



# Security Council

Sixty-sixth year

*Provisional*

**6590**<sup>th</sup> meeting

Tuesday, 26 July 2011, 3 p.m.

New York

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<i>President:</i>	Mr. Berger . . . . .	(Germany)
<i>Members:</i>	Bosnia and Herzegovina . . . . .	Ms. Hodžić
	Brazil . . . . .	Mr. Rizzo
	China . . . . .	Mr. Yang Zhiyu
	Colombia . . . . .	Mrs. Escorcía
	France . . . . .	Mr. Beaumont
	Gabon . . . . .	Mr. Lembouma
	India . . . . .	Mr. Raguttahalli
	Lebanon . . . . .	Mr. Ramadan
	Nigeria . . . . .	Mrs. Aguwa
	Portugal . . . . .	Ms. Teixeira Coelho
	Russian Federation . . . . .	Mr. Zhdanov
	South Africa . . . . .	Mr. Laher
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . . . . .	Mr. Day
	United States of America . . . . .	Ms. Germain

## Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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*The meeting resumed at 3.05 p.m.*

**The President:** Under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to participate in this meeting.

I wish to remind speakers to limit their statements to no more than four minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously.

I give the floor to the representative of Kyrgyzstan.

**Mr. Kydyrov** (Kyrgyzstan): Thank you, Sir, for convening this important debate at such a crucial time, when popular protests and major political changes are continuing in the Middle East. In addition, we do not see any tangible progress in the Israeli-Palestinian political process.

The Middle East remains at the centre of the world's attention due to the recent well-known revolutionary upheavals. Despite some undeniable differences, these events have a great deal in common. The causes behind them are based on Governments' inability to adapt to new conditions of social development and to carry out effective reforms. The peoples and Governments of the region face not only tremendous social and political challenges, but also new opportunities and perspectives. We strongly condemn the use of force against peaceful demonstrations and urge all parties to show utmost restraint. Kyrgyzstan, which has gone through similar revolutionary changes recently, believes that the only way to address these problems is through dialogue and reforms.

Kyrgyzstan strongly calls for the resumption of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations as soon as possible. In this regard, we support the statement of the Middle East Quartet of 20 May 2011 with an appeal to overcome the current obstacles and resume direct bilateral negotiations without delay. But we regret that the most recent meeting of the Quartet, held on 11 July in Washington, D.C., ended without substantive agreement. It is essential that a new meeting be held as soon as possible to take active measures to promote the negotiation process. We consider it important that this process continue in order to find ways to achieve a long-term settlement of the situation and to reach a peace agreement providing for the coexistence of two States in peace and security, in accordance with

previously defined and accepted parameters. Kyrgyzstan hopes that the Quartet will play an active role in finding a solution acceptable to all parties concerned.

Kyrgyzstan favours the settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through political diplomatic means on the basis of the relevant Security Council resolutions, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Road Map of the Middle East Quartet. I would like to note that the time to consider the accession of Palestine to membership in the United Nations is rapidly approaching, as we have discussed that issue at length both informally and formally. In that regard, Kyrgyzstan considers it extremely important to achieve rapid progress in the peace process and to overcome the current worrisome impasse. We also urge the parties to demonstrate their strong will and unwavering commitment to peace and to eliminate all obstacles impeding the resumption of direct talks.

For us, it is quite obvious that the continuing construction of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and those regular announcements of its expansion, will not contribute to an early solution of the problem. Quite the contrary — at least as we have seen from recent events — it leads to even greater disturbances, escalating violence and civilian deaths. Kyrgyzstan supports the implementation of all relevant Security Council resolutions concerning Jerusalem and calls for a stop to the building of Israeli settlements.

In conclusion, let me emphasize that the peoples of the Middle East have been suffering from conflict and confrontation for several decades. The time has come to reach a final and comprehensive settlement that would resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We believe that maintaining the current situation is totally unacceptable.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

**Mr. Çorman** (Turkey): As the Security Council holds another open debate on the situation in the Middle East, a great transformation in the region is firmly under way. Universal notions such as freedom, equality, dignity, human rights and the rule of law have all become rallying cries for millions who rightfully demand a more just and promising future for themselves and their fellow citizens. While achieving meaningful change may take some time and may not necessarily always be smooth sailing, that process of

historic restoration cannot be reversed, undermined or corrupted.

Meanwhile, as that major upheaval runs its course, the Palestinian question still remains in limbo. Palestinians in their millions, whether in Gaza, the West Bank or refugee camps across the region, continue to suffer an unfortunate fate not of their own making. That is an anomaly and must be addressed as a matter of utmost urgency.

The truth is that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict lies at the heart of the many disputes in the region and beyond. The international community cannot expect the momentum towards positive change to be maintained in the Middle East and North Africa while occupation and subjugation are a day-to-day reality for the Palestinian people.

Recent and past events stand as testament to how the plight of the Palestinian people has repercussions far beyond its own geographical scope. If we are to win the hearts and minds of the Arab people and to support them in meeting their aspirations, we must be able to show them our collective determination to reach a just and viable peace in the region to which everyone can relate. That is why it is crucial that the search for a lasting and comprehensive settlement not take a back seat to other developments in the region. On the contrary, it must once again be the priority.

At the moment, there is neither peace nor a process in the region. Instead, there is an impasse that is neither reassuring nor promising for Israelis or Palestinians. The parties seem to be drifting further apart. The Security Council and the Quartet have been unable to pronounce themselves in an effective manner and to inspire genuine engagement.

The people want solutions from their leaders, not empty rhetoric. Overall, there is a prevailing sense of abandonment and uncertainty, which fuels mass frustration, especially among the most disenfranchised. That is a troubling picture, reminiscent of a tinderbox.

Turkey rejects violence in any shape or form by any party as unacceptable and unjustifiable. We also believe that there is no genuine alternative to a negotiated settlement. However, meaningful engagement that inspires confidence on both sides cannot happen while settlement activity continues, including in occupied East Jerusalem.

Israel's latest position on the construction of more than 300 new settlement units is another example of its illegal activities in the occupied territories. As such, it is unacceptable and cause for deeper doubt about Israel's sincerity towards furthering the peace process.

Once again, we call on Israel, based on its Road Map commitments, to cease all settlement activity and to return to direct negotiations with the Palestinian side. That is not much to ask, and it is currently the only way to pave the way towards the realization of a two-State solution based on the well-established principles by which Israel and Palestine will forever live side by side in peace and security.

The Palestinians have been working hard for the past two years to lay the institutional groundwork of their future State. Through its deeds, the Palestinian Authority has proven beyond any doubt that it is ready to assume all the rights and obligations of an internationally recognized State, even though Palestine continues to be under occupation and therefore in need of international support.

