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Official Records

President: Mr. Lykketoft (Denmark)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 38

Question of Palestine

Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (A/70/35)

Report of the Secretary-General (A/70/354)

Draft resolutions (A/70/L.10, A/70/L.11, A/70/L.12 and A/70/L.13)

The President: Today we are meeting during a period of turmoil in the Middle East. The conflicts in Syria and Yemen, a major refugee crisis and violent extremism are all helping to foment growing instability across the region. In that context, the question of Palestine takes on an even greater significance. Let me therefore reaffirm the General Assembly's resolute position that the United Nations has a permanent responsibility with regard to the question of Palestine, until that question is resolved in a satisfactory manner in accordance with international law.

Earlier today, I attended the observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People organized by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, which was established 40 years ago. It was established because by then no progress had been made on key United Nations principles: on the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war, on equal rights and on the self-determination of peoples. Regrettably, those

principles continue to be violated to this very day. The reality is reflected by the fact that in recent months we have witnessed a new wave of violence across the occupied Palestinian territory. The latest escalation in violence in Jerusalem and the West Bank is of particular concern.

I urge all involved to bring an end to the violence and to strictly comply with international law. I also stress the importance of upholding the historic status quo of the holy sites, including Al-Haram Al-Sharif. Ultimately, the Israeli and Palestinian leaders have a responsibility to avoid inflammatory actions, prevent escalation and defuse tensions. The General Assembly has repeatedly affirmed the illegality of the Israeli settlements in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem. The demolition of Palestinian houses and the construction of new settlements on occupied Palestinian land will not contribute to peace. On the contrary, they will only increase tensions and become a further impediment to peace.

In the Middle East, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) serves as a pillar of stability for some 5 million Palestinian refugees. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that the core programmes envisaged in the mandate of UNRWA — in education, health, relief and social services — are delivered in the most efficient manner. Thanks to the support of donors and host countries, UNRWA has made tremendous progress in enhancing the human capital of Palestinian refugees. It has also helped ensure the protection of those refugees, a huge community. In addition, it has

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been called upon to manage crises of varying intensity in all five fields of operation. It is a very challenging agenda.

The General Assembly is the United Nations organ that wrote UNRWA's mandate. I therefore see it as my responsibility to ensure that everything possible is done to ensure that UNRWA's mandate is carried out until the very day a political settlement between Israel and Palestine is reached.

On 30 September we raised the flag of the State of Palestine here at United Nations Headquarters in New York. It was a symbolic acknowledgment of the contribution of the Palestinian people in addressing our common challenges. But it was also a reminder of the urgent need for a peaceful settlement on the ground. I call on the international community, therefore, to help both parties to return to meaningful negotiations. We must open the way to fulfil the vision of an independent, sovereign, democratic, contiguous and viable State of Palestine, living side by side in peace and security with Israel, within mutually recognized borders based on the pre-1967 lines.

On this momentous seventieth anniversary of our Organization, let us recall the ideals of peace, unity and human rights, and let those ideals serve as a source of inspiration for a new momentum to find a lasting solution to this long-standing Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

I now give the floor to Mr. Desra Percaya of Indonesia, Vice-Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, to introduce draft resolutions A/70/L.10, A/70/L.11, A/70/L.12 and A/70/L.13.

Mr. Percaya (Indonesia), Vice-Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People: At the outset, let me thank all the delegations and you personally, Mr. President, for your active participation in this morning's special meeting of the Committee on the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to observe the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. The messages and statements of support we heard this morning and received from world leaders speak with one voice of the strong will of the international community to achieve a just and lasting solution of the question of Palestine, which envisages two States living side by side in peace and security.

We are meeting at a time when the world is entering a very dangerous phase. The shadow of war and terrorism is swirling over the region and beyond. Our sympathies go out to all the innocent victims of the barbaric atrocities that continue to occur in several parts of the world. As we mourn the victims and coordinate our strategies to confront expanding threats, we must not lose sight of the centrality of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Violent extremism worldwide has often used the story of this never-ending and unacceptable occupation as an effective recruitment tool.

