptian Government to the parties involved in the conflict to convene a preparatory meeting which might be a prelude to the Geneva Conference—an invitation which has been rejected by the Syrian Arab Republic and the PLO—clearly shows that this is a sterile approach that will in no way offer further impetus to peace efforts, the more so since Israel, through its Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs, declared clearly that it refused to negotiate with the PLO, whereas Israel knew beforehand that the PLO would refuse to attend that Conference. Our people in the occupied Arab territories has expressed its will and determination to remain faithful to its leaders, as can be seen from the memoranda and petitions addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations wherein it is stated that our people will never accept anyone but the PLO to represent it and lead it.

70. Fifthly, the Soviet Union, a Co-Chairman of the Geneva Conference, criticized these moves in their entirety and reaffirmed its consistent position, namely, that the Soviet Union will not participate in the Geneva Conference unless the PLO participates as well and unless the Palestinian question is considered in such a manner as to guarantee the rights of our Palestinian people.

71. We are today at the threshold of a new and dangerous stage where the possibilities for war in the Middle East region have been multiplied and where the vicious circle of contradictions has become wider, threatening regional and international peace.

72. The PLO—and with it all the Arab Palestinian people—despite its pessimistic view of the recent chain of events, remains convinced that it is necessary to continue to pursue the strategy it adopted some years ago, namely, that it should continue its armed and political struggle until it achieves its legitimate objectives, as recognized by this Assembly. The PLO firmly rejects any plot designed in any way to distort the will of our people through desperate efforts to produce other leaders to replace the present ones. We shall fight against any attempt to whittle down or sweep away our rights. We stand by all our rights: to self-determination, to return to our lands and to establish an independent Palestinian State enjoying full independence with no strings attached.

73. If the Zionist entity succeeds in making its existence and its policy of expansion and domination the first item on the list of priorities established in the Zionist movement,

thanks to the influence it wields through financial pressure and pressure on the information media, there is nothing to prevent us, for our part, from making the question of Palestine, the liberation of our land and the creation of our independent State the first item on the list of priorities for our Arab nation, which also has strategic petroleum and financial resources that could well tilt the balance of power in favour of our cause, the cause of law, justice and peace.

74. Our people has struggled for almost half a century to be able to exercise the most elementary rights of peoples, and for that it has made enormous sacrifices; hundreds of thousands of martyrs have died, and the peoples of the Arab nation, and especially the great Egyptian people, have always assisted and supported us in this struggle. Hence I must recall here all the sacrifices of our nation, all the martyrs who have died in their thousands on the field of honour to defend our fate, our right to existence and our national objectives.

75. Our people are fully aware also of the sacrifices made by the peoples of Egypt and the Syrian Arab Republic during the prolonged struggle that has lasted over 30 years. While at this time we find ourselves at cross purposes with the Government of Egypt, we are fully aware that the Zionist enemy, because of his mental make-up, his obstinacy, his extremism and his rejection of the constituent elements for attaining a just and vital settlement, bids fair to bring back our unity and to solidify the Arab position. Because peace in the Middle East cannot be achieved without a just settlement of the Palestinian problem, that solution will come only if it is imposed by force on the Zionist enemy. And the force capable of achieving that aim is to be found only in the unity of the Arab position and the solidarity of the peoples of the world with that position.

76. Four years ago we came here bringing in one hand a gun and in the other an olive branch. At each session we have been putting forward through you, Mr. President, to world public opinion political initiatives designed to solve our problem and remove the spectre of war from the Middle East region within the context of the United Nations Charter and the General Assembly resolutions. Each time we have received strong support, until finally Israel has been left in isolation; its true face has been unmasked and in this Organization it meets only condemnation and denunciation.

77. Here, firmly but with all modesty, we declare yet again that, however circumstances may change and whatever criteria are chosen, no one can impose upon our people a solution that they reject. We do not stand alone. It is enough to look at the map of the Arab world or even of the world as a whole, to see how many countries support us, how many support the struggle of our people and our just cause. We are acting not only in the context of our Palestinian responsibilities, to defend our existence and our rights, but also in the context of our Arab responsibilities, to defend the Arab world and the Arab destiny. We are also moved by our sincere desire to defend the cause of peace, which we so deeply revere.