Turkey believes that it is high time for Palestine to be recognized as a fully fledged Member State within the international community, based on the 1967 borders. The very notion of a two-State solution, going as far back as 1947, is the firm and clear basis for that. The international community must not turn a blind eye to the legitimate appeal of Palestine to be recognized as nothing less than an equal and, ultimately, to be admitted to the United Nations as a full Member. Turkey will work with Palestine to realize those critical goals. Ultimately, in the absence of a meaningful peace process, the Palestinians cannot be expected to remain a prisoner of Israel's will forever.

The situation in the Gaza Strip continues to be a cause for serious concern. The plight of the Palestinians in Gaza must urgently be alleviated, and the reconstruction and rehabilitation requirements of the people should immediately be addressed. Resolution 1860 (2009) must be implemented as a whole. The current humanitarian and human rights conditions of the civilian population in Gaza are unsustainable and unacceptable and, ultimately, are not in the interests of any of those concerned. The periodic escalation of tension among the parties clearly proves that the situation is tenuous at best. Minimalist approaches aimed at public diplomacy will not work.

Israel must lift its unlawful and inhuman blockade of Gaza immediately.

Meanwhile, Turkey welcomes the unity agreement reached among the Palestinians. That very important development comes at a time when the whole region has begun a democratic transformation. Thus it is a step in the right direction. We hope that that process of national reconciliation can be concluded soon with the formation of an inclusive and democratically representative Government that will take the Palestinian nation to free and fair elections.

Turkey calls on the Palestinian groups to embrace the reconciliation process once and for all and to partake in the creation of a Palestinian State that will exist side by side with Israel in peace and security. As Palestinians seek harmony among their ranks, the international community should also play a positive role by supporting the process and not prejudging its outcome.

It has been more than a year since the deadly attack by Israel on the international humanitarian convoy sailing to Gaza. Israeli forces ruthlessly killed nine civilians and wounded many. The passengers were subjected to all forms of maltreatment until they left Israel. The Panel of Inquiry established by the Secretary-General in accordance with presidential statement S/PRST/2010/9 of 1 June 2010 has concluded its work. The Chair and Co-Chair produced their report, which is now sealed and waiting for submission to the Secretary-General.

We have provided an exit to Israel out of this situation. It must apologize and pay compensation. There will be no normalization of relations between Turkey and Israel unless the Israelis deliver what is expected of them. Turkey will resolutely pursue the matter until justice is done.

In conclusion, let me reiterate once more Turkey's strong support for the establishment of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the region based on the two-State solution, as well as our determination to assist our Palestinian brothers and sisters in attaining their long-delayed goal of a viable, peaceful and prosperous State of Palestine.

**The President:** I give the floor to the representative of Japan.

**Mr. Nishida** (Japan): I would like to thank the President for giving us the opportunity to address the

situation in the Middle East. I thank Mr. Serry for his comprehensive briefing. I would also like to thank Ambassador Mansour and Ambassador Prozor for their statements.

Japan strongly supports a two-State solution, under which Israel and a Palestinian State would live side by side in peace, security and mutual recognition. Japan supports the vision that the borders under a two-State solution should be defined through negotiations and based on the 1967 lines, with mutually agreed swaps, in a way that would achieve peaceful coexistence between a viable Palestinian state and Israel with secure and recognized borders. Through such a two-State solution, the Palestinians would exercise their rights to establish an independent State, Israel would enjoy a greatly enhanced security environment, and both parties would be able to launch full-fledged cooperation for mutual prosperity.

A two-State solution can be achieved only through sincere negotiations. Japan has been encouraging both sides to resume direct negotiations in cooperation with the international community. Japan strongly supports the speech made by President Obama in May, which laid out a foundation for resuming negotiations. We call on both sides to engage with the United States and the international community and to take steps that would create an environment conducive to restarting direct negotiations.

Japan will not recognize any unilateral measures that prejudice the outcome of the final status negotiations. The two parties must abide by their obligations under previous agreements, most importantly the Road Map. We call on Israel again to freeze its settlement activities in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. At the same time, we call upon the Palestinian Authority to continue its efforts to improve security and fulfil its commitments to ceasing violence and working against incitement. Japan has strongly supported the State-building efforts of the Palestinian Authority, and will continue to provide assistance in that regard.

Japan remains concerned about the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip. We continue to call for the full implementation of resolution 1860 (2009). Japan is keenly monitoring the Palestinian efforts to establish a unified Government that will genuinely seek a two-State solution.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate our call on the parties to make the utmost effort to resume direct negotiations. Japan, along with the international community, will continue to make efforts to help realize a just and comprehensive peace in the region.

**The President:** I give the floor to the representative of Jordan.

**Mr. Omaish** (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): The Palestinian people has aspired for decades to enjoy the same political, economic and social rights enjoyed by the rest of the world, foremost among which is the right to sovereignty over their own national territory, freedom and dignity. They have a basic, universally recognized right to an independent State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side with Israel within the borders of 4 June 1967.

Jordan warns against the outbreak of conflict, war and anarchy due to Israeli intransigence in addressing the Palestinian question. Israel continues to procrastinate and to squander opportunities to establish peace. It must return to a pragmatic, practical and enlightened vision free from ideological paradoxes that can only negatively impact the situation and have adverse repercussions on international peace and security. It takes courage to make difficult decisions. Jordan therefore calls for a swift return to direct negotiations towards a final solution to the Palestinian question.

However, Jordan believes that negotiations will be in vain so long as settlements continue to be built. Israel must also define a clear and precise position vis-à-vis the peace process. Jordan is deeply concerned over Israel's ongoing violations in the occupied Arab territories and its attempts to Judaize them, which will have a negative impact on the holy places of East Jerusalem. On the basis of our active role in the maintenance of the holy Christian and Islamic places in the occupied territories, we call for international intervention to put an end to these violations and the Judaization process. We also call for an end to the ongoing suffering of Palestinian prisoners and detainees languishing in Israeli prisons.

We welcome the recent signing of the Palestinian national reconciliation agreement. It is a step in the right direction on the path towards Palestinian reunification, and will fulfil the hopes of the Palestinian people for unified, responsible leadership that can meet the aspirations of the Palestinian people

to establish their independent State. Jordan calls on the international community to work towards the lifting of the illegal embargo and blockade of the Gaza Strip. An international community that insists on the enjoyment of human rights, freedom and dignity cannot remain silent about the collective punishment of an entire nation.

**The President:** I give the floor to the representative of Malaysia.

**Ms. Zainul Abidin** (Malaysia): Let me first congratulate you, Mr. President, on your delegation's presidency of the Council. I align my delegation with the statements by Egypt, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, and by Kazakhstan, on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

Here at the United Nations, we are used to experiencing and marking milestones. The creation of the United Nations itself marked the end of World War II and the beginning of global peace — the first of its many milestones. But some of those historic events are sad marks in our civilization. Last month, we marked another such occasion: the longest foreign military occupation — for June 2011 marked the forty-fourth year of occupation of the Palestinian territories by Israel.