Seventy years ago the United Nations was created by countries just emerging from the trauma of the Second World War, determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, to reaffirm their faith in human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, to ensure respect for international law and to promote social and economic progress. However, in the case of the Palestinian people, those lofty statements of the Charter of the United Nations ring hollow. Fast forward to today, and the Palestinians are still recurrently affected by the scourge of war, which has occurred three times in the past eight years. Their fundamental human rights are trampled upon and their dignity, worth as humans and freedoms are an abstract concept to Palestinians who endure the daily humiliations of the military occupation with its checkpoints, barbed wire, permits, walls, cages, arbitrary arrests, violence and extrajudicial executions. The United Nations reports documenting the violations of international law and human rights norms in occupied Palestinian could fill the General Assembly Hall, the most recent being the report of the Independent Commission of Inquiry established pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution S-21/1 to investigate the 2014 Gaza conflict, despite which the perpetrators are still not accountable,

This year, at a United Nations Summit, world leaders inaugurated the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1), which includes a set of 17 Goals to end poverty and combat inequality and injustice. However, we must openly acknowledge that occupation and the Sustainable Development Goals are mutually exclusive. Better standards of living remain elusive goals when most of the land in the West Bank is off limits to Palestinian development, and Gaza is blockaded and under siege, as a result of which the per capita gross domestic product in Palestine is barely one tenth that of Israel, located just over the Green Line.

One of the first orders of business of the newly born United Nations was the peaceful settlement of the Palestine question. The United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine, which the General Assembly adopted on 29 November 1947, envisaged a Jewish State and an Arab State. However, the ensuing war sent hundreds of thousands of Palestinians into perpetual exile and seemingly closed the door on the Palestinian State. Thanks to their bold leadership, Palestinians, a marginalized population of refugees scattered around the region, found their voice on the international stage and the Palestine issue was put back on the United Nations agenda. Forty years ago, the General Assembly accorded our Committee a mandate to promote the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinians to self-determination, national independence and sovereignty, as well as the right of Palestinian refugees, who now number over 5 million, to return to their homes. That is a daunting task, one that has remained our responsibility to this day.

This year our Committee concentrated our programme of conferences on key issues. We dedicated a conference in Vienna to efforts to move the stalled Gaza reconstruction forward. We then went to Moscow to discuss efforts to find a political solution to the conflict. Our conference in Brussels concentrated on settlements as an obstacle to peace and the responsibilities of third parties in that regard. Our next conference, in Jakarta, will tackle Jerusalem, a key final status issue and a perennial flashpoint of conflict. Tonight, we will inaugurate a photo exhibit on Gaza's children in the Visitors Lobby, to which everyone is invited. We are grateful to our partners — the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the League of Arab States, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, UNICEF — as well as civil society and everyone who took part in our events throughout the year.

I would like to commend the Governments of those States that supported the initiative to raise the Palestinian flag at the United Nations. That is a true sign of the international community's commitment of support to the Palestinian people in exercising its inalienable right to self-determination. But much more needs to be done. Regrettably, this past year did not bring tangible progress to the Palestinian people. On the contrary, we are gravely concerned about the latest escalation of violence in Jerusalem and the West Bank.

Leaders have a responsibility to prevent incitement and to respect the status of holy sites in word and deed. We strongly condemn measures of collective punishment and excessive use of deadly force against unarmed protesters. We equally condemn random attacks against innocent civilians.

I would like all of us to leave this Hall with a sense of great urgency and renewed commitment. The fallout of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict affects every country represented in the General Assembly in very negative ways, and the risk of escalation is high. The Palestinians are desperate and the Israelis are terrorized. We are one major provocation in Jerusalem away from a descent into a religious war, the likes of which the world has not seen. The trust between the parties has reached a new low, and no new peace initiatives have been forthcoming from the United States of America for at least a year. The time for symbolic steps, half measures and sterile debates is over. Ours is a small committee with limited resources, and we are doing all we can to raise awareness of the issue and keep it on the front burner in the international arena. Our Committee firmly believes that the United Nations should continue to maintain its permanent responsibility towards the question of Palestine until it is effectively resolved, in accordance with United Nations resolutions. The Committee also calls on the Security Council, a revitalized Quartet and regional players to take serious steps to salvage what remains of the two-State solution. The Committee, for its part, will continue to fulfil its General Assembly mandate.