78. However, there is a great difference between peace and surrender. There is even a fundamental contradiction

between the two concepts. We have spared no effort to defend peace. Our tenacious defence of peace will only be exceeded by our refusal, at whatever cost and whatever sacrifice, to surrender.

79. Our people, who for exactly 30 years have been robbed of their territory, driven from their homeland and shorn of their identity and of their human and national rights—our people, who refuse to live as refugees and displaced and lost persons, who fight for freedom and the creation of an independent State—express their gratitude to this Assembly and hope that the Assembly will achieve success in its untiring efforts in the service of right, justice and peace.

80. Mr. NUSEIBEH (Jordan): One learned observer once remarked that if we were to link together the printed material on Palestine, it could span the Atlantic Ocean. No one, I am sure, would want such lengthiness or depth. There are truths so self-evident to the non-partisan that an attempt at vindication would be an uncalled-for invitation to doubt. I shall therefore confine my brief statement to a few basic essentials and leave the judgement in the trusted hands of members of this Assembly.

81. First, the Palestinian people have been the undoubted indigenous inhabitants of Palestine since the dawn of recorded history, 7,000 to 8,000 years ago. Notwithstanding Israeli claims that the Palestinian people do not exist and have no entitlement, even a partial one, to their ancestral homeland, the Israelis seem to be totally oblivious of the universally recognized principles of international law, which stipulate that the entitlement of a people to a country derives from long and continued possession.

82. Secondly, when modern Zionist ideology pursues a devisive and hostile attitude towards the Palestinian Arabs, it cannot have been derived from Jewish history, but is motivated by extraneous forces in which the Palestinian Arabs had no hand and for which they can by no stretch of the imagination be held responsible. If the Tsarists persecuted their own nationals and the Nazis committed their abominable holocaust, why should retribution for those acts be visited upon the Palestinian Arabs? Why should an abominable persecution be inflicted, bringing about the destruction of an innocent third party, a whole people, who in those days did not travel and did not know what went on in other continents?

83. Thirdly, the United Nations, and particularly the General Assembly and the Security Council, have been passing numerous resolutions with a view to redeeming the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people, but those resolutions have all remained unheeded and unimplemented. It is an exercise in futility to enumerate them; they are in the records of the United Nations' most efficient filing system.

84. Fourthly, it is indisputably clear to all that the Palestinian Arabs have been and continue to be the principal victims of Israeli conquest, annexation and systematic colonization. Not one inch of occupied territory has been restored; not a single refugee has been repatriated; and even the exiled victims of 1967, some quarter of a million from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, remain exiled victims.

85. Fifthly, it is now conclusively evident after three decades that naked power, and not an orderly international system, wins the day, unrestrained by considerations of justice, equity or United Nations resolutions. Any redemption for the Palestinian people must, therefore, be sought through other avenues, if not in this generation, then in generations to come. For the 3.5 million Palestinian Arabs, it is a long, long struggle for survival. As I stated on an earlier occasion, they will not fade away from the face of the earth, no matter what happens, now or then. As a matter of fact, they have a notoriously high birth-rate.

86. Sixthly, needless to state, there can never be peace in the Middle East unless and until Palestinian Arab rights are recognized and restored eventually, we hope, with the whole-hearted and unreserved support of their brethren in the Arab world and their brethren, the peace-loving peoples everywhere.

87. Seventhly, feverish and breathless diplomatic activity is at present under way on almost all fronts, but with varying approaches, forms and attitudes. I am not going to get into that, to avoid aggravating Arab schisms. But I can state that my Government has decided not to participate in the preparatory Cairo conference or in any conference on the Middle East, unless all parties to the conflict participate, including the PLO. This stems from our long-held conviction of the need for a unified Arab stand on this fateful issue if we are to achieve a just and lasting peace. And let me say this: that having been the victim and the pawn in the game for decades, the Palestinian people have lost faith in forms, approaches and modalities. They can only have their faith restored when they see, in concrete and tangible form, that their existence is no longer in terminal jeopardy; that, like all other nations of the world, they have a homeland and a home which they can call their own; that they can live in dignity, normality and freedom, not on borrowed time, nor in the wilderness of nowhere.