Forty-four years is a long time to languish under the thumb of another, especially in this day and age. Chunks of land that were once Palestine have now been appropriated and their inhabitants squeezed out. The construction and expansion of settlements and the separation wall, the demolition of Palestinians' homes and infrastructure, and the revocation of Palestinian residency rights in East Jerusalem are all part of Israel's illegitimate policies and practices designed to supplant inhabitants and erase history. These actions are not only illegal but also render the two-State solution more elusive than ever.

Last month also marked the fourth year of the inhumane blockade of Gaza by Israel. The living conditions facing 1.6 million Gaza inhabitants continue to be a matter of concern. Dependent on international aid, Gaza residents are robbed by the blockade of their right to live in dignity. On 31 May 2010, we also saw nine deaths added to the more than 1,400 people who were killed as a result of Israeli military aggression since the end of 2008. Those nine were the humanitarian activists killed in international waters, messengers of relief efforts to alleviate the plight of the

people of Gaza. In this regard, we urge Israel to fully implement resolution 1860 (2009) and to lift completely the illegal blockade, which is a form of collective punishment forbidden by international law.

It is now more than imperative that a just solution be found on this issue. The parties concerned must step up to their mark as honest parties to this peace process, lest we continue to remain in the untenable state we are in. On this note, the establishment of an independent State of Palestine, on the basis of pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side with Israel in peace and security, in accordance with the established parameters as defined by resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002), 1515 (2003), 1850 (2008), the Madrid terms of reference, including the land-for-peace principle, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Road Map, is extremely crucial in addressing the Palestinian question, which has been the crux of the Arab-Israeli conflict for more than 60 years.

The Security Council is duty-bound, under its mandate, to do whatever is necessary to ensure the implementation of its own resolutions. We need to ensure that all parties resume peace negotiations. Anything less would make a mockery of the very Organization we seek to uphold.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Uganda.

**Mr. Kafeero** (Uganda): Thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this open debate. I also thank Special Coordinator and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Robert Serry, for his briefing.

Today the Israeli and Palestinian parties, as well as the international community, are at a critical juncture. It is regrettable that, despite efforts by the parties and the support from regional and international actors, no tangible progress has been achieved and the peace process remains deadlocked. It was the expectation of my delegation that the recent meetings this month of the Quartet and the Arab League would result in the resumption of the stalled direct negotiations, leading to an agreed framework.

This is a defining moment. It is a test of statesmanship on the part of the Israeli and Palestinian leaders. While the support of the international community is vital, the primary responsibility for negotiating and reaching a comprehensive and lasting

peace lies with the Israeli and Palestinian parties. Uganda reiterates its call upon both parties to urgently resume negotiations and summon the necessary courage to take bold decisions, bearing in mind that the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinians for statehood cannot be delayed much longer and that the legitimate security concerns of Israel must be addressed.

My delegation remains deeply concerned about recent approvals for the construction of new settlement units by Israel and once again calls for a complete freeze on all settlement activity.

We commend the Palestinian leadership for their State-building efforts and for fulfilling their obligations under the Road Map, particularly in the sectors of security and economic development. We also commend their efforts at forging unity and reconciliation.

We remain concerned about the humanitarian situation in Gaza and the continued obstacles to the movement of goods and persons to and from Gaza. We call on Israel to lift the blockade on Gaza, and we reiterate our call on all parties to fully implement resolution 1860 (2009).

In conclusion, my delegation wishes to underscore that the current situation is unsustainable. We encourage the Israeli and Palestinian parties, with the support of the international community and the Security Council in particular, to overcome the current stalemate and work towards the realization of a two-State solution, in the interest of peace, security and prosperity for their people.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Iceland.

**Ms. Gunnarsdóttir** (Iceland): Iceland firmly supports a peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the two-State solution. Since the Oslo process was launched, almost two decades ago, we have been betting on the peace process to lead to such a result, which would make a comprehensive peace achievable in the region as a whole, as foreseen in the Arab Peace Initiative.

Now, however, the peace process is at a complete standstill. While Iceland urges the parties to return to the negotiating table, we feel that the time has come for the international community to become more directly involved. The United Nations had a historic role in the creation of the State of Israel and the time might be approaching when it would be appropriate for

the General Assembly and the Security Council to re-engage themselves for the purposes of solving the Palestinian question.

If the Palestinians decide to bring the issue directly to the General Assembly, Iceland stands ready to support them. This was clearly stated by the Icelandic Minister for Foreign Affairs when he met with President Abbas and Foreign Minister Al-Malki during his trip to Ramallah earlier this month. At that time, our Minister stated that Iceland would support a resolution on Palestinian statehood, based on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, as well as a resolution on the full membership of Palestine in the United Nations, should the Palestinians decide to seek such resolutions in the autumn.

Iceland's position is that the pursuit of recognition of a Palestinian State does not contradict the wish for a negotiated settlement of the conflict. It might, quite to the contrary, be seen as the means to stimulate serious negotiations. There is a need to address the asymmetry of power between the two parties. That can only be done through a more forceful participation by the international community, including through emphasizing the international law applicable to the occupation.

In the absence of a political solution the situation on the ground needs to be improved. First of all, we echo those worldwide who urge the Israeli Government to lift the blockade of Gaza immediately. Enough of the currently closed legitimate crossings and established channels for goods in and out of Gaza should be opened to be able to reach the pre-blockade capacity for imports and exports. The markets in steel bars and cement should especially be liberalized by the Israeli authorities.

The decision of the Israeli Government to continue with its settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territories, including in East Jerusalem, is incompatible not only with its obligations under international law but also with the Road Map. We note that this illegal activity continues and that the use of violence, house demolitions and forceful evictions in the occupied Palestinian territories, including in East Jerusalem, remains a serious concern. The international community should be careful not to send messages that can be perceived as accommodating existing illegal settlement activities. Creating facts on the ground that are contrary to international law and constitute an

obstacle to achieving a two-State solution should not be rewarded. The settlements are reversible.

Iceland would also like to voice concern over increased settler violence against the Palestinians, including their so-called price-tag policy. This is a very worrying development, and Israel is under the obligation to do its utmost to prevent such violence and, when it does occur, to ensure that those involved are held accountable.

Finally, Iceland welcomes the reconciliation agreement between Fatah and Hamas and their intention to form an interim Government in preparation for presidential and parliamentary elections in Palestine. We urge the Palestinian parties to heed the calls of their own people to work towards realization of the agreement and to become united in their pursuit of a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Kuwait.

**Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*):** I have the honour to deliver this statement to the Security Council on behalf of the States members of the Arab Group. First, however, let me express our support for the statement delivered on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement by the representative of Egypt, as well as for the statement to be made by the representative of Kazakhstan on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

The meeting is a demonstration of the importance that the international community attaches to the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, who have suffered for more than 60 years under the occupation and practices of Israel and its refusal to abide by its international commitments and its flouting of all international resolutions.

The peoples and States of the region place great hopes in the ability of the international community to assume its political, legal and moral responsibility vis-à-vis the return of occupied Arab territories, putting an end to Israeli intransigence and arrogance and compelling Israel to comply with and fully implement the resolutions of international legitimacy, particularly the relevant Security Council resolutions. Israel persists in ignoring those resolutions as it continues to pursue illegal and aggressive measures and practices in the occupied Palestinian territories, particularly East Jerusalem and its environs, with a view to altering their

demographic status, character and composition. That is in addition to continuing violations by Israel, the occupying Power, of international law and the rules and regulations relating to human rights.

Such practices make a mere fantasy of any talk of the existence of an Israeli partner having sincere intentions about achieving peace. They also demonstrate beyond any doubt that, through its practices and policies and the declarations of its officials, Israel is working as hard as it can to undermine every international effort to resume peace talks based on the solution of two States within the framework of the borders of 4 June 1967.

Furthermore, all practices such as Israel's continued and intensified campaigns to rapidly construct thousands of settlement units and its persistent demolition of Palestinian properties and buildings affirm its expansionist intentions and contradict the claims of the Israeli Government that it wishes to resume the peace process and move towards a two-State solution.

The existing situation in the Gaza Strip represents yet another manifestation of Israel's violations of resolution 1860 (2009) and its disregard of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. As the oppressive Israeli blockade enters its fifth year, Palestinian civilians continue to be subjected to collective punishment, leading to increased poverty in Gaza and to severe deterioration of the economic, social and humanitarian situation there.

It is not strange, therefore, that the blockade has resulted in terrifying statistics — for example, a rise in the unemployment rate to 65 per cent. Also, the air raids that the Israeli air force conducts from time to time — despite the fact that such raids contravene the most basic rules of international law, which prohibit such attacks on areas populated by civilians — are tantamount to terrorist actions against unarmed Palestinian people.

The international community must send a clear, unequivocal message to Israel that it must lift the blockade and open the crossing points immediately, permanently and without conditions, in order to allow access for humanitarian assistance, construction materials and goods, and the movement of people. Israel must also be punished for its persistence in violating international law, including international humanitarian and human rights law. It must be held

accountable for the war crimes it has committed so far, for its practice of State terrorism, and for the systematic violations of human rights it has committed against unarmed Palestinians, the perpetrators of which must be prosecuted.

The Arab Group demands that the Security Council take all measures to pressure Israel to implement Council resolution 497 (1981), which calls for Israel's withdrawal from the occupied Syrian Golan to the lines of 4 June 1967. It also reaffirms that the measures taken by Israel aimed at changing the legal, physical and demographic situation there are considered null and void and having no legal basis, as well as violating international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

The Arab Group also demands that Israel cease its continued violations of Lebanese sovereignty and infringement on Lebanon's territories, air space and territorial waters. The Group also demands Israel's complete withdrawal from the northern part of the town of Al-Ghajar, the Shebaa farms and the hills of Kfar Shouba.

A comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict — a just, comprehensive and lasting solution — can be reached only by implementing the relevant resolutions of international legitimacy, particularly Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002), 1515 (2003) and 1850 (2008). It must also be based on the principles of the Madrid Peace Conference, including the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative, and the Road Map as endorsed by the Quartet.

The Arab Group affirms its full support for the efforts by the Palestinian Authority to obtain membership in the United Nations at the upcoming session of the General Assembly, in accordance with what has already been confirmed at the meeting of the Ministerial Committee of the Arab Peace Initiative held in Doha on 14 July.

More than six decades have passed while Israel has persisted in defying the international community. It has gone too far in carrying out its illegal and unilateral policies, while the Palestinian people have deferred their dreams and aspirations year after year, for more than six decades, waiting and hoping to build a national home that will embrace them all.



For six decades the demands of the Palestinian people, and our demands, have been very clear. What we need most is implementation of United Nations resolutions, including those of the Security Council, and the exercise by the Palestinians of their right to self determination and to live a free, independent and dignified life within an independent, sovereign State with East Jerusalem as its capital.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Nicaragua.

**Mr. Rosales Díaz** (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): As a member of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, Nicaragua fully associates itself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Egypt in his capacity as Chair of our Movement.

Nicaragua reiterates once again its most profound condemnation of Israel's illegal occupation of all the Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese territories and demands its immediate withdrawal from them. We condemn the Israeli policies and practices of construction and non-dismantling of settlements, as well as the inhumane blockade of Gaza, the policy of severing the West Bank and other Palestinian territories.

The Security Council is meeting on the eve of a historic moment, which must lead us to make an incontrovertible reality of a Palestinian State that is recognized and fully welcomed into the fold of this Organization, thereby finally implementing all the provisions of General Assembly resolution 181 (II), which calls specifically for the creation of two States in Palestinian land — one Arab, the other Jewish.

Indeed, it is no longer possible to allow the logic of the denial of the very existence of a Palestinian State to continue. Since the triumph of the revolution of 1979, Nicaragua has been in a privileged position to witness the struggle of the Palestinian people and the substantial concessions made by Palestine, which have been shamelessly met by Israel with more illegal settlements, more humiliations, more deaths, more systematic assassinations of Palestinian leaders, more destruction of homes and more plundering, including of East Jerusalem.

In short, we have been witnesses to a policy that is truly aimed at cornering the Palestinian people — a policy that is supported by an unspoken determination

on the part of the Israelis to deny all Palestinian citizens their very humanity.

For all of these reasons, Nicaragua reiterates the need to put an immediate end to the insufferable impunity that Israel has been enjoying, which has been ensured, irresponsibly, by the Security Council, and more specifically by the indiscriminate use of the veto by those who have become the major accomplices of Israel.

The time has come for the Security Council to assume its responsibilities and demand that Israel commit to peace. Threats of the use of veto must end, and the international community must cast aside rhetoric in favour of concrete action.

To that end, Nicaragua calls on the Security Council and the General Assembly to recognize the State of Palestine on the basis of its 1967 borders. That is the only way to bring about a stable and lasting peace that would enable both peoples to effectively enjoy all of their rights, thereby putting a definitive end to an unacceptable and inexplicable injustice.