Our Committee has been a strong supporter of the two-State solution, and we intend to continue playing a constructive role in that regard. There is no daylight between us and the rest of the General Assembly membership on the substance, as Member States' overwhelming vote in favour of the peaceful settlement resolution attest. Nevertheless, some Member States still harbour old reservations about the Committee. Perhaps they regard some of our discussions as lacking balance. But our doors are open and we welcome all views. By absenting themselves from our discussions, they only ensure that their views are not reflected. Advocating for the two-State solution should be accompanied by supporting the only body set up by the General Assembly within the United Nations devoted to that goal, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

In that context, I would like to introduce to the Assembly the four draft resolutions approved by the Committee and circulated under this agenda item, namely, draft resolutions A/70/L.10, A/70/L.11, A/70/L.12 and A/70/L.13. Regional groups held consultations on those draft resolutions, and the Committee approved them. The first three draft resolutions are related to the work of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat and the special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information. They reaffirm the important mandates entrusted to those entities by the General Assembly. As in the past, the Committee intends to ensure that the resources available to it are employed in a cost-effective manner.

Allow me to highlight a few elements in the draft resolutions. As members will note, draft resolution A/70/L.10, which renews the mandate of the Committee, notes with appreciation the efforts of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development to compile a report on the economic cost of the Israeli occupation to the Palestinian people and calls for the exertion of all efforts to expedite the conclusion of the report. The second draft resolution, A/70/L.11, renews the mandate of the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat and requests the Secretary-General to provide the Division with the necessary resources to ensure the implementation of all mandated activities. Draft resolution A/70/L.12, on the special information programme of the Department of Public Information, renews the mandate of the Department to continue its initiatives that effectively support an atmosphere conducive to dialogue and peace efforts. The fourth draft resolution, A/70/L.13, entitled "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine," reiterates the position of the General Assembly with regard to the essential elements of such a settlement and includes references to the developments of the past year. It calls for respect for the historic status quo in the holy places of Jerusalem, in word and in practice, and for immediate and serious efforts to defuse tensions. It also recognizes that security measures alone cannot cope with the recent rise in violence and calls for full respect for human life and the establishment of a stable environment conducive to the pursuit of peace.

I hope those and other provisions of the texts will meet with the Assembly's strong support.

The President: I now give the floor to the Rapporteur of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to introduce the Committee's report.

Mr. Grima (Malta), Rapporteur of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People: It is an honour for me, in my capacity as Rapporteur of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, to present to the General Assembly the Committee's annual report (A/70/35). Allow me to summarize each section of the report.

Following the introduction, chapters II and III outline the mandate entrusted to the Committee by the General Assembly and the organization of the Committee's work during the year. Chapter IV contains a review of the situation relating to the question of Palestine, as monitored by the Committee, and a detailed factual account of the developments during the reporting period, which ended on 6 October. The most recent events will be reflected in the next report. Chapter V describes the action taken by the Committee, including the Chair's participation in General Assembly and Security Council debates, statements issued by the Committee and its Bureau and the continuing dialogue between the Committee and members of intergovernmental organizations. It also provides information about the various international meetings and conferences organized by the Committee and other mandated activities carried out by the Division for Palestinian Rights. Chapter VI provides an overview of the work performed during the past year by the Department of Public Information pursuant to resolution 69/22, of 25 November 2014. The last chapter of the report is devoted to the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee. In view of the stalled bilateral negotiations, the Committee would welcome a comprehensive and more regional solution — conceivably with support from a reinvigorated Quartet — that includes greater engagement with key Arab States. The Committee also urges the Security Council and the General Assembly to give positive consideration to all proposals concerned with finding a way out of the current impasse.

Regarding the reconstruction of Gaza after the 2014 war, the Committee report calls for immediate steps to solidify the ceasefire and to accelerate reconstruction efforts, focusing on the physical rebuilding and delivery of affordable energy and sufficient water and the amelioration of dire socioeconomic conditions.

The Committee report calls upon the United Nations and donors to secure funding for the long term, including for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, and acknowledges the need for continued funding for the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism. Welcoming the fact-finding mission established by the Human Rights Council and the report of the United Nations Independent Commission of Inquiry into the 2014 Gaza conflict as important steps towards bringing about accountability for violations of humanitarian and human rights law, the Committee report calls on the relevant bodies and authorities to vigorously follow up on the findings and recommendations, with a view to ending impunity.

