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Official Records

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Tuesday, 25 November 2014, 10 a.m.  
New York

*President:* Mr. Kutesa ..... (Uganda)

*The meeting was called to order at 10.05 am.*

## Agenda item 36 (continued)

### Question of Palestine

**Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (A/69/35)**

**Report of the Secretary-General (A/69/371)**

**Draft resolutions (A/69/L.21, A/69/L.22, A/69/L.23 and A/69/L.24)**

**Mrs. Nusseibeh** (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the delegation of the United Arab Emirates, I would like to extend our sincere thanks and appreciation to Ambassador Fodé Seck, Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, and to the members of the Committee for their efforts to obtain justice for the Palestinian people and to reveal the true impact of the Israeli occupation. I wish also to take this opportunity to reaffirm the message sent this morning by the President of the United Arab Emirates to the Chair of the Committee on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, confirming the continued support of the Government and the people of the United Arab Emirates for the Palestinian people in their struggle to achieve their legitimate aspirations to establish an independent sovereign State, like any other people.

Today's discussions on this matter are especially relevant in view of the grave developments in Palestine and are underscored by the persistent impasse of the peace negotiations due to Israel's failure to honour its agreed commitments. The growing unrest and serious deterioration of the security, humanitarian and social conditions in the Palestinian territories resulting from Israel's unrelenting aggressive policies against the Palestinian people only compound the exacerbation, particularly in East Jerusalem, where they continue to negatively affect the situation on the ground.

The alarming daily unilateral security measures taken by Israel, illustrated most recently by the storming of the Al-Aqsa Mosque by Israeli forces and extremist settlers and the repeated, flagrant aggressions against Palestinian worshippers, including women, have contributed to escalating the current atmosphere of confrontation, leading to retaliatory clashes, tension and violence in the Palestinian territories. The truth is that the systematic Israeli attacks on the Al-Aqsa Mosque provoke Muslims all over the world. Such attacks will lead to more crises and affect peace and security in the Middle East.

In that context, we support the position of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan regarding the administration of Islamic and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem. We commend its recent endeavours to reduce tensions resulting from the aforementioned unacceptable Israeli practices. We also emphasize that Israel must respect the sanctity and inviolability of such holy sites and must implement its related obligations under international law.

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The large-scale violations committed by Israel in the Palestinian territories now include excavations near holy sites in East Jerusalem, as well as the confiscation of additional lands and the destruction of Palestinian properties and infrastructure. Moreover, Israel is also systematically building settlements and expanding its territory in villages and towns of the West Bank, especially in occupied East Jerusalem. Furthermore, Israel is continuing its unjust blockade of Gaza and obstructing the reconstruction and recovery efforts needed to meet the basic emergency requirements of Gaza's population of more than 1.8 million persons.

The United Arab Emirates reiterates its strong condemnation of all war crimes committed by Israel and welcomes the Secretary-General's recently formed internal investigation committee to investigate Israel's attacks on buildings, schools and United Nations facilities in the Gaza Strip. We hope that the independent investigation will be expanded to cover all crimes committed by Israel during the same period, which resulted in the deaths of some 2,189 Palestinians, including 513 children and at least 269 women, in order to identify the perpetrators of those crimes and hold them accountable under international criminal law.

In that context, we emphasize that the time has come for the international community, especially the Quartet and the Security Council, to take effective measures for the protection of the Palestinian people, in accordance with the provisions of international law and the relevant international resolutions. In that regard, we would like to stress the urgent priority of several goals.

First, the international community must demand that Israel, under international supervision, immediately and completely cease all settlement activities, including the construction of the separation wall in the West Bank and the outskirts of Jerusalem, because such activities are null and void.

Secondly, the international community must compel Israel to remove all barriers and restrictions preventing the freedom of movement of the Palestinians and limiting their trade and economic activity. Israel must also lift the unjust siege it has imposed on the Gaza Strip since 2006.

Thirdly, the international community must obligate Israel to release more than 5,000 Palestinian prisoners, including those under administrative detention. In that regard, we emphasize that the justifications given by Israel for maintaining its security in the region cannot

be upheld, due to its flagrant and repeated violations of its obligations under international humanitarian law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention. Israel will be secure only when it fully complies with its obligations as an occupying Power. That alone will demonstrate its genuine political will towards achieving real peace in the region and attaining the two-State solution on the basis of the pre-1967 borders, in accordance with the Arab Peace Initiative.

The United Arab Emirates, which is deeply concerned about the dire and unprecedented humanitarian situation of the Palestinian people, welcomes the commencement of the operations of the temporary Gaza reconstruction mechanism earlier this month, and supports the critical role played by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and other international organizations in the implementation of the mechanism. The United Arab Emirates also urges the international community to pressure Israel to fully and unconditionally cooperate with the mechanism by removing all the restrictions it imposed more than 14 months ago so as to allow the entry of essential construction materials for the rebuilding of vital projects in Gaza. For its part, the United Arab Emirates will continue to fulfil its commitment to providing \$200 million in aid for Gaza as part of its direct and indirect financial, humanitarian and development aid programmes.

We also welcome the important role played by Egypt in its ongoing support for the Palestinian cause and the Palestinian people. We call upon the international community to strengthen its political and development support for the Palestinian National Authority to enable it to carry out its responsibilities. We also thank the Government of Sweden for its decision to acknowledge the Palestinian State. We hope that other Member States will take similar positions and make similar commitments.

In conclusion, we emphasize that the time has come for Israel to realize that its existence as a secure country depends on normalizing its relations and establishing stable economic cooperation with the countries of the region, which will require it to reconsider its aggressive positions against the Palestinian people and neighbouring countries. We also stress the importance of achieving a just, lasting and comprehensive settlement of the question of Palestine and the Arab-Israeli conflict in the Middle East, as well as the establishment of an independent Palestinian

State, with Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side with Israel and neighbouring countries in mutual peace and security.

**Mr. Haniff** (Malaysia): At the outset, my delegation would like to thank Ambassador Seck, Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, for his statement. Malaysia also aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Saudi Arabia on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (see A/69/PV.59).

My delegation appreciates the indispensable work carried out by the Committee, the Secretariat's Division for Palestinian Rights and other entities within the United Nations system related to the question of Palestine. We commend the commitment, efforts and contribution of the Secretary-General and the United Nations in that regard, and we hope that they will persevere with their mandate and faithfully execute their responsibilities towards the goal of achieving a just and lasting peace in the region.

Malaysia applauds the efforts made by the Committee to commemorate the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian people every year. The successful organization of activities in cooperation with Governments, United Nations bodies, parliamentarians and intergovernmental and civil society organizations has increased international awareness of the question of Palestine. My delegation welcomes the recognition of Palestine by the Parliaments of the United Kingdom and Spain. We have also heard about last Friday's international meeting of parliamentarians organized by the Committee. We welcome the recognition of Palestine by the Government of Sweden, bringing the total number of countries that have done so to 135, which is more than two thirds of the membership of the United Nations. Today, Malaysia also joins the international community in observing the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

The question of Palestine has been before the United Nations for more than six decades, yet we are still nowhere close to resolving that conflict or to achieving a just and durable peace between Palestine and Israel. Malaysia reaffirms its long-standing commitment in support of Palestine's continuous efforts for self-determination, sovereignty and independence, underpinned by various international principles and laws. In that regard, Malaysia reiterates its full support for the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people to an

independent State of Palestine, with two States, based on the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine, living in peace and security.

Malaysia commends the establishment of the Palestinian unity Government and reiterates its unstinting support for that Government's efforts towards self-determination and statehood. We hope that all Member States will support the unity Government administration of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, under the leadership of President Mahmoud Abbas. Malaysia welcomes the assurances of President Abbas that the Government will continue to abide by the Palestine Liberation Organization's commitments with regard to the recognition of Israel, non-violence and the adherence to previous agreements.

However, we were alarmed by the rise of violence that erupted in Jerusalem, including the recent attacks at the places of worship in the Holy City, which resulted in the loss of innocent civilian lives. The life of each human being — be it man, woman or child — is sacred and precious and must be protected. Any act of violence inflicted upon innocent civilians in this conflict, be they Palestinians or Israelis, is therefore unacceptable and deserves equal criticism and rejection from us all. In this regard, we also condemn Israel's continued invasion by military force into the compound of Al-Haram Al-Sharif, which has long been recognized as a holy site for both Muslims and Christians.

Malaysia further condemns Israel's continued building of illegal settlements in Palestinian lands, including in East Jerusalem, which is further weakening the possibility of a two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders. In spite of the provocations of the occupying Power, Malaysia appreciates the readiness and commitment of the State of Palestine to continuing negotiations, and the same spirit should be emulated by Israel. We therefore urge the international community to further demand that Israel immediately cease its illegal settlement building in the occupied Palestinian territory, before the viability of a two-State solution is completely eroded.

Let me now turn to the situation in the Gaza Strip, which has deteriorated following the outbreak of hostilities last summer. The reports of the Committee (A/69/35) and the Secretary-General (A/69/371) contain very alarming accounts, revelations and stark realities about the situation on the ground. After 51 days of Israel's military aggression of Gaza, which took

place between July and August, 2,189 Palestinians, including 513 children, were killed, more than 108,000 Palestinians were left homeless and hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were displaced. Israeli security forces also destroyed thousands of crucial social and economic infrastructure, including the schools of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, which had been used as shelters for displaced persons. Malaysia is deeply saddened by the unbearable suffering that the Palestinian people, particularly those in Gaza, have had to endure as the result of Israel's atrocities and violations of international humanitarian law.

The long-term ceasefire agreement between Israel and Palestine, brokered by the Egyptian Government on 26 August, was therefore a much needed development, which Malaysia welcomed. We also called on both parties to honour the agreement, with the hope that the ceasefire agreement would pave the way for both sides to resume direct negotiations to ensure a lasting peace in the region. My delegation believes that stronger political will at the highest levels from all parties are needed to further encourage a more constructive dialogue.

My delegation notes with deep concern from the reports before us that the scale of the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza is unprecedented. Food, clean water, sanitation and electricity remain scarce with vast networks having been destroyed by the Israeli aggression. While Israeli settlers even have enough water to run farms, swimming pools and spas, Palestinians continue to struggle to satisfy their daily minimum water requirements. More than 90 per cent of the water extracted from Gaza's sole aquifer has been found unsafe for human consumption, due to high levels of chloride and nitrate, and in some areas, as high as six times of the limit set by the World Health Organization. We urge the international community to continue to provide generous support to all United Nations bodies and other organizations working on the ground, to alleviate the catastrophic conditions and to expedite rebuilding efforts of vital necessities.