**Mr. Raza Bashir Tarar** (Pakistan): Mr. President, I should like at the outset to thank you for convening today's debate. Allow me to express, on behalf of the people and the Government of Pakistan, our deepest condolences and commiseration to the people and the Government of Norway in connection with Friday's terrorist atrocities. Such dastardly acts only harden our resolve to combat terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

We align ourselves with the statement delivered by the Permanent Representative of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, as well as with the statement to be delivered by the Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

Pakistan believes that the time is ripe for a lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestine conflict, based on two independent and sovereign States living side by side and at peace with each other.

The Palestinian Authority's progress in establishing State institutions is an auspicious augury for peace. Numerous independent sources have confirmed that Palestinian statehood by September 2011 is well within reach. This has been acknowledged in the reports of many international bodies and mentioned in past statements of the Middle East

Quartet. The relative reduction of violence in the region recently has also helped strengthen the conditions necessary for lasting peace. It is in our common interest to embrace and strengthen the achievements of Palestine as an invaluable opportunity for lasting peace in the region.

The positive developments in Palestine can be sustained only with an active engagement on the part of the international community. In order for a durable peace in the Middle East to be achieved, it is incumbent upon the Security Council and the Middle East Quartet to honour their long-standing commitments to a final settlement and to work in tandem to achieve this goal. The well-known terms of reference of the Middle East peace process provide a navigational guide for the road to peace in the Middle East. Despite the clarity of our common goal and near-unanimity on the rules of engagement, the Security Council and the Middle East Quartet increasingly appear unable to act. This does not augur well for the region. Their inaction may cause the present opportunity for peace to be lost and lock the region once again in cycles of violence and mistrust.

The challenges to peace in the Middle East are not due only to the international community's inaction, but are rooted also in Israel's expansionist policy, characterized by the planning and building of new settlement areas. The recent approval of new construction areas in occupied Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Nablus are cause for serious concern. The demolition of Palestinian homes and structures in East Jerusalem and the Jordan Valley has resulted in the displacement of many Palestinian families.

Settlement activity is a clear violation of international law and should be treated as such. Each block of these settlements constitutes a major roadblock in this journey to peace. Israel must stop building new settlements and using settlement activity as a political tool in the peace process. Settlement activity and the peace process cannot move ahead together.

Israel's continuing blockade of Gaza is neither conscionable nor tenable. We call for the full implementation of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009). Life in Gaza cannot return to normal without the free movement of persons and goods, including essential reconstruction material. We hope that Israel will facilitate the completion of reconstruction

projects, including those undertaken by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

Pakistan is supportive of lasting peace for all the inhabitants of the Middle East, irrespective of religion, ethnicity or nationality. The framework for peace in the Middle East is laid down elaborately in Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002), 1515 (2003) and 1850 (2008); the Madrid terms of reference; the Arab Peace Initiative; and the Quartet road map. Mustering and sustaining the political will to implement the framework is imperative.

We hope that the Security Council and the Middle East Quartet will engage meaningfully with the protagonists concerned to realize the collective objective of the international community: an independent, sovereign and viable State of Palestine, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, living side by side and in peace with all of its neighbours. Pakistan shares and supports this objective.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

**Mr. Valero Briceño** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela welcomes the briefing by Mr. Robert Serry, United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General to the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority.

We endorse the statement made by Ambassador Maged Abdelaziz, Permanent Representative of the Arab Republic of Egypt, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

Mr. Maxwell Gaylard, United Nations Coordinator for Humanitarian and Development Activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, warned recently that thousands of Bedouins would be affected by the demolitions that are being carried out by the Government of Israel in Jerusalem with a view to expanding illegal settlements of Israeli citizens. According to Mr. Gaylard, this year more homes have been demolished than in all of 2009 or 2010, leaving homeless refugees who have been living in that area since 1948.

This serious situation threatens to displace 80 per cent of the Bedouins who inhabit the region. In addition, thousands of Palestinian families have been forcibly displaced from their residential areas. The increased illegal Israeli settlements, home demolitions and the prohibition on new Palestinian construction must all be condemned. All of those illegal and inhuman acts are obvious examples of the apartheid system imposed by the Israeli Government and are carried out with total impunity by the occupying Power, highlighting the Council's inaction.

Pursuant to the right to self-determination, the immediate recognition of the State of Palestine and its incorporation as a full member of the General Assembly have been proposed. My delegation reaffirms the sovereign right of peoples to choose their own destiny. Venezuela reiterates its call on the Government of Israel to fully respect the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Times of War within the Palestinian territories, including Eastern Jerusalem and the other occupied Arab territories.

Bradley Burston, senior editor at the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz*, has pointed out that

“[t]here is nearly nothing which more effectively delegitimizes Israel — and makes Israel look more like an uncaring blockhead state — than does the siege of Gaza”.

There is no doubt that the fragile humanitarian situation of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip is deplorable. The blockade imposed in that region is inhuman and illegal, as is the wall built by Israel in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem and its surroundings.

The unacceptable and relentless actions of the occupying Power against suffering Palestinian citizens have resulted in the most shameless violations of their human rights. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela firmly demands once again an unrestricted and immediate end to those inhuman, illegal and unilateral measures.

Venezuela expresses its concern over the serious events that took place in the occupied Syrian Golan on 15 May and 5 June, when Israeli soldiers massacred numerous Palestinian citizens who were peacefully protesting against the occupation. Venezuela once again calls on Israel to withdraw from that territory, in

compliance with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council. We also again request the State of Israel to respect the sovereignty of the State of Lebanon in order to avoid a conflict such as that which took place in July 2006.

My country proclaims the values of freedom, independence and sovereignty, which must continue to be strengthened in order to achieve peace between peoples. Again, without justice there can be no peace.

**The President:** I give the floor to the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

**Mr. Kim Yong Song** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): My delegation would first like to thank Mr. Robert Serry for his detailed briefing this morning. My delegation also aligns itself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Egypt on behalf of the States members of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The resolution of the Palestinian issue in the Middle East is a top priority among efforts to ensure peace and safety in the region. For that reason, the international community continues to devote its attention to the Palestinian question and to make every effort towards its resolution.

I would like to particularly underline a positive development that may decisively affect the resolution of the Palestinian question, with the strong support of the international community. It is noteworthy that the Palestinian people's struggle for an independent, sovereign State is gaining momentum now more than ever before. The key to victory in this struggle should be in the hands of the Palestinian people, as it is certain that key is the unity of the Palestinian people themselves. The adoption of a final reconciliation agreement between Palestinian political forces in May will surely serve to strengthen the unity of the Palestinian people and firmly encourage their struggle for an independent, sovereign State.

