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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 19th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. GREGORIADES (Greece)

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The meeting was called to order at 11.15 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 55: REPORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE ISRAELI PRACTICES AFFECTING THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE POPULATION OF THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES (A/31/218, A/31/235 and Add.1, A/31/302) (continued)

1. Mr. ALLAF (Syrian Arab Republic) reserved his right to revert in greater detail to the report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Population of the Occupied Territories at a later meeting. However, he wished to point out that the report was the eighth in which the Special Committee described the distressing situation of the Arab inhabitants of the occupied territories, who were being oppressed in their own country and reduced to the status of aliens on the soil where they had been born and where their ancestors had lived for centuries. Chapter V of the report was entitled "Quneitra" and not, it should be emphasized, the "city" of Quneitra because the city had entirely disappeared and nothing remained on the spot where once stood the "Pearl of the Golan", a regional capital where nearly 60,000 people made their homes. Dwellings, shops, schools, mosques and churches had been dynamited or razed by bulldozers and the rubble they had left now bore witness to the savage racism of the Zionist entity and the inhuman crimes that Israel did not hesitate to commit. The most shocking aspect of that unspeakable act was that it had been coldly premeditated and systematically executed during the few hours before the withdrawal of the Israeli troops, after the signing of the Agreement on the disengagement of Israeli and Syrian forces.

2. It had always been Israel's tactic to deny its abuse of authority and try to conceal it behind a wall of oppression and censorship in the occupied territories: that explained its adamant refusal to permit access by all investigating groups sent to the territories, as it had done in the case of the Special Committee and the various United Nations bodies or other international organizations which had tried to get an accurate picture of what was happening under Israeli occupation. Only when Israeli aggression had been liquidated and the last soldier of the occupation forces had been permanently expelled from the Arab territories would it be possible to uncover all the aspects of the criminal conduct of the Zionist racist régime, just as it had been only after the defeat of nazism that the full horror of Hitler's crimes had been realized.

3. The liberation of a portion of the Arab territories following the October 1973 conflict had provided an opportunity, however, to raise the curtain on Zionist practices. When the events of Quneitra had been disclosed, they had shocked the entire international community and, as early as its twenty-ninth session, the General Assembly had adopted resolution 3240 C (XXIX), requesting the Special Committee to draw up an inventory of the destruction wrought in Quneitra, to determine the nature and extent of the damage and to evaluate it with the help of experts appointed for that purpose. The Assembly had also endorsed the findings of the Special Committee, which, after visiting Quneitra on 9 July 1974, had stated in its report to the General Assembly at its twenty-ninth session (A/9817) that it had become convinced that Israel had been responsible for the systematic devastation of the city immediately before the withdrawal of its forces (para. 157).

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4. In pursuance of that resolution, the Special Committee had made a selection among many experts and had instructed the Swiss expert, Edward Grüner, to make a preliminary study. When the General Assembly had noted at its thirtieth session (resolution 3525 C (XXX)), that the Special Committee had been unable to submit the comprehensive report requested of it, the Special Committee had asked Mr. Grüner to continue and to complete his work. Heading a team of four specialists, he had stayed in the Quneitra region from April to July 1976 and in September last, had submitted a detailed report accompanied by plans and photographs to the Special Committee. A number of copies of that report were displayed in the conference room in which the Committee was now meeting and the members were free to consult them. That scientific analysis demonstrated the competence of Mr. Grüner and his team, and they should be congratulated by the Committee.

5. The report indicated that almost the entire city (97 per cent) had been systematically and deliberately demolished just before the Israeli forces withdrew. The plans, photographs, figures and findings contained in the report of the experts already constituted overwhelming evidence of a heinous crime. The members of the Committee were about to witness a live illustration of that crime with the screening of "Quneitra: death of a city", a British film of Lane End Productions. It had been shown to the Special Committee, which had included it in its official documentation along with the publications, photographs, books, testimony, etc. on which it had based its work. The members of the Committee would see with their own eyes that the occupation forces had not confined themselves to destroying houses, commercial establishments and schools; they had not hesitated to make hospitals their targets, to plunder mosques and churches and had even gone so far as to profane graves and mutilate corpses. They would also be able to note, in a short film sequence excerpted from a news broadcast of British television and filmed a few days before the occupation forces withdrew, that Quneitra's buildings, which had entirely disappeared shortly thereafter, had been standing at that time. The Zionist representative would find it hard to refute that evidence.