Malaysia also urges all Member States to continue to put pressure on Israel to demand an immediate lifting of the blockade on Gaza, in order to enable a legitimate and sustained flow of persons and goods, including construction materials, humanitarian aid and commercial flows. Exports from Gaza to the West Bank, to Israel, and to the outside world should

be allowed to resume, permitting the economy to re-establish itself and recover. My delegation firmly believes that the normalization of the situation in Gaza would significantly reduce tensions and facilitate the resumption of the political process.

However, let me be clear — normalization does not mean that the citizens of Gaza will continue to live in a de facto open-air prison; nor does it mean an indefinite extension of the 47-year occupation of Palestinian territories and the continued building of illegal settlements by Israel. Indeed, to use a term which has been used repeatedly in recent months, normalization does not mean a return to the status quo ante. Normalization to us means the realization and fulfilment of the inalienable rights of all the Palestinian people and for them to live the normal lives that many of us enjoy in peace, freedom, dignity and, ultimately, in a land they can call their own.

As a member of the Committee on the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, Malaysia fully endorses the Committee's report and its recommendations. My delegation is also pleased to co-sponsor all draft resolutions under this important agenda item.

In conclusion, my delegation reiterates that direct talks and negotiations between Palestine and Israel are the only way to ensure long-term peace, security and stability in the region. No effort should be spared to achieve long-overdue freedom, justice, peace and dignity for the Palestinian people.

**Mr. Reyes Rodríguez** (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank the Rapporteur of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for introducing the report of the Committee (see A/69/PV.59).

The situation of the Palestinian people has deteriorated since we held a similar debate in 2013 (see A/68/PV.58). Palestinian civilians were victims of the slaughter that was carried out by Israel against the Gaza Strip during a 50-day operation that took place in July and August. The report of the Committee on Palestine (A/69/35) describes the damage caused by that criminal attack, which killed 2,189 Palestinians, 67 per cent of whom were civilians, including 513 children and 269 women, and injured more than 11,000 human beings. The homes of over 100,000 Palestinians in Gaza were destroyed or seriously damaged. Those ravages worsened the living conditions of the 1.8 million inhabitants of Gaza, who were already facing critical

living conditions after eight years of the Israeli blockade.

The attack occurred precisely when the international community was renewing its efforts during the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, which was proclaimed by the General Assembly through its resolution 68/12. The resolution aims to mobilize broad support to put an end to the Israeli occupation and to make a two-State solution effective in order to enable the Palestinian people to effectively exercise their inalienable rights, including the right to self-determination.

Nearly three months since the ceasefire in Gaza, we have been observing with concern how the situation in East Jerusalem has gradually deteriorated. The Israeli Government has announced its intention to build new settlements in the illegally occupied Palestinian territories, even as it continues to demolish buildings and expropriate Palestinian land. It also intends to carry out the forced displacement of hundreds of thousands of families and to transfer settlers to the occupied territories, which will only serve to refuel tensions, which are already extremely high as a result of Israel's long and bloody military occupation. Cuba reiterates its strong condemnation of Israel's ongoing military occupation of Palestinian territory and its illegal policies and colonizing practices in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. We also condemn the violations of human rights and the systematic war crimes that are causing immense suffering to the people of Palestine.

Just a few hours ago, we celebrated the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. On that occasion, His Excellency Mr. Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cuba, sent a message to the President of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People on behalf of the Government and the people of Cuba. In his letter, the Minister reaffirmed Cuba's unequivocal solidarity with the Palestinian people and its firm and resolute support for all actions to promote both the recognition of the Palestinian State, based on the pre-1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital, as well as the right of the people and the State of Palestine to become full-fledged members of the United Nations.

He also recalled the General Assembly's historic decision to grant Palestine observer status in the United

Nations and reiterated the need for the Security Council to consider and accept, without further delay, the request of Palestine for recognition as a State Member of the United Nations submitted in 2011, as this is also the clear desire of the vast majority of States Members of the Organization. The letter pointed out, among other considerations, that Palestine has shown definite proof of its commitment to the multilateral system and has been working with a high sense of responsibility and professionalism in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, to which it was admitted as a member State with full rights in 2011.

Cuba reiterates its full support for the Palestinian initiative to promote the adoption of a Security Council resolution establishing a deadline for the end of the Israeli military occupation of the Palestinian territories and allowing the Palestinians to enjoy their inalienable rights, including the right to self-determination as an independent State with pre-1967 borders and East Jerusalem as its capital. Cuba also reaffirms its unequivocal solidarity with the Palestinian people and calls for an end to the prolonged occupation of the Palestinian territories; the immediate, unconditional and complete lifting of the cruel and illegal blockade of Gaza; and the opening of border crossings and checkpoints so as to enable free and permanent access to humanitarian aid, supplies and essential goods and to facilitate the movement of people to and from the Gaza Strip. Only the end of the colonial policy, the release of Palestinian prisoners and the recognition of the legitimate and inalienable rights of that people will allow us to establish a meaningful political process that will lead to lasting peace in the region.

One way or another, the situation in the Middle East affects all Member States. In an interconnected and interdependent world, it is more important than ever to ensure compliance with the basic objectives of the United Nations, which are to promote peace through political and negotiated settlement of conflicts, to promote the development and well-being of all peoples, and to promote and protect all human rights for all people, including the right to development. The question of Palestine, including Jerusalem, and an end to the occupation and illegal Israeli practices in the occupied Syrian Golan are issues that urgently require a definitive solution through the implementation of relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions with a view to achieving a final, just and lasting peace for all peoples in the Middle East.

All the moral strength, prestige and legitimacy of the United Nations must be marshalled to achieve these objectives. We must reject war and the use of force decisively and unequivocally. We must repudiate and strongly condemn all acts, methods and practices of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations by whomever, against whomever, wherever they may occur and whatever their motivations. These are essential aims in all our endeavours. Cuba will continue working together with the international community to ensure that we achieve these aims.

**Ms. Al-Thani** (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): The delegation of Qatar wishes to extend its gratitude to you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting and for your valuable introductory statement. We also wish to extend our thanks and appreciation to Ambassador Seck of Senegal, the Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, for his statement yesterday (see A/69/PV.59). We also wish to reiterate our thanks and appreciation to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. We endorse the recommendations contained in the Committee's report (A/69/35). We appreciate the activities carried out by the Committee, especially during this Year of International Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

This year has witnessed serious and regrettable events that have put the entire region in grave danger and are difficult to address. In Gaza, thousands of civilians were killed and much infrastructure destroyed as a result of the unjustified Israeli military campaign. We have joined in the efforts to stanch the human and material losses and avert even more harmful actions in the region that could threaten regional and international peace and security. We reiterate our well-known position that the rules of international law and international humanitarian law must be respected and that Israel must honour its commitments as the occupying Power.

Comprehensive peace in accordance with international law and resolutions will never be attained through the use of excessive force. On the contrary, the ongoing violations against unarmed civilians, the destruction of homes, forced displacements and confiscation of land only aggravate the conflict, push all parties to more extremist positions and impede the peace process. Accordingly, we condemn the recent exacerbation of the conflict in occupied Jerusalem when Israeli forces carried out an incursion in Al-Aqsa

Mosque and prevented worshippers from praying inside the Mosque. This dangerous escalation could undermine any chance of attaining the desired peace in the Middle East. The recent menacing events, which continue to take place, and the ensuing international human rights violations should serve as incentives for the international community to continue to resume peace negotiations in the Middle East in order to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting resolution to the Palestinian question.

The United Nations, and the Security Council in particular, should shoulder their responsibilities by taking speedy action to achieve that goal and by responding positively to the Palestinian leadership's application to the United Nations. Given the international community's unanimous rejection and condemnation of Israeli occupation, illegal settlement activities and ongoing settlement policies, Israel's refusal to honour its commitments and to uphold international law will lead to more death, destruction and victims, and undermine all efforts to achieve a two-State solution.

We hope that Israel will respond positively to the Palestinians' desire and commitment to continuing the peace process and releasing the remaining Palestinian captives who were imprisoned before the Oslo Accords. We also welcome the April Palestinian national reconciliation agreement as part of the effort to achieve permanent and comprehensive peace between the two parties, which would be one of the building blocks in establishing a Palestinian State. Palestine's international recognition as an observer State in the United Nations two years ago sent a clear message from the international community that establishing an independent State of Palestine is imperative. The reconstruction of Gaza, the lifting of the blockade and efforts to build Palestinian institutions are therefore steps in the right direction.

In conclusion, we believe that agreeing on a two-State solution for an independent and viable Palestinian State, based on the pre-1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions, particularly 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), the road map and the Arab Peace Initiative, is imperative. That requires that Israel end its occupation of all the occupied Arab territories, including the Syrian Golan and the occupied Lebanese territory. The entire world is waiting for Israel to join this unanimous position of the international community.

**Mr. Hermida Castillo** (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): We wish to acknowledge the Committee on the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat, and we vow that we will not rest until the Palestinian people achieve their inalienable right to a Palestinian State. After 66 years, Israel not only continues to create obstacles to achieving peace and the establishment of an independent, sovereign Palestinian State, it has also intensified its illegal practices, which undermine any good-faith solution to the conflict. Nonetheless, as it does every year, the international community takes this opportunity to renew its solidarity with the Palestinian cause and its support for peace in the Middle East.

Our Government also offers a brotherly salute on this International Day to the heroic Palestinian people, their authorities and their Government of national unity, and reaffirms its absolute and total solidarity with them in their struggle to be free and to exercise of their inalienable right to self-determination, through the creation of a Palestinian State based on the borders established before 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Nicaragua is concerned about and condemns the fact that in the year 2014, dedicated to solidarity with Palestine, we have once again witnessed another terrible attack on the Palestinian people, resulting in the deaths of more than 2,000 people, most of them children and women, and the devastation of their infrastructure. While we should acknowledge the noble efforts of the international community in that regard, and the support that has so far been provided for rebuilding heroic Gaza, we nonetheless reiterate that the promised aid should be delivered as soon as possible in order to speed up reconstruction and thus ensure that Gaza will at least have the minimum conditions of survival needed to cope with the coming winter.