The Committee report welcomes the appropriate stance taken by the European Union on the importation of products from illegal Israeli settlements, and encourages other organizations and States to adopt and implement such policies that guarantee the adherence to international conventions regarding illegal settlements in occupied areas, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention. It would welcome further steps by Governments and private businesses to dissociate themselves from policies that directly or indirectly support settlements.

Expressing its appreciation to the Fund for International Development of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries for the financing in 2015 of the annual training programme for staff of the Palestinian Government carried out annually by the Division for Palestinian Rights, the report strongly recommends that this important mandated activity be continued and, where possible, further expanded. The Committee report suggests that its programme of international meetings and conferences in 2016 be focused on amplifying international support for the achievement of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, stressing the role and responsibility of the United Nations in that regard, and continuing to examine the legal aspects of the question of Palestine. The Committee also suggests the continued utilization of the format of round-table meetings, which has proved particularly useful in generating practical proposals for action in the United Nations and beyond.

The Committee report continues to encourage civil society partners to work with their national Governments, parliamentarians and other institutions with a view to gaining their full support for the work of the Committee and the United Nations as a whole. The

Committee encourages its members and observers to mobilize their respective civil societies at the national level, in particular the youth, and to establish solidarity committees with the State of Palestine.

Finally, the Committee report reiterates its view that the special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information has made an important contribution to informing the media and the public of the relevant issues, and requests the continuation of the programme, with the necessary flexibility warranted by developments relevant to the question of Palestine.

In conclusion, I would like to express the hope that the report that I have just presented will be of assistance to the General Assembly in its deliberations on the question of Palestine.

The President: I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer of the observer State of Palestine.

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): I am honoured to address the General Assembly in this important debate and on this International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the thirty-eighth observance of that solemn day since the Assembly proclaimed it in 1977. I reaffirm the gratitude of the Palestinian people and their Government for the support to the just cause of Palestine that comes from every corner of the globe and for the moving expressions of solidarity with our people today and through the long decades of their plight.

We also reaffirm our appreciation to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, which for 40 years has exerted efforts in support of the Palestinian people's rights and national aspirations to live in freedom, peace and security in their homeland. We thank Ambassador Fodé Seck of Senegal for his skilled chairing of the Committee, and Ambassador Desra Percaya of Indonesia for introducing today's draft resolutions on the question of Palestine (A/70/L.10, A/70/L.11, A/70/L.12 and A/70/L.13). We also thank the Rapporteur, Ambassador Christopher Grima of Malta, for presenting the annual report of the Committee (A/70/35), and the other Bureau members — Afghanistan, Cuba, Indonesia, Namibia and Nicaragua — along with all of the Committee members and observers for their strong and principled support. We also thank the Division for Palestinian Rights and the special information programme on Palestine of the Department of Public Information for their efforts and support to the Committee in the past year.

Today, I also reiterate our appreciation to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his report on the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine (A/70/354) and for his efforts for peace. We are also grateful for the support of the entire United Nations system, including the efforts of Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Jeffrey Feltman and Special Representative and Coordinator Nikolay Mladenov and their teams, as well as the tireless and extensive efforts of the agencies that provide vital assistance to the Palestinian people, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, the United Nations Development Programme, UNICEF, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the World Food Programme, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the World Health Organization, UN-Women, UN-Habitat and the United Nations Population Fund, so generously supported by States, organizations and partners from around the world. We are grateful for that political, humanitarian, socioeconomic and moral support, which has helped sustain the Palestinian people, including more than 5.5 million Palestine refugees, through decades of conflict and crisis, and which will remain essential for as long as they are denied their inalienable rights and this injustice persists.

While we fully recognize the importance of that support, we must again urgently appeal for more serious efforts, in line with the Charter of the United Nations, the relevant resolutions and international law, including humanitarian and human rights law, to redress the injustice that our people have endured for far too long and that has traumatized successive generations, depriving them of their rights and of a life of freedom, stability, prosperity or even hope.