6. In view of the importance of the film, which was a concrete illustration of chapter V of the Special Committee's report, his delegation proposed that it should be considered an official document of the Special Political Committee as an annex to the Special Committee's report (A/31/218) and that that living proof of the crime committed by the Israeli racists should be preserved in the archives of the United Nations.

7. The rubble which was now all that remained of the beautiful city of Quneitra demonstrated the lengths to which the hatred of the racist Zionist entity could go, but for the Arab peoples and for all the countries which supported their just cause, it symbolized the need to continue the fight until every inch of Arab territory was liberated and cleansed of the Israeli occupation which had defiled it.

8. Mr. DORON (Israel), speaking on a point of order, said that since the Committee had once again adopted the old biased and tendentious decision, his delegation would not attend the screening which was to take place at the

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meeting. Furthermore, it categorically rejected all the allegations made by the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

9. Mr. MUSSA (Somalia) and Mr. BENNOUNA (Morocco), whose delegations had been unable to participate in the voting at the last meeting for reasons beyond their control, requested that it be duly noted that they would have voted for the Senegalese proposal.

10. The CHAIRMAN invited the Committee to attend the showing of the film entitled "Quneitra: death of a city". He noted that the film would subsequently be deposited in the United Nations Film Library.

The meeting was suspended at 11.35 a.m. and resumed at 12 noon.

11. Mr. ALLAF (Syrian Arab Republic) said that he wished to apologize to the members of the Committee for imposing on them such a painful spectacle. Everyone knew that criminals did not like to see their crimes revealed in their presence and he could understand perfectly well that the representative of Israel should have preferred to leave the room.

12. Mr. DORON (Israel) said that the lofty sentiments expressed by Mr. M'Baye in his statement introducing the report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Population of the Occupied Territories (A/31/218) at the 17th meeting were contradicted by the not so lofty methods of work of that Committee and its lack of impartiality, not to say its deliberate bias against Israel.

13. His delegation rejected Mr. M'Baye's insinuations, particularly his finding fault with Israel's position regarding the proposal made by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to set up joint commissions of inquiry after the Yom Kippur war of 1973, while praising the attitude of Egypt. In that connexion, he wished to make it clear that in its reply to ICRC the Israeli Government had stated that it had presented to ICRC a number of complaints concerning grave breaches of the Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War of 12 August 1949 by the Governments of Egypt and Syria and would welcome an investigation of those complaints under the auspices of ICRC in accordance with the principles outlined in the International Committee's note of 12 December 1973.

14. In its report on its activities in 1974, ICRC itself had recalled that, having received numerous complaints from the parties to the conflict of alleged violations of the Geneva Conventions, it had sent identical notes to the three Governments concerned proposing that joint commissions of inquiry should be set up in accordance with article 52 of the First Geneva Convention, article 53 of the Second Convention, article 132 of the Third Convention and article 149 of the Fourth Convention, in order to shed as much light as possible on the facts and to prevent further violations. The Egyptian Government had accepted the principle of the establishment of a commission of inquiry but with the reservation that it

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should consist of neutral members and that its activities should cover all violations committed since the war of 1967. The Israeli Government had likewise signified its approval of the principle involved but had indicated that it wished to restrict the field of activity of the commissions of inquiry to complaints made by the belligerents concerning allegations of violations of the Third Convention. The Syrian Government had not replied to ICRC's note.

15. He stressed that Israel, concerned at the inhuman treatment inflicted on Israeli prisoners of war, had accepted ICRC's proposal, whereas Syria had taken no notice of it and Egypt had ultimately rejected it.