We should emphasize once again that this vicious circle of attacks followed by reconstruction followed by attacks cannot continue. Israel continues to act with impunity, regardless of the fact that such actions are prohibited as violations under international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention, the relevant resolutions of the United Nations and advisory opinions of the International Court of Justice. We call for respect for the rights of Palestinian refugees and for the lifting of the criminal blockade of Gaza, and we reiterate our solidarity with Palestine's political detainees and prisoners and demand their immediate release. We

also condemn the illegal practice of building more settlements, which illegally alter the demographic composition of the occupied Palestinian territory, as well as the recent provocative actions of some settlers and extremists at various religious sites, particularly the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

In commemorating this day we also take the opportunity to celebrate 34 years of diplomatic relations, Nicaragua's recognition of the Palestinian State and friendship with Palestine since the historic visit to Nicaragua of its beloved and historic leader Yasser Arafat. In that context, we conducted various activities together with the Association of the Nicaraguan Palestinian Community, participated in by the children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren of Palestinians born in Nicaragua, as well as forming a committee of solidarity with the Palestinian people and celebrating Nicaraguan heroes who fought for Palestine, such as Patricio Argüello Ryan and Selim Shible.

Peace in the Middle East not only involves solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it must necessarily include the liberation of the Syrian and Lebanese territories occupied by Israel. Likewise, the situation in the Middle East beyond Palestine and the other occupied territories should be resolved through dialogue and negotiation, taking into account the legitimate interests of all States in the region without external interference.

In conclusion, as we come to the end of 2014 as the Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the Government and people of Nicaragua call on the international community to work to ensure that we comply with the historic responsibilities of the United Nations by adopting a draft resolution that includes a specific timetable for the creation of a Palestinian State based on the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and thus laying the foundation for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

**Mr. Dabbashi** (Libya) (*spoke in Arabic*): As the General Assembly once again considers the question of Palestine today, the tragedy of the Palestinian people continues. Feelings of frustration increase within the international community as it is unable to stand with them. Unfortunately, the international community remains paralysed despite its awareness of the suffering and inhumane treatment of the Palestinian people under the illegal practices of the Israeli occupying Power.

In recent years, it has become clear that Israel is refusing to recognize the inalienable rights of the

Palestinian people, and is relentlessly seeking to legitimize its occupation of all Palestinian territories by every possible means. It is clearly refusing to establish a viable Palestinian State. It is seeking to control all the land of historic Palestine by every possible means so that it can expand and strengthen itself as a racist State where only Jews can live. Furthermore, we would point to the racist nature of the Israeli entity, which is gaining strength every day under the laws of the occupying Power and its practices, in accordance with the Zionist doctrine that resolution 3379 (XXX) declared to be a form of racism.

The current situation, in which the Israeli entity has made a mockery of the efforts of the international community to resolve the question of Palestine, can surely be qualified as unnatural. The absurdity of the situation is only strengthening the status quo of occupation at the expense of the rights of the Palestinian people. It will be increasingly difficult to establish a sovereign Palestinian State living side by side with Israel because of the construction of settlements that now extend to half of the West Bank. This building activity has dismembered Palestinian land to the extent that Palestinians are now living in cantons and encounter numerous obstacles in crossing from one to another. Palestinian leaders have been forced to accept less than one quarter — I repeat, less, than one quarter — of the rights to their historic land, yet they still cherish the hope of establishing their independent State on that territory. Palestinian leaders concluded over 10 agreements with the Israeli Government from 1993 to 2005, but the Israeli party continues to prevaricate and manipulate the international community, and no agreement has yet been enforced.

Israel's policy of ridding the territory of all Palestinians is well known, as is its confiscation of land, destruction of homes, prevention of construction and destruction of crops. It impedes the Palestinians' vital freedom of movement and confines them, establishes settlements everywhere, prevents Palestinian access to places of worship, encourages settlers to attack Palestinians, and has taken illegitimate steps to Judaize Al-Quds. One natural consequence of these practices is that Jews now control over 85 per cent of historic Palestinian territory, whereas in 1947 they controlled only 6.2 per cent of that territory. Assembly members can judge for themselves the terrible difference between the two dates.

Resolution 67/19, adopted in 2012, gave rise to Palestinian hopes as the State of Palestine was accepted as a non-member Observer State to the United Nations. Despite Palestine's difficulties in becoming a full-fledged Member of the United Nations, all peace-loving members of the Organization should support Palestine in its quest to extend its sovereignty throughout its territory. In that regard, Libya welcomes the courageous decision of Sweden to recognize the State of Palestine. We invite all European Union member States and all States that have not recognized the State of Palestine to do so as swiftly as possible in order to contribute to peace efforts, thereby freeing the Middle East of the spectre of war. In Libya, we too welcomed the accession of the State of Palestine to the four Geneva Conventions and other international conventions. We Libyans invite the Palestinian Authority to accede to the Rome Statue of the International Criminal Court as soon as possible in order to ensure that the perpetrators of grave crimes against the Palestinian people may be duly judged.

The destructive wars launched by the Israeli occupation forces on Gaza every two or three years have transformed the region into a large-scale prison. That is terrible. This prison is worse than all others, however, because infrastructure, houses, schools and hospitals have been destroyed and civilians killed indiscriminately. The latest death toll in Gaza is 2,131 Palestinians killed, including 601 children, 18,000 deprived of their homes and 108,000 civilians displaced. It is high time for the international community to adopt the necessary measures to protect the Palestinian people from inhuman Israeli practices and human rights violations. It is also high time to establish a deadline ending the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory, and for the State of Palestine to access the United Nations as a full-fledged Member.

We condemn the ongoing occupation of the Syrian Golan and the Lebanese Shaba'a Farms, as well as the brutal practices of occupation against Syrian and Arab residents in occupied Syrian and Arab territories. Lastly, we reaffirm that the end of the conflict in the Middle East and the establishment of peace will require a just solution guaranteeing the end of the occupied Palestinian territory, in accordance with the principles of justice and the United Nations resolutions, and upholding the rights of the Palestinians, including the right to return to their homes, the right to self-determination and the right to live in a sovereign, independent State, with Al-Quds as their capital.



**Ms. Gunnarsdóttir** (Iceland): The Security Council has in recent weeks received a number of letters from the Israeli and Palestinian Missions highlighting acts of aggression and provocation. The situation seems to be spiralling out of control. Unless leaders on both sides show the necessary courage, restraint and firmness forthwith, the consequences for each community and the region will be dire.

Five Israelis were killed and a number injured in an attack by four men wielding knives and pistols last week in a West Jerusalem synagogue. About a week before that, an Israel Defense Forces (IDF) soldier was stabbed, as was a young Israeli woman. The use of cars as instruments of terror has increased and several Israeli civilians, including one baby, have been killed in such attacks.

According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 47 Palestinians have been killed in the West Bank since the beginning of the year. thousands of Palestinians have been injured in clashes with Israeli security forces in the West Bank. There have been 543 demolitions over the year; these include the reintroduction of punitive demolitions, in contravention of international law. There are increasing and violent multiple raids in East Jerusalem and the West Bank by the IDF, and attacks by Israeli settlers on Palestinians and Palestinian property continue.

The facts on the ground, as they have been developing for some time now, are steadily eating away at the prospects for a two-State solution. Hope is being eroded. Palestinians in the West Bank and East Jerusalem see their human rights flouted, their property seized and destroyed, and their children arrested or injured. Gaza remains blockaded, with an extremely serious humanitarian situation and no prospect of becoming a normal economy and part of the Palestinian State. At the same time, Israel feels threatened, and many Israelis live in fear of violence.

Iceland recognized the State of Palestine in 2011. This modest signal, added to that of many other States Members of the United Nations, encompasses the vision of a State based on the 1967 borders, and a situation whereby Israel and Palestine can live side by side in peace and security. In the current circumstances, the leaders of both sides need to take measures to stop retaliation and violence. Restraint is difficult and needs strong leadership. Now is the time for leaders to

engage with each other. Provocation and retaliation will continue the downward spiral.

**Mr. Pedersen** (Norway): Recent developments on the ground give cause for great concern. The murderous actions that we have witnessed over the past few weeks are gruesome, appalling and unacceptable. We react with particular disgust and condemnation to the murder of four worshippers in a Jerusalem synagogue on 18 November. The temptation to call for vengeance and further hate must be restrained, and the cycle of violence must stop.

Jerusalem, a city that is holy to three great religions of peace, must not be the centre of strife and violence. To achieve this, we believe that the sensitive status quo of the holy sites must be fully respected and should not be challenged. We commend those who call for moderation, such as Israel's Chief Sephardic Rabbi Yitzhak Yosef, who has admonished his fellow followers of the Mosaic faith to cease the provocative visits to Haram al-Sharif/the Temple Mount.

The recent violence in Jerusalem and the Gaza war this summer was merely a symptom of the overarching problem. The problem is the failure to date of the parties to reach a lasting two-State solution under which Israelis as well as Palestinians can live side by side in peace, security, dignity and mutual recognition. Credible negotiations towards that goal must be urgently revitalized. Norway believes that the parties will not return to the table by their own devices. Both are entangled in dynamics, both internal and between themselves, which increase the gaps between them and weaken the hands of those who want to negotiate. Therefore, the international community should come to their assistance.

Norway also urges the parties to refrain from unilateral acts that pre-empt the negotiations and from all forms of incitement that undermine moderate leaders. This includes the further building of settlements in violation of international law. Without the resumption of a credible political process, that which has been achieved in terms of building the foundations for the two-State solution may be soon torn apart.

While we hope for negotiations to address the fundamental issues of the conflict, there are substantial humanitarian challenges that urgently require immediate action. The Cairo Conference on Palestine and the reconstruction of Gaza on 12 October was a success. Norway was pleased by the overall focus

of the conference. We underline the insistence that the humanitarian needs in Gaza after the military confrontations this summer must be addressed with a perspective on the whole of Palestine. The donors are engaged in building a Palestinian State in support for a negotiated end to the conflict. The massive destructions in Gaza call for urgent reconstruction as a humanitarian imperative. Norway was therefore pleased with the pledges made. With respect to the urgent needs of the people in Gaza, it is now vital that the \$5.4 billion pledged, including \$2.5 billion allocated to Gaza, translate rapidly into real contributions on the ground. We therefore urge all the donors to deliver on their pledges in a transparent way. Contributions should preferably be channelled through the Palestinian Authority.

The Cairo Conference was important not only for its pledges, but also for its unified political message that there will be no fundamental change in the political, security and economic situation in Gaza unless the blockade is lifted, and unless the Palestinian Authority exerts full authority throughout the entire Palestinian territory. Brave leadership is required on both sides to end the unsustainable situation in Gaza. Both parties should urgently make progress towards a durable ceasefire.