Notwithstanding the positive developments, obstacles and challenges to the Middle East peace process still lie ahead. Israel has not withdrawn from the occupied Palestinian and Arab territories, in spite of increased denunciations by the international community. Israel has continued to further expand its settlements in East Jerusalem and the Arab territories, directly challenging international demands. Settlement-

building is part of Israel's ambitious effort at territorial expansion, and its impact is now having serious consequences. It is because of the expansion of the Israeli settlements that the Palestine-Israel talks, arranged after a laborious process of twists and turns, are now deadlocked.

Support for the founding of an independent, sovereign State of Palestine is becoming a trend of international society that no one dares to stop. Many countries recognize Palestine as an independent, sovereign State, and their number has now reached more than 120. The Palestinian people's struggle to regain its occupied territory and set up an independent, sovereign State is more than justifiable; its victory is ensured.

My delegation would like to take this opportunity to express our full support to and solidarity with the justified struggle of the Palestinian people to recover their legitimate sovereign rights, including the founding of an independent, sovereign State.

**The President:** I give the floor to the representative of Bangladesh.

**Mr. Mahmood** (Bangladesh): I thank Germany for scheduling this very important open debate on the situation in the Middle East. Allow me to express our appreciation to the Minister of State of the Federal Foreign Office of Germany for chairing this debate. I also convey our thanks to Mr. Robert Serry, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General, for his comprehensive briefing this morning.

The Bangladeshi delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of Egypt and Kazakhstan on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, respectively. In addition, I wish to briefly make certain points that Bangladesh believes to be of importance.

A durable and sustainable resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, including the issue of Palestine, which is the core of the long-lasting crisis, must be our collective strategic objective. All Member States should pledge complete commitment to this objective and throw their full moral, diplomatic, political and economic support behind its early realization.

The people of Palestine are being denied their fundamental rights to self-determination and to live

freely in their own land, and displaced Palestinians have been denied their rights to return home and live in dignity and safety. Unfortunately, it appears to be a collective failure on the part of the international community, and especially the people of Israel, who themselves having suffered deprivation failed nevertheless to rise to the occasion and guarantee the people of Palestine their fundamental rights to self-determination and to live in a sovereign State of their own, side by side with Israel. In order to achieve a lasting solution in the Middle East, it is very important to address the key issue, which is the prolonged and illegal occupation of the Arab territories by Israel.

We express our concern at the occupying Power's extensive destruction of property, homes, economic institutions, agricultural lands and orchards; the construction of the wall; the confiscation of land; and the continued imposition of checkpoints, contrary to international law, in the occupied Palestinian territory, including in and around East Jerusalem, which have seriously hampered the already dire socio-economic situation facing the Palestinian population.

We commend President Mahmoud Abbas' leadership of the Palestinian Authority and continued Palestinian State-building efforts, especially in the areas of governance, rule of law and human rights, livelihoods and productive sectors, education and culture, health, social protection and water.

But we are worried owing to the Israeli military operations and the continuing Israeli policy of closures and severe restrictions on the movement of persons and goods, including humanitarian personnel, as well as food, medical, fuel and other essential supplies, in the Gaza Strip, which are causing civilian casualties. We therefore call for maximum restraint and respect for international humanitarian law. In this regard, it is very unfortunate that a French civilian boat, which was sailing to provide humanitarian support, was recently seized.

My delegation believes that the Fourth Geneva Convention, the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978), the land-for-peace principle, and the Madrid Conference terms of reference, which guarantee Israel's withdrawal from all occupied Arab and Palestinian territories to the lines of 4 June 1967, the Road Map, and the Arab Peace

Initiative are the best guides for achieving a two-State solution.

The principled support for the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination that has come from all corners of the globe, both bilateral and multilateral, has been an essential pillar of Palestinian resilience over the decades. My delegation welcomes in this regard the Palestinian Authority's plan, "Palestine: Ending the Occupation, Establishing the State", a plan for constructing the institutions of a Palestinian State by September 2011.

Let us turn to the situations in Lebanon and the occupied Syrian Golan. It is sad that the occupying State is violating Lebanese sovereignty and repeatedly breaching Security Council resolution 1701 (2006). It is also of concern that there have been various measures and actions to alter the legal, physical and demographic status of the occupied Syrian Golan.

In conclusion, let me reiterate Bangladesh's long-standing position that the continued illegal occupation of Palestine over the past six decades is the root cause of violence, unrest and destabilization in the region. Let me also reiterate our full support for a lasting peace for all inhabitants of the region, both Arabs and Israelis, and our strong commitment to the realization of an independent, sovereign and viable State of Palestine with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, living side by side and in peace with all its neighbours.

**The President:** I give the floor to the representative of Morocco.

**Mr. Loulichki** (Morocco) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, let me express our profound gratitude to you for having convened this open debate. I also thank Mr. Robert Serry for his thorough briefing on the latest developments in the Middle East. As is customary, my delegation endorses the statements delivered by the representatives of Egypt, Kazakhstan and Kuwait on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Arab League, respectively.

At the outset, I would like to express our profound concern at the protracted deadlock facing international and regional efforts to reinvigorate the talks between the Palestinians and the Israelis, particularly in the light of the legal aspirations of the Palestinians with regard to September 2011. There can be no doubt that there is unanimous agreement at the

international level when it comes to the two-State solution and the need for a comprehensive settlement in the Middle East, in keeping with international legitimacy. Consequently, the international community must be strict and effective in order to create an environment conducive to negotiations, free from provocative, illegal, unilateral measures by Israel, so as to bring peace and prosperity to the region.

We are deeply concerned at the obstacles impeding direct talks between the two sides. At the same time, we are convinced that the peace process is a necessary choice that must lead to a comprehensive, just and legitimate peace for all peoples in the region.

In this context, Morocco is closely and optimistically following the several initiatives — by the United States, the Quartet, the European Union and other regional and international actors — to promote a return to direct negotiations. Our hope is that these efforts will bring about a resumption of serious negotiations in good faith, in keeping with international law, the Arab Peace Initiative, the Road Map and the previously achieved agreements between the sides.

Morocco warmly welcomed the commitment made by President Obama of the United States remarks his speech on 19 May 2011 on a comprehensive and just peace between the Palestinians and the Israelis and creation of an independent Palestinian State, within the 1967 borders and living side by side in peace with Israel.

We express the hope that this position, which is shared by the entire international community, will enable the Palestinian people to reclaim their legitimate rights and establish an independent State with its capital at Al-Quds Al-Sharif.

In this context, Morocco, whose King, Mohammed VI, is presiding over the Jerusalem Commission, would like to state its concerns to the Council and to condemn the measures taken by Israel in East Jerusalem with a view to changing its demographics, legal status and religious profile and Israel's expulsion of Palestinians in order to build roads and settlements and Judaize the area. All of these actions impede a final settlement, and, given the crucial importance of Al-Quds Al-Sharif in any comprehensive settlement to the Israeli-Palestinian question, we call on the international community, and the Security Council in particular, to assume their full

responsibilities to ensure that Israel end these illegal practices, respect the international efforts aimed at bringing about early talks and to cooperate with them.