16. He wished also to clarify two points mentioned by Mr. M'Baye. It was not true that the Defence (Emergency) Regulations, 1945, had been declared inapplicable in Israel: their provisions were applicable in Israel as well as in the administered areas, although on different legal grounds. It was equally false to state that the Criminal Code (Offences Committed Abroad) Amendment, 1972, applied in the administered areas and was retroactive.

17. Referring to the report of the Committee and particularly to paragraphs 360 and 361, he said he did not understand why the Committee complained that its activities had been criticized as an exercise in propaganda engineered by a faction hostile to Israel and that the impeachment of its integrity was "the only answer brought by the Government of Israel to the serious allegations made against it". Israel had done much more than question the Committee's integrity: the Israeli Government considered that resolution 2443 (XXIII) establishing the Committee was a most one-sided one, ignoring as it did Security Council resolution 237 (1967) and the plight of the Jewish communities in Arab countries. Furthermore, the Committee was composed of representatives of countries which had no diplomatic relations with Israel and which systematically opposed Israel alongside the States which were most hostile to it. In short, since its establishment, the Committee had displayed its prejudice against Israel, asserting that the very presence of Israel in the administered areas constituted a violation of the basic rights of the civilian population; it was obvious that Israel had already been convicted.

18. In addition, his delegation had repeatedly pointed out that the Committee was exceeding its mandate, inter alia by examining "Israel's policies". His delegation also felt that the Committee had interpreted the words "Israeli practices" as having an exclusively perjorative connotation and that it had deliberately closed its eyes to any benefits derived by the local population from Israel's activities.

19. His delegation had analysed before the Special Political Committee the seven previous reports of the Special Committee in question and had shown that they were partial, distorting or misrepresenting the facts, and that their aims and conclusions were as questionable as the methods used. The eighth report had been no exception to that rule. The Committee readily accepted the statements and depositions made against Israel without trying to verify their accuracy, notably in the case of a Mrs. Felicia Langer, to whose testimony considerable space was

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devoted in the report. Similarly, chapter IV of the report was entitled "Analysis of Evidence", whereas no real proof had been furnished in support of the false accusations made against Israel. The Committee made the mistake of formulating its charges first of all, drawing its conclusions at practically the same time and then looking for proof to support its conclusions. Thus the Committee spoke of an alleged policy of "annexation and settlement" yet it had never been able to prove that those two words were inseparable in the case of the administered areas. In that connexion, his delegation wished to state again that that question lay entirely outside the limits of the Committee's mandate and that its conclusions were just as baseless and wrong as those contained in its previous reports. The statements he had made on the subject before the Special Political Committee on 19 November 1973 and 26 November 1975 were still valid in 1976.

20. In paragraphs 25 to 75 of the report the Committee sought to prove its allegations by quoting from Israeli newspapers; actually the quotations were fragments of articles taken out of context. In paragraph 50, for example, it was said that "land used for the building of roads had been expropriated from private owners, while the systematic draining of water for the industries and agriculture in the plane had left the West Bank farmers short of water". Apart from the fact that those conclusions were based on depositions by a Major Cooper and his wife which were accepted as a matter of course by the Committee, it should be borne in mind that private land required for the construction of public roads was expropriated from its owners all over the world. The demands of town planning and land development were not peculiar to Israel. As for the shortage of water for farm use in the West Bank, it was well known that farming in the West Bank had never previously been as prosperous as it had been since 1967. In that connexion he referred to the statement which he had made before the Special Political Committee on 3 November 1976 under agenda item 54.

21. Paragraph 54 mentioned expropriation of Arab lands in Beit-Jallah. There could be no objection to expropriating such land for the construction of dwellings for the local population, for the land had belonged to the Jordanian Army. It was clear from the article in the Jerusalem Post that the statement by Mr. Toledano (para. 57) referred to a group of Bedouin who had been generously compensated for some lands on which they had been illegally squatting; but again, that matter was not within the purview of the Committee, since the land in question was in Israeli territory and had nothing to do with Yamit.