As we mark the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations, we recall that the question of Palestine is actually older than the Organization itself, inherited from the League of Nations, which entrusted its mandate for Palestine to the United Kingdom and considered Palestine to be among the Class A mandates, ready for independence. Indeed, the Subcommittee reporting to the General Assembly Ad Hoc Committee on the Palestinian Question in 1947 concluded that

“the people of Palestine are ripe for self-government and that it has been agreed on all hands that they should be made independent at the earliest possible date. It also follows, from what has been said above, that the General Assembly is not competent to recommend, still

less to enforce, any solution other than the recognition of the independence of Palestine.” (*A/AC.14/32/Add.1, p. 18*).

Tragically, that recommendation was not heeded, and 68 years ago, on 29 November 1947, the General Assembly adopted resolution 181 (II), partitioning Palestine, changing the course of history and creating a wound that remains unhealed as the Palestinian people remain without independence and without their rights, having suffered the grave injustice of Al-Nakba and brutal oppression under Israel’s foreign occupation for nearly half a century. The Middle East remains without peace.

History has repeatedly shown that it cannot be disregarded and is directly relevant to the present — in this case a present in which the international community continues to struggle with the question of Palestine, the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and its far-reaching impact in the region, across the globe and on the viability of international law and the international system itself — a present where peace remains elusive despite the many efforts to realize it. While countless resolutions have been adopted over the decades, first and foremost by the Assembly and the Security Council; while a landmark advisory opinion was rendered by the International Court of Justice in 2004; and while a global consensus exists on the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, the international promise to the Palestinian people remains unfulfilled and is at the heart of the responsibility of the United Nations for the question of Palestine until it is justly resolved in all its aspects.

What has been lacking is not support or solidarity for Palestine but rather the political courage and will to implement those resolutions in the face of Israel’s total intransigence and disrespect for its legal obligations. Resolution after resolution is ignored as Israel, the same Israel created by resolution 181 (II), arrogantly demeans the General Assembly and the Security Council and tramples on international law, perpetrating violations and crimes as if it were exempt from the law and as if the Israeli-Palestinian conflict were the exception to every norm and rule intended to ensure human rights and peace and security.

We all agree that the situation is completely unsustainable. One must therefore ask, what is the threshold for action? We believe it is past time for the international community, particularly the Security

Council, to overcome its paralysis and act to confront this reality before all is completely lost — before hopes are diminished beyond salvation, before the two-State solution is destroyed and the small prospects remaining for peace perish. The experience of the past two decades and the current wave of volatility and despair remind us that too many lines have been crossed and too many lives lost, and that things can indeed get worse.

In the past year, the situation has deteriorated on every front. Israel, the occupying Power, has continued its gross, systematic breaches of international law, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention, with many breaches tantamount to war crimes. This has aggravated the already dire security, humanitarian and socioeconomic conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, the territory constituting the State of Palestine. Israel has continued to kill and injure Palestinian civilians in military raids, air strikes and sniper attacks. Children and youths are clearly being targeted by the excessive force and malice of the occupying forces and settlers.

The occupying Power has also continued to imprison, detain, abuse and torture thousands of Palestinians in its jails, destroying homes and infrastructure, including as acts of reprisal; forcibly displacing Palestinians, among them entire Bedouin communities; and collectively punishing Palestinian civilians most inhumanely, sparing no child, woman or man, through its blockade on the entire population in the Gaza Strip, where it continues to obstruct movement and reconstruction, forcing our people to live in deprivation and the devastation of the 2014 brutal war and the wars that preceded it. Such illegal measures have caused pervasive insecurity among the defenceless Palestinian people and inflicted widespread suffering and collective indignity.

At the same time, Israel has persisted with its unlawful colonization of Palestinian land, rapidly constructing and expanding settlements, especially in occupied East Jerusalem, constructing its annexation wall, transferring thousands of settlers, confiscating Palestinian land, demolishing homes and property, imposing hundreds of checkpoints that impair movement and socioeconomic life, exploiting natural resources, and obstructing access to water and agricultural lands. All of that is aimed at illegally and forcibly altering the character, status and demography of the territory and has severely fragmented it, undermining its contiguity and isolating Palestinian civilians in disconnected,

walled bantustans, further entrenching the Israeli occupation and destroying the viability of the two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders.

