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PLENARY MEETING**

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*President:* Mr. Alex QUAISON-SACKEY  
(Ghana).

ITEM 9 OF THE PROVISIONAL AGENDA

General debate (continued)

1. The PRESIDENT: May I first of all apologize to the Assembly for the lateness 'in commencing the meeting. I have been working behind the scenes on some important matters which affect the conduct of our business and therefore I am sure you will sympathize with me in this endeavour.
2. For this morning we have one speaker who wishes to exercise the right of reply. I give the floor to the representative of Jordan.
3. Mr. RIFA'I (Jordan): Neither the time of the General Assembly nor the preoccupation with other immediate issues would enable me to reply at length to the statement of the representative of Israel which we heard from this rostrum yesterday [1310th meeting]. The question of Palestine, however, in one of its aspects, will soon be debated in the Special Political Committee, where we shall have a better chance for discussion. Furthermore, there is a growing Arab thinking that the question of Palestine in its entirety should be presented to this highest international forum so that the realities of this cardinal issue might be seen in their true perspective and a grave injustice might then be removed.
4. It is only because of the wrong impressions which might flow from the Israel statements that the Arab representatives here sometimes find it necessary to reply. I, for one, think that the Israel statement of yesterday could be taken seriously or lightly at one and the same time. An example of the applicability of these two simultaneous judgements is what the representative of Israel said, sarcastically, about the thirteen Arab States and the Arab homeland. He said: "Thirteen are evidently not enough. Eleven million square kilometres do not suffice" [1310th meeting, para. 99]. And concerning what he termed "the Israeli nation", he said: "This Israeli nation, which had more than twenty centuries of Middle Eastern history behind it ..." [ibid., para. 101].
5. These two examples—and a few others—are matters which no doubt could be argued at length, or, equally, could be met with silence, but what we cannot

ignore is the allegation that the Arab States take this platform to proclaim "a message of war" from "the highest tribunal of peace" [ibid., para. 98]. To this I should like to reply by saying that when we, the Arabs, endeavour to re-establish justice, to restore right and to rectify wrong, we are not proclaiming war, but rather laying strong foundations for permanent peace.

6. Speaking about the establishment of the Palestine liberation organization, the representative of Israel said: "This is not the first time in modern history that the word 'liberation' has been distorted in order to conceal an expansionist ambition." [ibid., para. 100.]

7. I do not know to what distorted liberation movements the Israel representative referred. On our part we, the Arab nations in Africa and in Asia, know only one definition of the word "liberation"—a definition which we applied in various parts of our sacred national soil, from the shores of the Atlantic in the west to the river Tigris in the east, and from the Syrian-Turkish border in the north to the Indian Ocean in the south. There is one definition, and only one, which was illustrated in our long national struggle in terms of sacrifice, blood and tears, and which illustration must continue until every spot of our homeland is liberated from foreign occupation and invasion. Yet the Israel representative claims that we have enough area and enough sovereign Arab States, as if to say that we must give some of our "surplus" land to his people, and perhaps to other foreigners.

8. In the same vein of logic, the Israel representative referred in his statement to the problem of the Palestine Arab refugees. He said:

"Can anyone doubt that thirteen Arab States in their 11 million square kilometres with their abundant resources could absorb and rehabilitate these hundreds of thousands of their kinsmen." [ibid., para. 114.]

9. The philosophy behind this Israeli theory is that the destiny of a Palestine Arab should be determined far away, outside his native homeland, Palestine, so that an Israeli immigrant could come from far away to take the place of the Palestine Arab, to possess his property, and to occupy his home. This Israeli policy reaches its climax in yesterday's statement, when Mr. Eban said—and I quote: "To ask for the return of the refugees is to ask for war and for the abolition of the sovereignty of a Member State."

10. Here is the line between the concept of war and the concept of peace between Israel and the Arabs. The Israelis want the land to be given, and the nation to be driven away, and yet they talk of peace, to protect their illegitimate gains. Peace is too sacred a word to be misused.

11. The Israel representative allotted most of his speech to the question of the security and sovereignty of Israel. On this subject of Israel's sovereignty, it is quite clear that the legitimate rights of the Arab people of Palestine—the true inhabitants of Palestine—prevail over and supersede any political claims advocated by Israel as the result of its occupation of Palestine. If

we are to admit the absolute right of a sovereignty which was brought about by force and invasion, in violation of the principles of the Charter, then we would be condoning lawlessness and aggression in international affairs.

*The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.*