22. In paragraph 61 of the report it was mentioned that Major and Mrs. Cooper had confirmed a story about events in the village of Abu Shanar, as if they were authorities qualified to do so. After a thorough investigation by competent persons, it had been proved that the Coopers' version of the facts was completely untrue. As for the story in Ha'aretz, what had happened was that a number of Arab land brokers had attempted to represent themselves to the authorities as being entitled to compensation. The perpetrators of that fraud had been tried and sentenced to terms of imprisonment and it could be assumed that in the Committee's next report their names would appear in the list of Arabs detained for no reason by the Israeli authorities. How could it be said that Israel was carrying out a policy of annexation and settlement when after nearly 10 years there were less than 5,000 Jews living in the administered areas among an Arab population of 1,140,000?

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23. With respect to everything connected with legal matters, the Committee had relied exclusively on the evidence of an Israeli lawyer, Mrs. Langer, who was a leader of the pro-Moscow Israeli Communist Party and was an active propagandist against Israel. If the Committee had chosen to invite her from among all the lawyers who defended accused persons before Israeli military courts without thereby trying to bring about the downfall of the country in which they were living, it was because it had been sure that her evidence would be to the Committee's liking, in other words, that it would be as unfavourable to Israel as possible.

24. The depositions of Mrs. Langer were a veritable issue of lies, half-truths, inaccuracies and distortions. He would deal only with the most outstanding points in that part of the report, but that did not mean that his delegation agreed to what was said in other parts.

25. In paragraph 78 it was said that certain persons were tried in the Israeli court in Lydda, which was made to sit as a military court for those purposes. That was not so. That court had been established from the outset as a military court and any person, irrespective of his nationality, religion or ethnic grouping, could be tried before it if charged with an offence under the Defence (Emergency) Regulations of 1945. Likewise, what Mrs. Langer had said about the jurisdiction of military courts with respect to minors and other persons in the occupied territories (paras. 79 and 80) was inaccurate and tendentious. With regard to the composition of military courts (para. 81), the report did not mention that the judge sitting alone or the presiding judge in such courts must be a member of the Bar and must have at least six years' experience.

26. Paragraph 85 quoted Mrs. Langer as saying that the Criminal Code (Offences Abroad) Amendment, 1972, was applied retroactively, which was not true, and extraterritorially, which was the case in many countries. Furthermore, no one was punished for the expression of an opinion or for membership in an organization, contrary to what was stated in paragraph 86. Likewise, contrary to what was stated in paragraph 87, it was only assistance to illegal organizations which was prohibited and not aid to families of detainees and convicted offenders, who were helped by the Israeli administration itself.

27. All the allegations relating to the procedures concerning administrative detention (paras. 88, 89 and 90) were also misleading: administrative detainees had rights and remedies and there were only 37 of them, which was a remarkably low figure both absolutely and in relation to the number of administrative detainees in some of the countries which spoke against Israel.

28. As to procedures and practices in handling security offences, prison conditions and conditions in women's prisons (paras. 93 to 136), it was true that in one or two cases, which were completely exceptional, force had regrettably been used against prisoners. It was in one of those exceptional cases that Ahmed Sheikh Dahdhoul had died. But Mrs. Langer had apparently withheld from the Committee information which she had had in her possession at the time of her

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testimony, namely that the officer responsible for that action had been tried, found guilty and sentenced to a long term of imprisonment. It was also not true to say that lawyers could not talk to their clients, that a person could be kept under arrest before trial for a period of six months and that that period could be renewed indefinitely. The truth was that no one could be detained by the Army or the police before trial for more than 18 days. After that, a warrant of detention had to be obtained from a court, which insisted that the investigation should be completed as quickly as possible.