Moreover, the Israeli Government and religious leaders, occupying forces and extremist settlers have persisted with incursions, provocations and incitement in occupied East Jerusalem, particularly against Al-Haram Al-Sharif and the holy Al-Aqsa Mosque, disrespecting the historic status quo and the sanctity of the holy sites, thereby inflaming religious sensitivities. Such actions risk disastrous consequences, including igniting a religious conflict, which we have repeatedly warned about.

Israel has also continued to inhumanely deny the rights of the Palestine refugees, foremost their right to return. Absent a just solution, their plight has endured for nearly seven decades, and their distress under occupation and in exile has been immense. Successive crises, especially in Gaza and in Syria, have deepened their vulnerability, inflicting displacement and dispossession, death and injury, rising poverty and unemployment and the fragmentation of their communities, creating an existential crisis and prompting many to take the perilous journey across the Mediterranean in search of a safer, better life.

All of that has been accompanied by a systematic Israeli campaign denying the history, rights and national aspirations of the Palestinian people and generating racist, discriminatory policies against them. There has been a blatant dehumanization of the Palestinian people, who have been characterized as terrorists and animals, including by Israel's highest officials, and Palestinians' legitimate resistance to the occupation has been criminalized and designated as "terrorism". In cruel irony, that campaign is an attempt to legitimate Israel's illegal occupation, negate the Palestinian national identity and justify its continued control of the Palestinian people and land. But that goal has never been achieved in an international environment, where, thankfully, the rule of law and human rights continue to prevail. It has, however, succeeded in derailing all peace efforts, destabilizing the situation and intensifying human misery. It has also exacerbated Israeli prejudices against the Palestinian people, fuelling paranoia, aggression and extremism among Israelis, especially settlers, and supplying ample pretexts and incitement for their crimes and terror.

Faced with that reality, we continue to call for international protection for the defenceless, unarmed Palestinian people. The call for protection must not be viewed as unreasonable or unimaginable by anyone who respects international law, insists on the protection of civilians in armed conflict and seeks peace. Protection is essential and the international community, particularly the Security Council and the high contracting parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention, have clear responsibilities in that regard. In this case, we stress that the right to security is not exclusive to Israel. It is a right for all, including Palestinians, and neither a de-escalation of the situation nor a resumption of the peace process and the negotiations will be possible absent such security.

Continued appeasement and inaction by the international community cannot be justified on any pretext. If Israel is never held accountable, it will only be emboldened to continue its violations and crimes, causing more suffering for the Palestinian people and making peace more impossible. We must demand that Israel cease its violations and comply with the law. Military aggressions must end, settlement activities must end, settler terrorism must end, the Gaza blockade must end, collective punishment must end, imprisonment and detention of Palestinians must end, destruction must end, provocations and incitement must end, including at Al-Haram Al-Sharif. The humiliation and isolation of the Palestinian people must end. The illegal occupation must end.

The Security Council must respond to the situation, which threatens international peace and security. Current efforts to mobilize the Council must be supported, and engagement must seriously address the immediate crisis situation and the root causes of the conflict and chart a path for a credible political process, which should reaffirm the parameters of a joint solution in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid principles and the Arab Peace Initiative and should set a clear time frame for negotiations and an end to occupation.

Moreover, in an era of collective international efforts to resolve conflicts and overcome major challenges, is it not high time, after all these decades, to apply such efforts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict? Should not calls for an international support group and an international conference for Israeli-Palestinian peace be heeded? We believe that they must. And we reiterate a call for collective action to realize

the two-State solution, based on the pre-1967 borders and a just solution for the Palestine refugee question, the pillars of a lasting and comprehensive peace, whereby the State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and the State of Israel can live side by side within secure and recognized borders. That is an imperative for a peaceful Middle East.

Despite the grim realities and despair at this moment, the will of the Palestinian people and their leadership has not been broken and they remain steadfast in their conviction in the justness of their cause, in international law and in the international community's pledges to achieve a just peace. On 30 September, when the Palestinian flag was raised at the United Nations, another resounding, hopeful message was sent to the Palestinian people, reaffirming their legitimate national aspirations, their existence among the nations of the world and their right to self-determination, to be a free people in control of their lives and destiny in their own independent State. From this Assembly's rostrum, we appeal once more to the international community to act to bring this tragic conflict to an end to help the Palestinian people fulfil their rights, achieve justice, achieve a sustainable peace and secure Palestine's rightful place among the community of nations.