In these sensitive historical circumstances, the eyes of the world are focused more than ever on the United Nations and the international and regional forces working to uphold their political and moral responsibilities towards the Palestinian people and to restart direct negotiations. This could give new momentum and optimism to the process to achieve the peace to which we all aspire.

The Palestinian Authority, strengthened by its national reconciliation, continues to show itself to be the genuine and effective partner in the peace process that it has always been, and to demonstrate its commitment to achieving a lasting solution. The Arab States, through the Arab Peace Initiative, have expressed their sincere desire for lasting and just peace.

Morocco places the issue of Palestine at the very centre of its regional and international interests, and will continue its efforts to resolve this matter through direct negotiations. This will happen only after Israel withdraws from all Arab and Palestinian territories occupied since June 1967, and through the creation of an independent Palestinian State, with Jerusalem as its capital, and respect for the legal rights of the brotherly people of Palestine.

**The President:** I give the floor to the representative of Kazakhstan.

**Mrs. Aitimova** (Kazakhstan): I have the honour to make the following statement on behalf of the States members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). I would like to emphasize again that, on 1 July, the name of that Organization changed and is now the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. I speak in my country's capacity as Chair of the OIC.

We are grateful to Germany for convening today's meeting devoted to the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. The continuation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the Arab-Israeli conflict as a whole continues to threaten international peace and security. This issue is at the centre of security problems and challenges, the negative implications of which are not confined to that region, but are felt well beyond and across the globe.

It is most unfortunate that the Security Council's efforts to address this conflict have repeatedly failed due to the refusal by Israel, the occupying Power, to comply with international law and relevant United Nations resolutions, as well as the lack of political will among Member States to implement the Council's resolutions. This is a regrettable fact, despite the Council's unequivocal demands from the outset for the withdrawal of Israel, the occupying Power, from the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, in accordance with the principle of the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force. The Council has consistently adopted resolutions calling for an end to the Israeli occupation and the realization of the two-State solution on the basis of the pre-1967 borders as the guarantor of peace and security between the two peoples.

We are shocked and extremely disturbed by the escalation of Israel's illegal practices in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. Israel, the occupying Power, has increased its military operations throughout the West Bank, even raiding a summer camp for children and forcing these children to endure harsh interrogations. The occupying forces continue to spread fear among the civilian Palestinian population, including women and children, and continue to carry out arrest operations, increasing the number of Palestinians illegally imprisoned and detained by Israel.

At the same time, Israel continues to intensify its illegal and destructive settlement campaign in the occupied Palestinian territory, especially in and around occupied East Jerusalem. We condemn Israel's flouting of international law and of the unanimous calls for a complete cessation of such illegal actions. The spate of settlement activities and the demolition of homes have reached an unprecedented level recently in a clear attempt to further colonize the occupied Palestinian territory and to create even more illegal alterations to the historical and religious landmarks, demographic composition, characteristics and status of the territory.

The OIC group is highly perturbed by the attacks not only on Palestinian civilians, but also on peace activists and volunteers from international non-governmental organizations. The OIC group reiterates that it is disturbed by the fact that, for the past four years, about 1.5 million Palestinians have been suffering in immeasurably grave conditions in the besieged Gaza Strip as a result of Israel's illegal and

inhumane blockade, a most condemnable form of collective punishment. We reiterate the call for the immediate lifting of the blockade and for Israel's compliance with all of its legal obligations under international humanitarian law.

The OIC is deeply concerned over the stalemate in the negotiations between Israel and Palestine, and the recent failure of the Quartet during its meeting in Washington, D.C., to deliver results that would enable the resumption of negotiations. At its thirty-eighth session, held last month in Astana, the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers reiterated the need for an early settlement of the Palestinian issue and expressed full support for the Arab Peace Initiative, which is aimed at reaching a lasting, comprehensive and just resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The OIC member States have also applauded the significant institution-building efforts of the Palestinian National Authority, and called on the international community to acknowledge the progress achieved and to recognize the independent, sovereign State of Palestine on the basis of the borders of 4 June 1967. The OIC also joins the international community in reaffirming that all measures and actions taken or to be taken by Israel, the occupying Power, to alter the legal, physical and demographic status of the occupied Syrian Golan and its institutional structure, as well as to impose jurisdiction and administration there, are null and void and have no legal effect.

The international community, including the Security Council, cannot afford to lose any more time. It should uphold its responsibility and take immediate and decisive action to bring Israel into compliance with international law, including its obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention, relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference, including land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet Road Map. This is the most urgent step to salvage the two-State solution for an independent, sovereign and viable State of Palestine, living side by side and in peace with Israel.

**The President:** I give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

**Mr. Falouh** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): The Security Council is meeting yet again to discuss the deteriorating situation in the occupied Arab territories under the agenda item "The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question". This

item is centred exclusively on the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Palestinian question and how to compel Israel to end its occupation of Arab land in implementation of resolutions of international legality, including resolutions of the Security Council. It does not refer to any other issues that are not covered by the historical definition of the item.

However, instead of focusing on the substance of this agenda item, some unfortunately attempt to engage the Council on other issues in order to dilute the essence of the item, under which the Security Council seeks to effectively engage in reviving the peace process, ending Israeli occupation of occupied Arab land and establishing a Palestinian State on the basis of the 1967 borders. However, the reality on the ground reaffirms that there is a systematic Israeli pattern of behaviour that some do not want to hold to international accountability. This pattern contradicts the core provisions of international law and international humanitarian law and demonstrates Israel's disregard for international legality.

Among Israel's most egregious practices are its great colonialist theft of territory through its history of settlement, including land confiscation, the demolition of homes, the expulsion of citizens from their homes and replacing them with foreign settlers, the construction of the racist separation wall, the Judaization of occupied Jerusalem, support for settlers' oppressive and extremist racist practices against unarmed Palestinians, under the protection of the occupying forces, and the unjust imposition of the blockade against Gaza.

On 15 May and 5 June, on the anniversary of Israel's occupation of their land, Israel fired live bullets at unarmed demonstrators, claiming the lives of many martyrs and wounding a great number of people. That is the underlying aggressive nature of the State terrorism practiced by Israel. Israel continues to refuse to return the occupied Syrian Golan to its motherland, Syria, and to implement resolutions of the international community, in particular resolution 497 (1981), which declared the annexation of the occupied Syrian Golan null and void and without international legal effect.

Israel pursues its policy of intimidating and oppressing Syrian citizens in the Golan. It continues to confiscate land, expand settlements and plunder the riches and resources of the Golan, distorting its history

and robbing its historic monuments. It continues to plant mines on the territory.