29. In order to lend some semblance of credibility to her stories of torture, Mrs. Langer had provided the Committee with the names of a number of prisoners who had allegedly been tortured. It was totally wrong to say that people were held in prison blindfolded and tied up or that they had to drink polluted water and listen to the howling of dogs (para. 100). It was not only for having been in possession of 20 detonators that Mrs. El-Hawari had been convicted but also because she had tried to murder a number of Arab residents of Ramallah by sending them poisoned sweets and drinks since the recipients had refused to co-operate with a terrorist organization of which Mrs. El-Hawari had headed the local cell. From the very first days of her imprisonment, Mrs. El-Hawari had been under constant medical care because she suffered from a disease of the spine. It was only after she had been released at her request that she had complained about ill-treatment during her detention in Israel, whereas for five years she had been seeing doctors practically every day and had met representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross without ever making any complaint. On the contrary, after her release she had remained on excellent terms with the prison personnel, to whom she had on several occasions expressed her gratitude.

30. The allegation that Mrs. Shafik Tahha had been ill-treated (para. 101) was completely without foundation. It should be noted in that regard that in 1974 the Women's International Democratic Federation had submitted to the Commission on Human Rights a complaint in which it was alleged that Mrs. Tahha had been expelled from the West Bank against her will, which contradicted the report that Mrs. Tahha had been released shortly after being sentenced when her request to emigrate had been granted by the West Bank regional commander.

31. No one was arrested by the Israeli authorities just for being a Communist (para. 102). The Communist Party was not forbidden in Israel, as it was in most Arab countries, and there were even a few Communist members in the Israeli Parliament. The Mayor of Nazareth was a Communist and he was not prevented from sowing anti-Israeli propaganda. It was only when a person, irrespective of his political associations, committed a criminal offence that action could be taken against him. As long as members of the Jordanian Communist Party, which was forbidden in Jordan, living in the West Bank had refrained from engaging in criminal activities, nothing had been done against them. It was only when those people had set up the so-called "Palestinian National Front" and had taken up terrorist activities that the security authorities had arrested those guilty of criminal offences. In 1974 Cairo and Beirut newspapers had themselves reported that the General Secretary of the Jordanian Communist Party had stated that his

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comrades in the West Bank had committed acts of terror. It was the duty of every self-respecting Government to protect the population against such acts and that was what the Israeli authorities were doing.

32. As to the alleged torture of prisoners, paragraph 111 stated that Mrs. Langer had observed marks of horrible torture on the bodies of some men whom she had seen before their imprisonment and who had previously appeared completely healthy. But how could she say that they had no previous scars? It was strange that Mr. Suleiman El-Najab and Khalil Hijazi had been visited by their families and even by representatives of the International Red Cross shortly after seeing Mrs. Langer and had not complained about being tortured. Mr. Jamal Freteh, whom Mrs. Langer had asked to show her signs of mistreatment, had been unable to do so and had indicated that he had no complaints about the treatment he had received. Mr. El Harb, whose family had said he had been tortured in prison, had been examined at Ramallah by two doctors who had found no trace of ill-treatment. Mr. Attalah Rashmawi had been detained for participating in subversive activities of the so-called "Palestinian National Front", of which he had been a leading member. He wondered what would have been the fate of a man, who, like Mr. Rashmawi, had been found guilty of terrorism and incitement to violence in any Arab country or in some of the other countries which accused Israeli. As to Mr. Mutaleb Abu Rumeile (paras. 96 and 104), it was alleged that the man's mental state had regressed to that of an animal as a result of the torture inflicted on him. The doctor who had examined him at the Mental Health Centre of the Prison Service had indicated that he exhibited no symptoms of mental illness.

33. Since those baseless accusations were repeated automatically in every report of the Committee, he wished to recapitulate the true situation. Arabs in the Israeli-administered areas were imprisoned under the same conditions as Israeli prisoners; security prisoners were generally lodged separately from ordinary criminal offenders but were subject to the same conditions and enjoyed some additional privileges such as visits by representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross, who themselves determined the frequency of their visits. The system of penalties for offences against prison discipline was based on the withholding of privileges rather than on physical punishment or the use of coercive means. Many prisoners were able to study during their terms and were even able to take examinations. The Ministry of Education and Culture provided them with the textbooks prescribed in the official curricula. The examinations they took were recognized by the Governments of Jordan and Egypt, and prisoners desiring to pursue their studies in a higher school or university in either country, on release, could do so. The examinations were taken under the supervision of a representative of UNESCO, among others.