First, the sustainable reconstruction of Gaza will largely depend on an overall framework of support to Palestine under the leadership of one legitimate recipient Government for Palestine. We therefore urge all parties involved to support a process that results in the Palestinian Authority regaining all its Government functions and effective control of Gaza, including the crossing points. Norway calls on all Palestinian factions to end internal divisions and to cooperate with the Palestinian consensus Government, uniting behind a common Palestinian vision under the leadership of president Abbas.

Secondly, transforming Gaza will simply not be possible unless the border-crossing points are opened. We therefore urge a change of Israeli policy so as to open the borders, allowing Gaza to trade normally on a permanent basis, while addressing the security needs of civilian populations. Both parties must cooperate with and fully implement the temporary materials monitoring and verification mechanism of large-scale reconstruction materials, negotiated by the United Nations. A shift allowing exports from Gaza, not only imports to Gaza, is also needed.

Thirdly, it is crucial that the Palestinian Authority be in charge of the reconstruction efforts of Gaza. But for this to be so will require increased coordination of donors and a system to monitor progress from Cairo. The only existing comprehensive mechanism to follow up on the pledges and the political messages from Cairo alike is the structure of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians. The Committee is the only forum where both parties participate as members and which provides an efficient system to report and monitor independently on the progress made by donors and the parties. To utilize these structures, Norway is reactivating the local aid-coordination regime in Ramallah and Jerusalem. The next Committee meeting, scheduled for March 2015 in Brussels, will be the first high-level stocktaking of the Cairo Conference.

A number of recent actions on the part of Israel in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, are deeply troubling. The international community is unanimous in its condemnation of the recent expropriation of land near Bethlehem; recent announcements of plans for new settlement construction, in particular in Givat Hamatos, Ramat Shlomo, Har Homa and Ramot; recent settlement activities in East Jerusalem; continued demolitions and forcible transfers; as well as plans to displace Bedouins in the West Bank. These actions are in violation of international law and counterproductive to the viability of the two-State solution. We urge Israel to reconsider and reverse these actions.

Norway has a history of commitment to the situation in the Middle East, and the fate of the Israeli and the Palestinian peoples. We support renewed diplomatic and humanitarian efforts to bring peace, security and dignity to Israelis and Palestinians. We will continue to do so through our leadership of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of International Assistance to Palestinians and other means conducive to the overarching goal of a lasting two-State solution.

**Mr. Phansourivong** (Lao People's Democratic Republic): The question of Palestine has been on the United Nations agenda for more than six decades now, and yet the Palestinian people still have no glimmer of hope for realizing their right to self-determination and freedom. It is time for us to take a historic step towards putting an end to the occupation of the Palestinian land and paving the way for the peaceful resolution to the conflict. We believe that achieving peace between Israelis and Palestinians is the most critical cause and

needs sustained and active international involvement. We welcome the decisions of several countries to recognize the State of Palestine and hope that more countries will follow suit.

I wish to express my deep appreciation to the Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his tireless efforts to bring this question to a long-overdue end.

We are deeply concerned by the conflict in and around the Gaza Strip in July and August 2014, which caused a tremendous loss of life among innocent people, including civilians, mainly children, women and the elderly. It destroyed homes and civilian infrastructure, including United Nations facilities, and displaced hundreds of thousands of civilians. We are also deeply concerned at the recent escalation of violence in the West Bank and Jerusalem. We call on all parties to exert all efforts necessary to avoid further exacerbating the already very tense situation, to take every possible step to create conditions conducive to the success of peace negotiations and to refrain from actions that may undermine trust and jeopardize the talks, including the continued construction of settlement units in the occupied Palestinian territory and attacks on civilians on both sides and against religious sites.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic wishes to see a just, lasting, comprehensive and peaceful solution to the Palestinian conflict, consistent with relevant United Nations resolutions and major initiatives undertaken over the past decades envisaging a sovereign, independent and viable State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side in peace and security with the State of Israel and other neighbours, within secure and internationally recognized borders. We therefore call upon the parties to resume and accelerate direct peace negotiations towards the conclusion of a final peaceful settlement on this basis.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic has long recognized the State of Palestine. I wish to reaffirm our continued support for the Palestinian people in attaining their long-delayed goal of a viable, peaceful and prosperous State of Palestine that is a fully fledged Member of the United Nations.

I take this opportunity to commend the role and work of United Nations agencies, especially the United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East, in providing assistance, including emergency assistance, to the Palestinian

people throughout so many years and amid multiple difficulties. We also wish the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People every success in its noble endeavour to attain a peaceful, just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the question of Palestine.

**Mr. Abdrakhmanov** (Kazakhstan): We thank the Secretary-General for his report on the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine (A/69/371). We also thank the members of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for its report (A/69/35).

My country expresses its serious concern at the continuing violations and conflict in Palestine, its occupied territories, including East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip, and in the whole region. The developments there do not allow us to speak of any improvement in or mitigation of the situation. We condemn the rocket launches by Hamas and the disproportionate use of force by Israel in densely populated areas leading to the loss of hundreds of innocent civilian lives from both sides. We are very much concerned by the continuing violation of human rights and the suffering of the civil population, particularly of vulnerable groups.

It is lamentable that many years of negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians, with the strongest involvement of the entire international community, have not brought any concrete results. The persistence of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict continues to threaten regional and international peace and security, the negative implications of which are not confined to the region alone but are felt well beyond, indeed across the globe. The ultimate goal of the efforts of all parties involved should be the restoration and promotion of the peace processes in all directions. All parties to the Middle East conflict must fulfil their commitments with an increased sense of responsibility and accountability. We commend the internal Palestinian reconciliation process and the consolidation of the efforts of the Government of Palestine to alleviate the situation.

Kazakhstan expresses its hope that international actions, including those of the Secretary-General, may contribute to the ceasefire and the resumption of further peace talks. My delegation commends the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. My country reiterates our recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination, to establish an

independent State of Palestine within the 1967 borders, coexisting peacefully with Israel, and to obtaining fully fledged membership in the United Nations.

The two-State solution is the only viable option for a durable peace; it must be reached through direct and meaningful negotiations aimed at finding a comprehensive, fair and lasting solution that includes an end to occupation and conflict. We therefore call on the Israeli and Palestinian leaders to show wisdom, responsibility and political will in order to reach a historic peace agreement that would meet the legitimate aspirations of their peoples.

As the question of Palestine is directly linked to the situation in the Middle East, Kazakhstan is extremely alarmed at the overall situation there. Well-coordinated international efforts are needed to stop the senseless bloodshed and find a political solution with the participation of all parties involved, with their voices and concerns heard. We have to try our best to restore peace and stability in the region, eliminate destabilizing factors, provide peaceful conditions appropriate for the return of refugees and the recovery of economies, in order to bring about the settlement of the political crisis with its dramatic security, human rights and humanitarian consequences.

*Mr. Mahmadaaminov (Tajikistan), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

In conclusion, we again urgently call on all parties, especially those having real political power and influence, to commit their political will to ensuring lasting peace and security in the Palestinian territories and throughout the Middle East and, through a genuine multilateral approach, to bringing about freedom and justice for all people.

**Mr. Suárez Moreno** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Venezuela congratulates the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People on its commendable work in promoting the right to self-determination, independence and sovereignty of that sister nation. Accordingly, we welcome the Committee's report (A/69/35).

For Venezuela, the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People is a good opportunity for strengthening the process of peace negotiations between Israel and Palestine in order to achieve a negotiated political solution to the conflict. Our country reiterates its call on Israel to withdraw from the occupied

territories of the Palestinian State, end its settlement policy in support of Israeli settlers and proceed to the destruction of the wall. We also demand the definitive lifting of the ruthless blockade on the Palestinians of the Gaza Strip, an illegal measure that has been in place for seven years. The unrestricted observance of international law by Israel, including compliance with the resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council, is essential for achieving a firm and lasting peace in the Middle East condition.

Venezuela categorically condemns the illegal actions of the occupying Power including, inter alia, the indiscriminate use of force, the arbitrary detention of children, women and men, mass forced displacements, demolitions of homes, denial of access to water and land for farming, the bullying of teachers and students in the Gaza Strip, and restrictions on free movement. Acts of State terrorism and war crimes committed by the occupying Power have consequences for the international criminal system that can no longer be ignored.

Finally, on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, Venezuela reaffirms its support for the self-determination of that sister nation. We support the existence of a free, sovereign and independent Palestinian State, living peacefully side by side with Israel, within internationally recognized pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

To conclude, we support the admission of Palestine as a full State Member of the United Nations.

**Mr. Laassel** (Morocco) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to begin by commending the positive and substantive efforts that have been made by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People under the chairmanship of Ambassador Seck.

I would like to inform the Assembly of the solidarity message that His Majesty King Mohammed VI sent to the Chairman of the Committee as an expression of our solidarity with the Palestinians and our support for their full enjoyment of their rights and for the establishment of their free and independent State within the pre-1967 borders with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital and in the service of the Palestinian issue.

Today's meeting is being held at a critical time with respect to the question of Palestine. After the launch of negotiations in July 2013 by the United States and the

efforts of the Secretary of State John Kerry, supporters of peace thought that those negotiations would lead to a solution that would include the end of the occupation; they were also optimistic because of the new intra-Palestinian reconciliation and the establishment of a national unity Government. However, the subsequent turn of events led to the dismay of those who love peace when negotiations came to halt as a result of clearly dubious Israeli pretexts.

The world was then shocked when Israel began to wage an unacceptable and unjustified war of aggression on Gaza that claimed more than 2,000 Palestinian lives, including children, women, the elderly and the disabled, and injured thousands of persons whose property and homes had literally tumbled down upon their heads and whose families had been displaced. That situation has exacerbated an already existing deplorable humanitarian situation stemming from Israel's systematic practices and provocations, which are designed to increase the suffering of the Palestinian people.

There are no safe places in Gaza, and that has led to an unprecedented humanitarian disaster. Schools run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East were not spared, even though they were being used as shelter by the displaced who had thought they were safe. All of the foregoing is in grave violation of the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international humanitarian law and international law.