Comprehensive and fair peace will be achieved only through complete Israeli withdrawal from all Arab territories to the 4 July 1967 lines, and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. The Security Council is called on to sincerely and effectively commit to finding a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict without delay or partial solutions. The Security Council has an important opportunity to prove its ability to play its Charter role by supporting the internationally backed and fair Palestinian request to establish an independent State on its territory, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. That would be achieved by accepting Palestine as a full Member of the United Nations, pursuant to the resolutions of international legality.

In that regard, we recall General Assembly resolution 273 (III) of 1949, which established the conditions for Israel's admission as a full Member of the United Nations: its commitment to the principles of the Charter and respect for the rights of the Palestinian people to establish its independent State and of Palestinian refugees to return to the homes from which they had been forcibly expelled.

However, some speakers have used non-objective and exaggerated language in their statements to describe recent domestic events. They have sought to engage the Council in internal affairs on fragile and unfounded pretexts that have nothing to do with the Council's role or responsibilities. That is why I wish to underscore that the goal and substance of this agenda item are clear. I would like to make the following points.

Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad has declared a comprehensive reform programme that the Government has begun to implement to promote democratic national reconciliation and to increase the participation of all citizens in the political and economic process, as well as to sanctify national unity and to ensure law and order for all citizens. We sent a letter to the Secretary-General, issued under the symbol S/2011/353, in which we stated our position vis-à-vis recent developments in Syria.

Syria has held consultations on new bills concerning pluralism and the participation of political parties in Syria. The consultations recommended the establishment of a supreme human rights council and a

political committee to revise the Constitution to ensure pluralism and to promote human rights, social justice, the rule of law and the rights of women and children.

I wish to comment on the statements made by certain representatives when a group of young people demonstrated outside the French and United States embassies to voice their views on interference by those embassies in our internal affairs. We stress that the Syrian authorities are committed to protecting the security of those two embassies. We recall that the Syrian embassies in certain countries have been attacked and that the countries where those attacks took place did little to protect them.

It is clear that any internal reform undertaken by a Member of the United Nations should comply with the United Nations Charter and should be respected. Those outside the country advocating reform should not deliberately ignore serious reform measures or undermine the Syrian model of tolerance and coexistence among all citizens. They should not draw conclusions from or base their analysis on fabricated and false information. They should ignore neither our reform efforts nor the sabotage and crimes being committed by organized terrorist groups in Syria.

We would have hoped to hear in those statements even a single word of condemnation of Israel's use of live fire against unarmed civilian demonstrators on 15 May and 5 June. That is the behaviour at the heart of this issue and falls within the purview of the Security Council's mandate, pursuant to relevant resolutions.

**The President:** I give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

**Mr. Al Habib** (Islamic Republic of Iran): At the outset, I wish to express our appreciation to you, Sir, for convening this important open debate at this critical juncture in developments in the Middle East. This meeting will surely provide us with an overview of the current state of affairs in the region and the path forward to bring peace to the Middle East.

The question of Palestine, from its occupation until today, has remained one of the biggest challenges and problems of the world. The occupation represents the most painful and biggest tragedy of humankind in modern history. More than six decades of massacres, home demolitions, embargos, the abduction and imprisonment of people, attacks on neighbours and



others, and violations of international law and international humanitarian law have followed this occupation.

The Israeli regime continues to defy international law in its pursuit of an unlawful and inhuman blockade of the Palestinians, particularly in the Gaza Strip, which has entered its fifth year. A recent report of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East indicates that broad unemployment in Gaza in the second half of 2010 reached an unprecedented 45.2 per cent, one of the highest rates in the world. The seizure of another civilian boat, the *Dignité-El Karama*, by the Israeli regime was yet another violation of international law. The inhumane blockade is a source of grave concern to people all over the world, who have expressed their support for such humanitarian gestures as the freedom flotilla and the *Dignité-Al Karama* and called for the immediate lifting of the Gaza blockade.

States supporting the Israeli regime have brought shame on themselves because, on the one hand, they claim to advocate human rights and international law and international humanitarian law, while at the same time they support the occupation, illegal settlements and all violations of international law by the brutal regime occupying Palestine. The history of the Israeli regime is nothing but crime, the killing of men, women and children, the use of banned weapons and the stockpiling of nuclear weapons, blind assassinations, attacks on civilians and aid convoys in international waters, and war crimes in Lebanon and Palestine. All these inhumane acts have become the routine doings of the occupying regime. There is no doubt that support for this regime is tantamount to support for occupation, massacre, assassination and the violation of human rights.

Attaining a peaceful and just settlement of the question of Palestine is imperative to the realization of comprehensive and lasting peace and stability in the Middle East and beyond. In our view, achieving lasting peace in Palestine and the region will be possible only by ensuring justice, putting an end to discriminatory and racist policies, and ending the occupation of Palestine and other occupied territories. Today, we are seeing more and more States joining the ranks of those that have already recognized Palestine as an independent State. This is a very clear indication that the cause of Palestine is gaining new momentum.

On Syria, there have evidently been attempts to incite sectarian sensitivities and denominational tensions and divisions, a known tactic of hegemonic regimes. Such

mischievous attempts are worthless and vain and will have no effect on the stability of the country. The enemies of humankind do not want and have never wanted the people of Syria to remain united, independent and developed. But the people of Syria know that the key to their independence and dignity is unity and resistance to mischievous and subversive attempts.

The Israeli regime has persisted in its aggressive policies towards Lebanon by constantly violating its land, sea and air space and refusing to withdraw from occupied Lebanese villages. These occupations and acts of aggression should stop immediately.

Before concluding, I would like to react to the reference made to my country by the representative of the Israeli regime in this Chamber this morning. It is no surprise that, in levelling baseless allegations against Iran's nuclear programme, the Zionist regime has preposterously attempted to deflect attentions from its long and dark catalogue of crimes and atrocities, such as occupation, aggression, militarism, State-terrorism, and crimes against humanity. It is a widely recognized fact that the Israeli regime's clandestine development and unlawful possession of nuclear weapons poses a uniquely grave threat to regional and international peace and security. The Israeli regime has clearly defied the demands of the overwhelming majority of the United Nations Member States that have time and again called on it to renounce nuclear weapons and accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

Regrettably, the inaction of the relevant United Nations organs in the face of such Israeli policies and practices has emboldened this dangerous regime. The Council is expected to condemn the Israeli regime for the possession of nuclear weapons, compel it to abandon nuclear weapons, urge it to accede to the NPT without delay, and demand that it promptly place all its nuclear facilities under the full-scope safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency. Indeed, peace and stability cannot be achieved in the Middle East so long as the massive Israeli nuclear arsenals continue to threaten the region and beyond.

**The President:** There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

*The meeting rose at 4.50 p.m.*