34. Visits by the families of prisoners were authorized once a month, for a period of half of an hour. The visiting family could deposit money in the prisoner's account to enable him to make purchases at the prison canteen. In addition to those regular visits, special family visits were allowed on Muslim or Christian holy days and prisoners were also allowed visits by members of their families living in Arab countries. Each prisoner was allowed to write six letters

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a month and prisoners with families in Arab States could write on Red Cross letter-forms or postcards. They were allowed full freedom to say their prayers and to observe the holy days of their religion. Books and newspapers in Arabic and English were available to the prisoners. All those facts had been confirmed on several occasions by various competent persons such as the Chairman of the International League for the Rights of Man, reliable journalists - and even Arab notables and other prisoners, whose testimonials he had offered at the previous session to make available to representatives who had made allegations against Israel; however, they had never accepted his invitation.

35. He stressed the contradictory nature of the allegations - which were always pejorative - made for the sole purpose of discrediting his country. Thus, if the statement in paragraph 115 to the effect that there was a tendency to propose to detainees to buy their freedom by leaving the country but that consent was generally not given was compared with the statement in paragraph 136 that except in the case of the very ill, those who requested permission to leave the area after having served a long sentence were denied it, one could not but be struck by the crass contradiction between those allegations and the utter lack of logic.

36. Turning to part IV, section C of the report, he noted that its very heading pointed unerringly in the direction which the Committee had set itself from the outset. Rejecting the existence of any of the so-called effects of the occupation, he asked on what grounds, psychological or other, the Committee had assumed that the mass manifestations, regular occurrence of incidents, adoption of repressive measures, and mass arrests, trials and convictions were the effect of the "prolonged occupation" of the administered areas and he pointed out that a good number of the countries whose representatives took pleasure in making anti-Israel speeches were the scene of similar events.

37. With regard to civilian detainees, he said that the 37 administrative detainees had engaged in subversive activities and had not yet been brought to trial for obvious reasons of security. He wished to reiterate, however, that no innocent person was detained under the relevant provisions of the law obtaining in the administered areas; the law provided ample safeguards, including appeals to the Appeals Committee and the Israeli High Court of Justice.

38. Easily excitable young students had been responsible for the few demonstrations in the occupied territories; the Israeli authorities had had a duty to restore order to prevent a recurrence of such incidents and had used much less force than the authorities of many other countries, including Arab States.

39. With regard to the demolition of houses mentioned in the report, he said that such a measure could only be carried out under the provisions of the relevant law against persons convicted of an offence. It was the view of the Israeli Government that the Fourth Geneva Convention, which was invariably invoked in the matter, did not apply in the administered areas for a number of legal reasons. In that connexion, he categorically rejected the spurious and fallacious arguments made concerning the precedence of the Fourth Geneva Convention over local laws.

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He noted that in finding that certain existing laws and regulations were invalid, the Committee was exceeding its mandate and was contradicted by the relevant provisions of the Geneva Convention itself. Notwithstanding its reservations concerning the applicability of the Geneva Convention, which had been officially explained on several occasions to those competent in the matter, Israel continued to base itself on the provisions of the Convention. The measures taken concerning the demolition of houses by the Israeli authorities were permitted by the reservation appearing in article 53 of the Convention and, in that connexion, he referred to the commentary by the ICRC on the Fourth Convention. In that field, the Israeli administration always acted with the greatest moderation and carefully compared the military advantages to be gained with the damage done.