Upon the instructions of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, Chairman of the Al-Quds (Jerusalem) Committee of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), since the beginning of the latest Israeli aggression Morocco has provided humanitarian and financial support in solidarity with our Palestinian brothers during their ordeal. In addition, we participated in the donor conference held under the sponsorship of Egypt and Norway in Cairo on 12 October. In that context, we will contribute to the reconstruction of Gaza through a number of projects whose details will be determined as we coordinate with the Palestinian national authorities and within the United Nations mechanism being developed for the specific purpose of rebuilding Gaza. We commend the efforts of Egypt to broker the truce that was signed on 26 August and to make the ceasefire permanent.

We follow with grave concern Israel's escalation of the Al-Quds Al-Sharif issue, its authorities' continued provocative statements and ongoing Judaization of Jerusalem, the relentless establishment of settlements and forced displacement of residents, the unrelenting aggression against the Al-Aqsa compound and the faithful there, and all attempts to end Al-Quds Al-Sharif's legal standing as an indivisible part of the occupied Palestinian territories under resolutions of international legitimacy, which can only lead to religious animosity.

We strongly deplore such aggressive methods, which have led Palestinians and millions of Muslims to feel even greater injustice, especially as they are not consistent with United Nations resolutions on Al-Quds Al-Sharif and other occupied Palestinian territory. Such actions also undermine international efforts to find a just settlement to the Middle East conflict, which would otherwise be a breeding ground for extremism that could harm us all. In that context, we call upon the international community to continue to pressure Israel to end its aggression on Al-Aqsa Mosque and to stop all settlement activities and efforts to Judaize Al-Quds Al-Sharif.

On 12 November, the Kingdom of Morocco and His Majesty the King hosted a coordination meeting of the Ministerial Team of the OIC mandated by the twentieth session of the Al-Quds (Jerusalem) Committee following two meetings of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs to deliver the message of the Islamic world to the international community that the Al-Aqsa Mosque needs to be defended. We truly believe that the rights of the Palestinian people — including the right to establish their own State, with East Jerusalem as its capital — should be respected. His Majesty has reaffirmed on many occasions, in bilateral meetings and international forums, that there should be an end to settlement activities and the Judaization of Jerusalem.

Furthermore, we have sent a message to the Vatican referring to the risks of unilateral action that could hurt the civilizational landmarks of Al-Quds Al-Sharif. We have also sent messages to influential international parties concerning the serious escalation of Israel's illegal activities in the city of Jerusalem, which could be detrimental to the holy and cultural nature of the city. Specifically, we condemn the Israeli project to Judaize Jerusalem.

The question of Palestine will not be resolved by war, bloodshed or the killing of innocent civilians. The only means of resolving the issue is to return to negotiations in good faith having as their criteria a two-State solution with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace, security, harmony and cooperation. Ours is a steadfast position that is based on the Arab Peace Initiative and resolutions of international legitimacy for the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital, based on the 4 June 1967 borders.

**Mr. Lasso Mendoza** (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is of special importance for my delegation to take the floor at today's plenary meeting of the General Assembly to celebrate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People and the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People and to express the fraternal greetings of my country to the people and the Government of Palestine. The adverse circumstances experienced at present by the Palestinian people are proof for all of us of the ongoing and legitimate struggle of this brave people to achieve recognition of their identity and their right to live in a free and sovereign State of Palestine. Having recognized this fact for several years now, my country has sought to enshrine the relationship between the Republic of Ecuador and the State of Palestine with the opening of the Embassy of the State of Palestine in Ecuador and a corresponding form of Ecuadorean diplomatic representation in Ramallah.

The latest legacy of death and destruction left by the Israeli military aggression against the Palestinian territory, particularly in the Gaza Strip, has shaken consciences and confirmed that, from any point of view, the status quo is unsustainable and that peace in the Middle East requires a definitive solution to the question of Palestine. The solution should include the recognition of an independent, sovereign, democratic, viable and contiguous Palestinian State coexisting with Israel in peace and security, based on borders prior to 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital. The solution also demands an end to the military occupation and the full realization of Palestine's self-determination and sovereignty over its territory. The solution encourages the fair treatment of the issue of Palestinian refugees who were expelled from their lands. The solution requires an end to the blockade of the Gaza Strip and the halting and reversal of the settlement policy and the construction of the wall by

Israel, actions that violate international law, as held by the International Court of Justice.

The General Assembly will take action today on various draft resolutions related to the Palestinian question and the situation in the Middle East, all of which have been sponsored by my country. In this regard, we note that these draft resolutions are the result of the heightened awareness that this issue generates among the vast majority of the international community. The international community, through the United Nations, has embarked on the path leading to the full exercise by the Palestinian people of their rights as a nation and the establishment of a number of bodies — including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Population of the Occupied Territories, and the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat — that support the cause from different perspectives and have thereby contributed to alleviating the dire situation that the Palestinians have endured over the past decades. Ecuador reiterates its full commitment to and support for their work.

That said, we must recognize that even the United Nations can and should do more. The Security Council, the body to which the Charter assigned the responsibility to maintain or restore international peace and security, must fulfil its role now that it has before it a draft resolution submitted by the Arab League, which we hope will receive the treatment the circumstances require.

While encouraging the parties, especially Israel, to immediately resume negotiations in the framework of a peaceful two-State solution, we urge that country to refrain from unilateral actions that imbues the conflict with a religious aspect, which can become a very dangerous element in the dispute. On the contrary, it should maintain the status quo of religious sites, including Al-Aqsa Mosque and the entire Al-Haram Al-Sharif complex.

To conclude, I wish to urge the United Nations, particularly the Security Council, to enable the speedy realization of the the State of Palestine's inevitable full accession to our Organization as the 194th Member State.

**Mrs. Arce Echeverría** (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the Government and the people

of Costa Rica, I want to express our solidarity on this very special day with the people of Palestine. We wish to join with the people of Palestine this year in recognition of the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. Sixty-seven years have elapsed since Costa Rica voted in favour of resolution 181 (II), which proposed as a solution the creation of two States in the former British Mandate of Palestine. In 2008, we recognized the State of Palestine and we supported its entry into the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in 2011. Two years ago, Costa Rica voted in favour of resolution 67/19 on the status of Palestine, which enabled it to become a permanent observer State here at the United Nations.

Costa Rica, as a democratic State that has not had an army for 66 years and is a defender of peace, the rule of law and respect for human rights, reiterates its firm condemnation of the escalation and violence in the conflict. Once again, we call on the parties to resolve their differences, which have precluded both peoples from living in peace and security for so long. In that regard, we call for the resumption of negotiations based on the obligations set out in previous agreements between the parties, backed by international law and by the decisions of the Security Council and the General Assembly.

We want Palestine to achieve peace and stability in the near future, something that every society aspires to, which would transform its people's hope into a tangible reality.

**Mr. Percaya** (Indonesia): I thank President Kutesa for convening this meeting. I also thank the Secretary-General for his report entitled "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine" (A/69/371). Indonesia associates itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Saudi Arabia on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (see A/69/PV.59).

The international community has always maintained its overwhelming support for the peaceful settlement of the conflict between Palestine and Israel. There is no military solution to that conflict. All parties must make substantial efforts in the quest for peace. The international community, including the United Nations, must be ready to provide the greatest possible assistance to ensure that a fair, credible and results-oriented peace process takes place. Indonesia has followed with deep concern the events that recently unfolded in Jerusalem, in particular Israel's continued

incursions against the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Those actions only ignite hostility and worsen the already volatile situation. We would also underscore that the West Bank, including the Al-Aqsa Mosque, is an integral part of the Palestinian territory that has been occupied since 1967. Accordingly, the construction of settlements in the area is not only contrary to international law, but obstructs the establishment of a viable State of Palestine, which we expect will emerge from the peace process.

The year 2014 also witnessed Israel's inhumane aggression against Gaza. The aggression has only deepened the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, which is already dire owing to the Israeli blockade. The blockade, which has entered its eighth consecutive year, is nothing more than a collective punishment imposed on the whole population of Gaza, and a clear violation of international law. On a different but related matter, Indonesia would also like to underline that the year 2014 coincides with the tenth anniversary of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the separation wall. The illegality of the wall was clearly established by the advisory opinion. Yet Israel continues its construction. We share the view of the Court that the wall is tantamount to a de facto annexation and is not a temporary security measure, as claimed by Israel.

The international community must be resolute. We cannot afford to allow the continued violation of international law by Israel. Indonesia is therefore of the view that the establishment of the commission of inquiry of the Human Rights Council is a welcoming effort to put a stop to the culture of impunity for Israel's violations. In that regard, I would like to reiterate our deep concern over Israel's recent refusal to grant access to the members of the commission to enter Gaza. The actual presence of the commission in Gaza to directly witness the conditions in the aftermath of the Israeli aggression would contribute to an objective, transparent and professional investigation.

Last year, the Assembly adopted resolution 68/12, declaring 2014 as the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. The Year is nearing its end, while the promise of peace for Palestinian people is still far off on the horizon. With great sadness, we take note of the Secretary-General's observation that the negotiated solution to help realize the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people remains elusive. Instead of the desired two-State solution, the unfolding events have, dangerously, led to a one-State reality.

It remains our fervent hope that the year 2014 can still witness a substantial breakthrough in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, one that will shed some light for the Palestinian people in their quest for independence. Indonesia therefore calls on Israel to heed the noble aspiration of the international community, namely, the establishment of an independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital. Until the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people are realized, the world will continue to witness violence between Palestine and Israel. I therefore fully subscribe to the words expressed by the Secretary-General during the Gaza Reconstruction Conference, last month, "The cycle of building and destroying must end". To that end, the Israeli occupation must stop immediately.

**Mr. Estreme** (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Republic of Argentina believes that the international community must pay heed to the meaning of this year, which has been proclaimed the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. That means taking responsibility for the urgent need to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, especially given the fact that 67 years have passed since the adoption of resolution 181 (II) by the General Assembly and 47 years since the Israeli occupation of the Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem and West Bank.

We note that, since the 1991 Madrid Peace Conference, numerous peace initiatives have been launched, both multilaterally and by various States. None of them has, however, achieved the aim that we all seek, namely, a definitive end to the Israeli occupation and the establishment of an independent and viable Palestinian State. In fact, the Madrid Peace Conference was followed by the negotiations under the Oslo process, which led to the signing of the Declaration of Principles in 1993 and the 1994 agreements in Cairo. Later, in 2000, the Camp David Summit took place; in 2002, the Arab Peace Initiative was launched in Beirut; in 2003, the Quartet adopted the road map. Then, in 2005, the Sharm el-Sheikh Summit was held and, in 2007, the negotiations were resumed at Annapolis. Later still, in 2010, direct talks between the parties were launched. In 2011, the Quartet Peace Plan was relaunched. In 2012, the Arab League floated its peace proposal once again. And more recently, there have been additional efforts to hold direct negotiations between the parties.