88. Eighthly, pending that day, it is our duty, as Members of the United Nations, to continue to give a helping hand and unequivocal support to a people afflicted by unparalleled adversity.

89. Ninthly, Jordan, which has at least 1 million Palestinian refugees and displaced persons, pledges—quite apart from its fundamental and unalterable national commitment to the just causes and destiny of the Arab world—its unswerving support in every struggle and endeavour to restore the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people, including their natural right to self-identification and self-determination. Jordan has repeated on every occasion that it is for the Palestinians to determine their future and shape their destiny freely and without hindrance from any side.

90. Every people must, one day, face the moment of crucial decision-making and shoulder the burden and the consequences of its decisions. It is truly surprising that the Israelis, who claim to want peace and to want to live peacefully with their closest neighbours—the Palestinians—are fearful of an across-the-table dialogue with their principal adversaries, who have indicated their willingness for such a dialogue under appropriate chairmanship at the Geneva Conference.

91. In situations of strife and conflict, it is universally the case that the disputants strive to reach an agreement. If there were no dispute, then any effort at agreement would be a waste of time and effort.

92. Tenthly, I wish to assure the General Assembly that Jordan's dedication to a just and lasting peace in the Middle East and in the world at large is staunch and unqualified and we shall, therefore, contribute whenever we can to its achievement.

93. When we talk about peace we mean real and enduring peace, and not just ephemeral, *ad hoc* truces and pacifications—I said that most categorically during the debate on this item last year⁸—provided the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people are restored. I also said that if serious consideration were given by the Israeli leadership to the uppermost question of peace, and if the Palestinians and Israelis were to live side by side in amity and fraternity, as the Arabs and the Jews did for countless generations, the Middle East and the world might well witness one of its greatest creative transformations. A decision either way will be momentous for all. But this can only happen if both of us unshackle ourselves from the conflicts, tragedies and sufferings of the past few decades.

94. It is in this spirit that we are discussing today the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, established by the Assembly in its resolution 3376 (XXX) of 10 November 1975, and which submitted its first report to the Assembly at its thirty-first session.

95. This year's report outlines the efforts undertaken by the Committee, under the most able and dedicated leadership of its Chairman, Ambassador Fall of Senegal, to promote the implementation of its recommendations in

accordance with paragraph 5 of General Assembly resolution 31/20. We should all be grateful to the Chairman, Ambassador Fall, and to the Vice-Chairman and the Rapporteur as well as to all members of the Committee, for their painstaking and thankless task.

96. In its report, the Committee states that:

“Having taken into account the various observations made on its report and recommendations and in the light of current events in the region, the Committee unanimously decided to reaffirm the validity of its recommendations, endorsed by the General Assembly.”—It is no longer a report of the Committee; it is a resolution of the General Assembly—“It agreed that the date suggested for the withdrawal of Israeli occupation forces from territories occupied in 1967, although now passed, should be retained for its symbolic significance and as a timely reminder of the urgency of a peaceful solution under the auspices of the United Nations, and particularly on the basis of resolutions unanimously adopted but not yet implemented.” [A/32/35, para. 43.]

97. Ambassador Fall most ably presented the Committee's findings to the Security Council, but it was agreed that a decision on those suggestions should be deferred until such time as the Security Council had considered the question of Palestine.

98. If the situation pertaining to the question of Palestine is to be unfettered from its prolonged stalemate, then something must be done about it. The Committee's report is a position paper, a policy programme of implementation which grapples with most of the conceivable variables that might be raised in the long entangled issue, and endeavours, pragmatically, to find appropriate solutions. It is for this reason that my delegation endorses the report and is confident that the General Assembly will do likewise.

⁸ *Ibid.*, Thirty-first Session, Plenary Meetings, 69th meeting, paras. 22-54.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.