40. With regard to the "mass arrests, trials and convictions" mentioned in the usual manner in the report and accompanied by quotations from Israeli newspapers, his delegation had already demonstrated on previous occasions that they were distorted statements which did not mention the reasons for the arrests and convictions because they were designed solely to create the impression of arbitrary arrests and imprisonment. In other words - and he gave once again examples from paragraphs 238 and 242 of the current report - the facts and details presented were always distorted in such a way as to give a completely negative picture of Israeli justice whereas Israel could be proud of its record of scrupulously observing the rule of law in the administered areas. It was precisely that liberal and enlightened attitude, including the candid admission of any mistakes that might have been made and the efforts to correct them - reflected in the press - which enabled the Committee to distort the true situation in the territories. If there had been a few cases of justified demolition and even fewer cases of expulsion of known agents of subversion who had been sent to the neighbouring countries from which they had been receiving their instructions, there had been no death sentences or executions, in spite of the provocations and heinousness of the offences perpetrated against innocent people by terrorists. That situation compared most favourably with that existing in Arab countries.

41. His delegation had not yet had time to study the report on Quneitra thoroughly and its comments would therefore be of a preliminary nature. He wished, however, to refute at the present stage the figures given by Mr. Grüner, who said that 3,913 houses had been deliberately destroyed - in its report, the Committee gave the figure of 4,088 - whereas only 30 houses were reported to have been destroyed by war activities. It was well known that the town had been totally destroyed over six years of intermittent warfare, as had been reported by many impartial observers. The surrender of Quneitra to the Israeli forces in 1967 had been preceded by considerable fighting in the area. The inhabitants had fled after the surrender of the town and it had come under heavy shelling by Syrian artillery, which had continued its attacks during the "war of attrition" between 1970 and 1973 and during the Yom Kippur war. Quneitra had also been bombed at various times.

42. The Syrian Government was sparing no effort to create the impression that Quneitra had been deliberately destroyed by the Israeli forces in 1974 before

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their withdrawal. That allegation was nothing more than a crude propaganda fabrication which was refuted by many reports and press articles by independent observers describing the destruction in Quneitra during the two wars in 1967 and 1973. It sufficed to mention in that regard, in addition to the Jerusalem Post (26 June 1974), Le Monde (29 June 1971), The New York Times (14 May 1974), the Guardian (9 October 1974), the London Times, the Washington Post, etc., the testimony of individuals and organizations such as the International League Against Racism and Anti-Semitism. His delegation therefore reserved its position on the report in question.

43. The conclusions in chapter VI of the report had no foundation in fact. The only obstacle to peace in the region was not to be found in the imaginary causes of a "serious deterioration" of the existing situation presented in the Committee's report but in the refusal of the Arab States, in particular those which bordered on Israel, to accept that country's existence and to live with it in peace, maintaining good neighbourly relations.

44. For perfectly valid reasons, his Government had refused to co-operate with the Committee which had been guided by preconceived ideas and demonstrated a total lack of objectivity; that was clear from the list of witnesses appearing in annex I of the report and the other reference documents used by the Committee. In those circumstances, his delegation categorically and totally rejected the Committee's report as well as its findings, conclusions, proposals and recommendations. It did not intend to speak again in the discussion on the item, unless it considered it necessary to do so.

45. Mr. SIBAHI (Syrian Arab Republic) said he would have wished to exercise his right of reply, but in view of the lateness of the hour, his delegation had decided to reply to the baseless accusations of the representative of Israel, who was grossly distorting the facts, at the Committee's next meeting.

46. The CHAIRMAN announced that the representative of Palestine Liberation Organization had also agreed, in order not to prolong the current meeting, to include what he had intended to say in exercise of his right of reply in the statement which he would make under agenda item 55.

47. Mr. DJIGO (Senegal) recalled that it was his delegation which had had the honour of submitting the report of the Special Committee to the Committee. No one would be surprised to see the representative of Israel try to question the sincerity and impartiality which had prevailed in the preparation of the report. He had taken note of that representative's comments and reserved the right to speak at a later stage in order to provide the necessary clarification.

The meeting rose at 1.35 p.m.