I could refer to yet other initiatives or proposals that have been put forward over the years, but I believe that that list suffices to explain the frustration that exists

at the global level at the absence of progress towards peace between Palestine and Israel.

All of those gathered here today are aware of the conditions that enjoy the broad support of the international community for achieving peace, namely, a peace based on a two-State solution — with a Palestinian State within the borders of June 1967 as agreed by the parties and with Jerusalem as the capital of both States — a fair, equitable and definitive solution to the issue of refugees, and, of course, the recognition of Israel's right to live in peace and security within secure and internationally recognized borders. Unfortunately, despite so many efforts by the international community to achieve peace, the situation remains characterized by recurrent cycles of violence and destruction.

With regard to the events in Gaza this past summer, Argentina condemns the disproportionate use of force by Israel, which claimed countless civilian lives, including women, children and elderly people, and included attacks on schools and hospitals, and the blockade imposed by Israel against the territory. At the same time, I want to make it clear that Argentina condemns in the strongest terms the launching of rockets by Hamas from Gaza into Israel.

My country is deeply concerned by the humanitarian crisis unfolding in Gaza. That is why, on 12 October, we participated and added our contribution to the efforts of the international community to support the reconstruction of Gaza and participated actively in the Cairo Conference. Following the 50 days of unprecedented violence and devastation in July and August, rebuilding Gaza and meeting the massive needs of victims are humanitarian, political and moral imperatives or the utmost urgency. The scenes of devastation that we saw in Gaza raise legitimate questions based on provisions set out in international humanitarian law, in particular those concerning the obligation to protect the rights of civilians.

While the work of rebuilding begins once again and efforts are under way to consolidate the truce reached on 26 August, we have to think in the long term. Ending the cycle of destruction will require a lasting solution that transcends the mere provision of short-term assistance while leaving the underlying causes that trigger violence intact. One of the major conclusions of the Cairo Conference was precisely that: maintaining the status quo is not an option.



Regarding the tense situation prevailing in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, Argentina unequivocally condemns the acts of violence and incitement over recent days and weeks, such as the brutal attack on the Kehilat Bnei Torah synagogue on 18 November and the unpunished attacks committed by settlers against the Al-Mughayir mosque on 11 November. All such acts are unacceptable and cannot be justified.

We note with great concern that Israel's response to the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories is almost exclusively focused on the security dimension, including military operations, mass arrests and the resumption of the practice of demolishing the homes of those accused of committing acts of terrorism and the homes of their families. At the same time, tensions remain high, owing to unilateral measures, acts of incitement and restrictions at the holy sites of Jerusalem. That does more than add a religious dimension to the crisis, which we believe will be difficult to contain and is potentially explosive.

We deplore the inflammatory rhetoric of the extremists on both sides. We regret that, against that already very delicate backdrop, Israel is continuing its campaign of colonization, with newly announced settlements and the further appropriation of land in East Jerusalem and the West Bank. In that regard, we recall, once again, that the Israeli settlements in the occupied territories have been determined to be illegal, and we believe that such unilateral actions threaten peace and make the task of realizing a two-State solution more difficult. In that context, I recall that the stance adopted by my country in its capacity as a non-permanent member of the Security Council has been that the Security Council must stop tolerating, through its inaction, the acts of provocation and other acts incompatible with peace, and must do all within its power to save the two-State solution before it is too late.

In conclusion, I wish to express Argentina's view that the roots of the violence in the occupied Palestinian territories lie in the lack of hope and the stagnation in negotiations. Joint efforts are therefore crucial. We believe that action must go farther than it has to date. It is not enough to condemn the excessive use of force by Israel or the launching of rockets by Hamas; to express our horror at the killing of civilians, in particular women and children; to repeat time and again that the construction of settlements is illegal and goes against peace; or to express our deep concern at the wanton acts of extremist settlers and the acts inciting violence in the

holy sites of Jerusalem. That is not enough. It is time to say that there has been enough repetitive rhetoric and enough unnecessary violence, and to work towards a two-State solution, as set out in the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council, the road map, the Arab Peace Initiative and in the many other documents negotiated by the international community over the past decades.

**Mr. Rahman** (Bangladesh): The history of the Palestinians is a story of human tragedy. It is a unique saga of the long suffering inflicted by one part of the human race on another — starting with the occupation of land, altering history, then the escalation of violence and military incursions, leading to the imposition of inhumane conditions on the people through the demolition of homes, confiscation, closures and blockades.

The report of the Committee on the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (A/69/35), the report of the Secretary-General (A/69/371) and other reports reflect and validate yet again the appalling human rights and humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territories. The borders of Gaza have been subject to a regime of closure that is without precedent anywhere in the world. The quality of life of the Palestinians has already diminished to the subsistence level. For example, in Gaza, 1.7 million people have been living in an area of 360 square kilometres; 80 per cent of them are extremely poor and rely on food handouts; 90 per cent of the water available there is unfit for human consumption; and 31 per cent of vital medicines are unavailable in the hospitals. Those are only a few of the statistics that demonstrate the precarious condition in which the people of Palestine languish. The recent attacks in Gaza were yet additional flagrant violations of international law by the occupying Power, Israel, with utter disregard for the international outcry.

The illegal separation wall continues to divide and isolate communities, destroying livelihoods and depriving hundreds of thousands of people of access to their jobs, families, markets, schools and hospitals. The periodic escalation of violence leads only to further despair and desperation. Israel continues to build the wall in the West Bank, contrary to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice. Unfortunately, all those things are happening before the eyes of the international community and in the absence of any resolute action. It is time to review our role as responsible members of the global community, reflect on what we

could do better and take an objective position on this long-standing human rights and humanitarian issue.

The root cause of the conflict is the illegal occupation. It must end, better sooner rather than later. One issue that deserves our utmost attention is the continued construction of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories. The international community has repeatedly called for such activities to cease. The settlements present an existential threat to the viability of a future Palestinian State. They are contrary to international law and must, therefore, cease. The International Court of Justice has described the violation by Israel of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination as the violation of an erga omnes obligation. If peace in the Middle East is to be achieved, we must exert collective pressure on Israel to stop the expansion of the illegal settlements and dismantle existing ones, in keeping with its obligations under article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

The upgraded status of Palestine in the United Nations is a small step towards amending that historical injustice. A great deal of work lies ahead to create the conditions that will allow for the resumption of meaningful negotiations and preserve the viability of the two-State solution. All parties must realize that there cannot be a military solution to that long-standing conflict. Only through negotiations can there be a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

We therefore stress the importance of immediately resuming the stalled peace process. Our collective endeavour continues to strive for the realization of the inalienable rights and legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people by creating an independent, contiguous and sovereign State of Palestine, based on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side in peace and harmony with Israel.

We believe that the Fourth Geneva Convention, Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978), the principle of land for peace, the Madrid Conference terms of reference, the road map and the Arab Peace Initiative are the best guides for achieving a peaceful solution. We certainly need our collective resolve to achieve that goal, otherwise, the peace, hope and prosperity of the peoples of the Middle East will remain as elusive as ever. Let us take this opportunity to recommit ourselves to working for a lasting peace in the Holy Land.

**Mr. Sareer** (Maldives): On behalf of the Republic of Maldives, it is an honour for me to address the Assembly during the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. My delegation takes this opportunity to express once again its unyielding support to the people of Palestine and the entire region. It is with great sadness that we bear witness to yet further atrocities committed by those who choose to promote violence, hatred and fear.

This statement addresses both the agenda item on the question of Palestine and that on the situation in the Middle East, and my delegation therefore extends its thanks to the Secretary-General for his reports under those respective agenda items (A/69/371 and A/69/341). We also thank the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for its report (A/69/35).

The inability of the General Assembly to mitigate the unending streams of hatred that have fuelled the decades-long conflicts in the region is one of the enduring failures of our community of nations. There is no blemish as dark upon the visage of the Organization as that of the occupation of the State of Palestine. Generations are living and dying under such ignominy and repression that cycles of violence, hatred and fear are eternally perpetuated. Though we, as an international community, call for peace, we must understand that peace cannot be found at the end of the barrel of a gun. Peace cannot be achieved by apartheid in the guise of semi-autonomy. Peace can be achieved only through the end of occupation.

Once again, the Maldives calls for a two-State solution recognizing the sovereign and independent State of Palestine, based on the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital. Until that day, my delegation will continue to acknowledge the flagrant violations of international law that regularly occur under occupation. We are especially distressed by recent developments, including increased tensions in occupied East Jerusalem and in the Gaza Strip. The Committee's report notes, with regard to the most recent assault, that

“during the offensive, 2,189 Palestinians were killed, 1,486 of them identified as civilians, including 513 children and 269 women, and 11,100 were injured, including 3,374 children, 2,088 women and 410 elderly persons. It is estimated that up to 1,000 of the injured children will have a permanent disability and up to 1,500 orphaned

children will need sustained support from the child protection and welfare sectors” (A/69/35, para. 20).

This loss of life and limb is compounded by the destruction of essential infrastructure, the theft of natural resources and daily forms of oppression. The report notes that, according to official statistics, Israel arrested more than 805,000 Palestinians over the course of this conflict, and that more than 200 have died in Israeli jails as a result of torture, the denial of medical treatment or deliberate killing.

The continued excessive and disproportionate use of force against Palestinian civilians and infrastructure are part of an institutionalized policy of collective punishment. A key example of this is the reinstatement of a policy demolishing the family homes of Palestinians suspected of crimes. The Maldives condemns any criminal activities, by whomsoever committed, while at the same time condemning institutionalized policies of collective punishment as flagrant violations of international law.

My delegation would like to draw special attention to Israeli settlements, whose construction has more than doubled in 2013 and attempts to alter the nature and character of the state of Palestine. These settlements are illegal and have been condemned by the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council, the Economic and Social Council, the International Court of Justice and the Security Council. Yet, despite this unanimity, more settlements are constructed and more international corporations relocate and support these settlements. The overwhelming international consensus has not manifested itself in tangible outcomes.

Policies of hatred and oppression in Palestine have radicalized generations across the region. Its neighbours face constant instability from ideologies perpetuated by hatred and today the region faces one of its biggest threats in the form of the so-called Islamic State. State and non-State actors in the region are using religion to justify violence and violations of international humanitarian law. The Government and people of Maldives strongly condemn these groups, their ideologies and their activities.

In Iraq, the Maldives remains deeply concerned that almost 2 million citizens have been internally displaced during the course of the year, and that thousands more flee for their lives every day. The situation is just as dire for the more than 3 million Syrians who are currently refugees abroad, while 11 million Syrians within the

country are in desperate need of humanitarian aid. Unfortunately, the ongoing relentless violence prohibits aid from reaching more than half of these civilians. The Secretary-General has noted that many

“ordinary people are denied the basics required for their survival; food, health care, clean water... when assistance is available a short drive away”.

The challenges that the Middle East region faces are neither national nor regional. Instead its challenges are manifestations of the global struggle to eradicate hatred, fear and ultimately violence from our community of nations. It is our duty to lead the way, to end these cycles of violence, and go beyond the surface of the region’s problems to the instability at its core.

**The Acting President:** We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

I should like to inform members that the consideration of draft resolutions A/69/L.21, A/69/L.22, A/69/L.23 and A/69/L.24 will be taken following the conclusion of the debate on agenda item 35.

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 36.

## **Agenda item 35**

### **The situation in the Middle East**

#### **Report of the Secretary-General (A/69/341)**

#### **Draft resolutions (A/69/L.25 and A/69/L.26)**

**The Acting President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt to introduce draft resolutions A/69/L.25 and A/69/L.26.

**Mr. Aboulatta** (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): We are about to usher in the second half of the second decade of the twenty-first century. We are proud of humankind’s many achievements, especially those that have contributed to the well-being of the human race. However, the international community can no longer ignore one of the most unjust practices against humankind, namely, the occupation and forceful imposition of the status quo by exploiting the imbalance in power between an occupied State and a tyrannical, occupying Power.

In expressing the international community’s rejection of the ongoing occupation and the illegal Israeli practices in the occupied Arab territories, I would like to introduce, on behalf of the sponsors, draft

resolution A/69/L.25, entitled “Jerusalem”, and draft resolution A/69/L.26, entitled “The Syrian Golan”.

Draft resolution A/69/L.25 underscores the legitimacy of the terms of reference of the General Assembly and the Security Council resolutions that address the special status of occupied Jerusalem and that all the administrative and legislative measures taken by Israel to alter the legal status of the Holy City are null and void. It also underscores that any comprehensive and just solution to the question of Jerusalem should include internationally guaranteed provisions that ensure its inhabitants’ freedom of religion and belief and that end settlement activity and attempts at illegal judaization made by Israeli settlers. It also calls for an end to all violations and excavations in and around the holy sites in Jerusalem.

Draft resolution A/69/L.26 recalls Security Council resolution 497 (1981) and reaffirms the Assembly’s deep concern about Israel’s failure to implement that resolution. It emphasizes that the provisions of The Hague Convention of 1907 and the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 continue to apply to the territory of the Syrian Golan, occupied by Israel since 1967, stresses the illegality of Israel’s imposition of its resolutions and laws there and calls on Israel to withdraw fully to the borders existing before 4 June 1967.

The sponsors of the two draft resolutions believe that it is time for the international community to pursue a comprehensive approach to addressing the situation in the Middle East. The people of the region continue to suffer from violence, aggression and war. Peace will never be achieved without political will and a serious commitment on the part of Israel to withdrawing completely from all occupied Palestinian and Arab territories, in accordance with the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, the principle of land for peace and the rules of international law.

In order to achieve that, we call on all member States to vote in favour of these two draft resolutions, in an affirmation of the will of the international community and support for international law and for ending the occupation and all violence, and in order to fulfil the noble principles and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

**Mr. Churkin** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): A year ago, from this rostrum, we talked about support for the American efforts to establish

direct negotiations between Israel and Palestine. At the same time, we stressed the necessity of ramping up the role of the Middle East Quartet together with the Arab League, in view of the fact that arriving at a solution to the Middle East issue is too complicated for anyone to try to pull it off alone.

Unfortunately, the Quartet has continued to be kept in the dark and, as has often happened before, the unilateral efforts ended in failure. As a result, a shaky hope for peace has been replaced by despair and fear. The gulf of mistrust between the Israelis and the Palestinians has become even deeper. The region has gone through the bloodiest and most destructive open conflict of recent decades between Palestine and Israel. But even after the ceasefire there has been no prospect of a quick recovery or progress towards peace. The Holy Land is being battered once more by a wave of violence and hatred. A succession of killings in Israel and the occupied territories have only confirmed that the negotiating vacuum is being filled by extremists and terror and that there is once again no place for a glimmer of hope in this vicious circle.

It is clear that without collective settlement frameworks or the Security Council’s decisive involvement in solving this deeply serious regional problem, ending the stalemate will be extremely difficult if not impossible. But the fact is that to a large extent the stability of the entire region, and the ability to curb the dangerous wave of turbulence that has engulfed it in recent years, depends on finding a solution to the Palestinian-Israeli question.

We firmly believe in the necessity of seeking a solution to the problem of Palestine based on the well-known international legal framework that includes Security Council resolutions, the Madrid principles, the road map and the Arab Peace Initiative. At the same time, it is important to work to restore Palestinian unity from the platform of the Palestine Liberation Organization, which will enable the Palestinian people to achieve their legal aspirations for a just and lasting settlement. It is essential that the Government of national unity be able to expand its functioning authority throughout Palestine’s entire territory, without exception, and as soon as possible. Without it any effective recovery for the Gaza Strip will remain doubtful.

The Israeli settlement construction in the occupied territories, including East Jerusalem — a city sacred to the followers of the three monotheistic religions, where

ill-conceived unilateral actions can have far-reaching consequences — has seriously complicated the situation. Such actions reinforce mutual hatred, fraught with escalating tensions, and threaten the territorial contiguity of Arab neighbourhoods in Jerusalem. The settlements contravene international law and must be stopped. The situation needs to be defused, and clamping down will make the tensions even worse.

And the problem here is not only the lack of prospects for negotiations. The region is undergoing profound upheavals. Terrorist activity has reached catastrophic proportions. Today, a caliphate composed of every kind of extremist is strengthening its position across broad swathes of Iraq and Syria, moving its ranks into other countries, including Lebanon and Libya, enriching itself through crime and a shadowy trade in oil and gas resources and honing its skills in handling weapons of mass destruction.

Combating terror effectively requires the united efforts of the entire international community, on the basis of Security Council resolutions 2170 (2014) and 2178 (2014). In that regard, of course, it is important to coordinate with the forces in the region that are the natural enemies of terror, having fought it long and hard. They include the Governments in Baghdad and Damascus. And, of course, the peoples of the countries of the region themselves must unite in the face of terrorism's threat. The joint struggle against terrorism should become one of the key themes in a dialogue between the Syrian Government and the opposition, which, once begun, could expand to other momentous aspects of a settlement in Syria. We are pinning our hopes in that regard on the efforts of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Mr. Staffan de Mistura. We support his ideas in principle, including his initiative on local freeze zones. Russia, in its turn, will continue to work with all constructively disposed Syrian parties on the basis of the 2012 Geneva communiqué (A/66/865, annex) and the principles of the preservation of Syria's national and ethno-religious unity, territorial integrity and sovereignty.

**Mr. Ja'afari** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would first like to thank my colleague the Permanent Representative of Egypt for introducing the two draft resolutions entitled "The Syrian Golan" and "Jerusalem" (A/69/L.26 and A/69/L.25).

I would like to begin my statement by reading a letter addressed from a female Syrian citizen living

in the occupied Syrian Golan. The writer says that the Syrian Arabs living in the occupied Syrian Golan are attached to their land, their patriotic position and their wounded mother country, Syria, which they hope will overcome all its enemies. We would like to convey their daily suffering and pain at the illegal Israeli occupation. Their only crime, the writer says, is to have protected their land and the land of their ancestors. They have been subjected to many violations since the first days of the occupation, which began on 5 June 1967. Their water resources are being stolen, as is their land. Collective sanctions are being imposed on them by Israeli tribunals. Indeed, the illegal Israeli entity is trying to asphyxiate them, as Syrian citizens, and is imposing extreme fines upon them simply because they have built houses to live in with their children on their land and the land of their ancestors, which is only their natural right. The land does not belong to the Israeli entity as it claims, and it cannot do with it what it wishes.

The writer continues:

"The violations of the illegal occupying Power are unbelievable and are aimed at forcing us to abandon our land and our past. That entity, through its tribunals, imposes significant fines, seeks to throw us into prison and threatens to destroy our homes. The same entity brings in foreign settlers from all over the world to the Golan and provides them with administrative facilities and financial resources to enable them to build settlements on our land. The entity is providing financial assistance to those persons and encouraging them to carry out unacceptable and arbitrary acts.

"The Israeli entity claims to uphold the values of democracy and freedom. At the same time, it steals water, financial and other resources. Those who contradict Israeli democracy are then deemed to be terrorists who need to be fought. Finally, we are part of the peaceful Syrian people, and we only wish to have our rights respected, as a people living under the yoke of occupation. All we are demanding is the most basic measures for us to live in dignity."

That was a letter from a Syrian citizen living in the Syrian Golan. It reflects some of the suffering of our people, living under the Israeli occupation since 1967. Indeed, the authorities of the Israeli occupying Power violate human rights in a horrifying manner and impose arbitrary policies of discrimination and injustice.

Recently, Israel added another chapter to its list of violations by providing support to takfiri terrorists in the zone of separation in the Syrian Golan, including by treating their wounded in Israeli hospitals. The most recent developments in the situation in the region, which led the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) to temporarily withdraw from some of its area of operations, did not arise accidentally. Rather, they confirm what we had cautioned against, namely, that support to certain groups, in particular Israel's support for terrorist groups associated with Al-Qaida in the separation zone, not only is a flagrant violation of the Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces, international law and the relevant General Assembly and United Nations resolutions, but also thwarts the efforts of UNDOF to discharge its duties. It also jeopardizes United Nations peacekeepers.

The support provided to terrorist groups, including the Al-Nusra Front, in the separation area has enabled those groups to open fire against armed forces and to kidnap UNDOF peacekeepers, target them and fire upon them, in full view and with the full knowledge of Israeli forces in the occupied Golan. The United Nations must therefore discharge its duty and deal with that issue in a serious manner without hesitation. The heads of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations have, in an immoral and unjustifiable manner, ignored all of our warnings and all the information that we have provided in recent years.

Despite all the international demands and the United Nations resolutions concerning the need to put an end to the Israeli occupation of Arab territories and the need to build an independent Palestinian State within the borders of 4 June 1967, no progress has been achieved. The situation is actually getting worse. The prospects for creating a Palestinian State are, as expected, becoming more remote. Instead of seeing progress towards peace and security in the region, what we have seen is another chapter in the Israeli aggression against Gaza, during which war crimes and crimes against humanity have been committed. We have seen an unprecedented pace of settlement-building, particularly in East Jerusalem. Since the Oslo Accord of 1993, the number of Israeli settlers has increased from 70,000 to 700,000 today. We can also see a worsening of the violent acts committed against Palestinian civilians and an increase in aggression against Christian and Muslim holy sites, including Al-Haram al-Sharif.

Lastly, the representative of Israel has told the Security Council that East Jerusalem is not occupied territory, but the eternal capital of the Israeli people alone, in flagrant violation of all relevant United Nations resolutions and international consensus, including resolutions by States friendly to Israel. Israel's intransigence has led it even to attack European countries that have supported it, simply because those States had expressed their support for a few of the basic rights of Palestinians. Despite the Israeli escalation and provocation, some still claim that they are against settlement-building and that they support a two-State solution. However, we have yet to see any steps taken to end settlement-building or any glimmer of hope for the creation of a Palestinian State or for a just and comprehensive peace in the region. No measures have been taken in that regard by the United Nations.

In conclusion, I invite Member States to support draft resolution A/69/L.26, entitled "The Syrian Golan", which seeks to bolster international law and the Charter of the United Nations, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolution 497 (1981), through which the Council determined that Israel's decision to annex the Syrian Golan in 1967 was null, void and without legal effect.

**Mr. Raja Zaib Shah (Malaysia):** As my delegation participates in this annual debate in the General Assembly on the situation in the Middle East, we are again reminded of the contemporary geopolitical importance of that region. The Middle East region is considered by many to be the cradle of civilization and the birthplace of the three major monotheistic traditions of Islam, Christianity and Judaism. It is also a region that has been very much influenced and impacted by both internal and external interests, whether in sociopolitical spheres, such as ideology and sectarianism, or in military terms, that is, defence and containment, or in economic priorities, such as energy security.

Regrettably, the region is continuing to experience more than its fair share of violence, with history repeating itself, with territories that are being occupied by conquest and conflicts that are being waged in the name of religion. Millions of innocent civilians continue to suffer, owing to the lack of political solutions to disputes, both old and new. The Sykes-Picot lines drawn by the colonial Powers are also now being washed away by blood through the actions of non-State actors. In recent weeks, even the holy city

of Al-Quds and its places of worship have not been spared from violence and provocative acts. Malaysia therefore remains gravely concerned by the overall situation in the Middle East. As a strong believer in multilateralism, we believe that Member States have a collective responsibility to ensure that the peoples of the Middle East are able to live in peace and stability.

*The President returned to the Chair.*

First and foremost among Malaysia's priorities in the Middle East is a just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine. We again reaffirm our solidarity with the Palestinian people and reiterate our support for the legitimate rights of the Palestinians for an independent State of Palestine, with the realization of two States, Palestine and Israel, living side by side, based on the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine. Malaysia has also remained committed to the implementation of internationally recognized initiatives, such as the Arab Peace Initiative, the Oslo Accords, the Quartet road map, the Madrid terms of reference and the relevant Security Council resolutions. Our position on that matter has been consistent and clear, as outlined in our statement earlier this morning during the debate on the previous agenda item. Yet we firmly believe that the pivotal issue of Palestine is central to the situation in the Middle East.

Malaysia reiterates its condemnation of Israel's illegal occupation of the Palestinian territories of the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip. However, Israel's violations of international law have continued unabated, both in the occupied Palestinian territories, as well as in other occupied Arab territories. It is therefore apparent that the occupying Power continues to refuse to honour its commitments to international agreements, and that is compounded by the inflexible attitude of the Israeli leadership.

We do not see the logic in Israel's objecting to so-called unilateral actions on the part of the Palestinian leadership to accede to international agreements, when that step has been welcomed by the majority of Member States as a demonstration of the State of Palestine's adherence to international norms. On the other hand, the Israeli Government itself defies logic by unilaterally continuing to build and announce settlements, which are illegal under international law and condemned even by their own allies.

My delegation also reiterates its shock and deep concern with regard to the recent violence and

provocative actions in Al-Quds. We urge an end to such actions, in particular those affecting Al-Haram Al-Sharif and the Al-Aqsa Mosque, as well as other houses of worship in the Holy City of Jerusalem. In that regard, we hope that all parties will heed the call of President Abbas, who warned against the situation turning from a political dispute into a religious conflict.

Malaysia has also condemned the acts of violence that occurred in the Gaza Strip this summer. The Israeli assault on the Gaza Strip left thousands dead and tens of thousands homeless, as their residences were turned into ruins. The international community was rightly shocked and demonstrated its solidarity and generosity during the recent Cairo conference on the reconstruction of Gaza.

However, my delegation wishes to take this opportunity to caution against another instance of history unfortunately repeating itself. We have seen such a pattern before, during Operation Cast Lead in 2008-2009, where again thousands were killed and again billions of dollars were pledged during the International Conference in Support of the Palestinian Economy for the Reconstruction of Gaza, held in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt. Yet in 2012 Israel again ferociously attacked the people of Gaza in the Operation Pillar of Defence, reducing the territory to rubble.

Before we even begin to consider the notion of donor fatigue, we must more seriously consider the more agonizing fatigue of those in Gaza affected by such cycles of violence. We should not turn the oft-quoted "build-destroy, build-destroy cycle" remarks of the Secretary-General into a cliché to be rehashed every few years when the situation repeats itself. Instead, we should focus our efforts on achieving a comprehensive solution to the almost perpetual series of events, beginning with a complete end to any and all acts of violence.

While my delegation notes the security concerns expressed by the various interested parties, we reiterate our firm demand for the lifting of the blockade of Gaza, and we call for the opening of the crossings into and out of the territory, with priority given to access for humanitarian aid and reconstruction material. The long-suffering people of Gaza deserve better from the international community, and it is time that we deliver on that.

Let me now turn to the situation in Syria. Malaysia is concerned with the escalating violence, which

has resulted in heavy casualties and hardship for the people of Syria. We reiterate our call for all parties to immediately end the violence and human rights violations, in particular against civilians. My delegation also urges all necessary measures to be urgently taken to ensure that humanitarian access is provided to those in need.

The ongoing instability has now provided opportunities for other armed terrorists groups with ulterior motives to take root in the region, such as the so-called Islamic State. Malaysia rejects the actions of that group, and we condemn the violence being committed in the name of Islam. We also regret that the international community's calls to end the violence have not been heeded, and we are now faced with another factor in the conflict. My delegation hopes that we are collectively able to combat that emerging threat before history again repeats itself and yet another black flag rises in the Middle East in the absence of a resolution to the conflict.

Malaysia therefore reaffirms that a political solution is the only way to end the conflict, and we will continue to support international efforts that call upon all parties in Syria to immediately end the crisis in a peaceful and meaningful manner through dialogue and negotiation. All parties inside and outside Syria should come together and work towards a political solution that is Syrian-led and inclusive in order to ensure a viable and sustainable outcome.

In that connection, my delegation also welcomes the appointment of the United Nations Special Envoy for Syria, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, and we wish him well in carrying out his important mandate. We are following his work closely, and we note the progress that he has made, particularly in developing the framework for the freezing of the conflict in Aleppo. My delegation also thanks his predecessor, Joint Special Representative Lakhdar Brahimi, for his tireless efforts.

With regard to the occupied Syrian Golan, Malaysia reiterates its strong rejection of Israel's changing of the physical character, demographic composition, institutional structure and legal status of the territory. Last year, my delegation objected to Israel's ongoing activities aimed at exploiting oil deposits in the southern half of the occupied Syrian Golan. We have since learned that those activities have recently been overruled by the relevant authorities, albeit on the grounds of environmental impact. However, we remain

concerned that the Israeli company involved in that activity is considering an appeal to overturn the ruling.

In that regard, my delegation wishes to reiterate that all measures and actions undertaken by Israel, including the construction and expansion of illegal settlements in the occupied Syrian Golan since 1967, constitute a flagrant violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations. In that regard, Malaysia calls for an immediate and full withdrawal by Israel from the occupied Syrian Golan, in line with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Malaysia is pleased to co-sponsor the two draft resolutions under this agenda item, contained in documents A/69/L.25 and A/69/L.26.

We reaffirm that the root causes of the deteriorating situation in the Middle East must be addressed, including and in particular the illegal occupation of Arab territories by Israel. It is therefore our hope that the draft resolutions on Jerusalem and the Syrian Golan will be adopted, as in previous years, as a demonstration of the international community's resolve to push towards that goal.

In conclusion, Malaysia wishes to underline that our position is based on a moderate approach to conflict resolution in order to bridge the differences and restore stability to the lives of Palestinians, Syrians and other peoples in the Middle East. As the Prime Minister of Malaysia stated in this year's general debate,

“The fight against extremism is not about Christians versus Muslims or Muslims versus Jews but moderates versus extremists of all religions. We need to rally a coalition of moderates — those willing to reclaim their religion and pursue the path to peace” (A/69/PV.12, p. 46).

As such, we believe that it is important to continue to sow the seeds of moderation in the region and remove the root causes in which extremists find fertile soil to plant their poisonous ideology.

**The President:** We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

I would like to inform members that action on draft resolutions A/69/L.25 and A/69/L.26, under agenda item 35, will be taken after we take action on draft resolutions A/69/L.21, A/69/L.22, A/69/L.23 and A/69/L.24, under agenda item 36.



The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 35.

### **Programme of work**

**The President:** I would like to consult members regarding an extension of the work of the Second Committee. Members will recall that, at the second plenary meeting of the General Assembly on 19 September, the General Assembly approved the recommendation of the General Committee that the Second Committee should complete its work by Wednesday, 26 November. However, I have been

informed by the Chair of the Second Committee that the Committee requests an extension of its work until Friday, 5 December, on the grounds that such an extension would facilitate reaching consensus on resolutions pending before the Committee.

May I take it that the General Assembly agrees to extend the work of the Second Committee until Friday, 5 December 2014?

*It was so decided.*

*The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.*