Mr. Danon (Israel): Forty years ago, Israel's Ambassador, Chaim Herzog, stood in this Hall at this very rostrum and stood up for truth and for high principles at the lowest point in the history of the United Nations (see A/PV.2400). He courageously denounced the shameful attempt to define the national aspirations of the Jewish people for a home as a form of racism, the very evil that Jews in countries around the world have suffered from for centuries.

As I stand here before the Assembly today, that infamous decision has been repealed, but an endless number of biased and backwards measures have taken its place. Over the years, the Assembly has adopted countless one-sided resolutions blaming Israel for any and all problems confronting the Palestinians. It is unfortunate that the seventieth session has joined the pitiful United Nations tradition of passing more than 20 empty anti-Israel resolutions, which deepen the conflict, distance us from real dialogue and diminish the prospects of peace. We do not need these resolutions, because we already had the resolution we needed. Before all the endless documents and declarations, the Assembly adopted a resolution to partition the British Mandate into a Jewish State and an Arab State.

We accepted and established a State for the sake of self-determination, the Arabs rejected it and launched a war. Despite all the years of distortion and disinformation, there is one simple truth about the root cause of the conflict that remains clear and unimpeachable. If the Arab States and the Arabs of Mandatory Palestine had accepted the very existence of a Jewish State, Israelis and Palestinians would have been spared decades of needless conflict, of unnecessary pain and suffering, and of the devastating loss of life on both sides. But instead of saying “yes” to living side by side with Israel in peace, the Palestinians said “no” — “no” to peace and “no” to the existence of a Jewish State. The echoes of that “no” continue to this very day.

The resolutions before the Assembly deliberately ignore the root cause of the conflict: the unwillingness of the Palestinians — even today, even now — to accept a Jewish State in any part of the land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. As we are here today to debate the question of Palestine, let me ask the Chamber: Why did the Palestinians reject peace offers that would have granted them a State not once, not twice, but three times? Why did they launch violent waves of terror every time they had the opportunity for statehood? After Israel signed the Oslo Accords and recognized the Palestine Liberation Organization, shootings, stabbings and suicide bombings took the lives of nearly 300 Israelis. Following Arafat’s rejection of a State for the Palestinians at the Middle East peace summit at Camp David in the year 2000, the Palestinian leadership ignited a five-year intifada in which more than 1,000 Israelis were killed. Since Israel withdrew all of its security forces and evacuated all Israeli communities from Gaza in 2005, more than 11,000 rockets have rained down on Israeli cities.

Let us stop avoiding the real, pressing question of Palestine and ask ourselves if the Palestinian leaders really want peace, why do they refuse to sit in the same room with the Israeli Prime Minister and negotiate? If the Palestinian leaders truly want a home for the Palestinian people, why do they reject the very idea of a home for the Jewish people? If the Palestinian leaders are concerned about the protection of their own people, why do they encourage and incite them to terror and violence?

Looking for answers to any of those questions in the resolutions being discussed here today is harder than finding a needle in a haystack. Instead, it is business

as usual at the United Nations, with hollow decisions and empty gestures. Let no one be fooled. No amount of biased resolutions and empty symbols will bring the change that the people of the region so desperately need. A Palestinian flag can be raised at the United Nations, but as long as the Palestinians fail to raise a generation committed to peace and reconciliation, there will be no end to the violence. As long as those in this Hall do not demand that the Palestinian leaders make the difficult decisions needed for peace, no rhetoric will improve the lives of the Palestinian people.

Since September, Israelis have experienced a wave of terror. Innocent Israeli men, women and children have been brutally stabbed in the streets and intentionally run over at bus stops day in and day out, all for the crime of being Jews living in Israel.

Here, in front of the Assembly, I would like to read out the names of those innocent victims of terror, murdered in cold blood: Alexander Levlovich; Naama Henkin; Eitam Henkin; Aharon Banita-Bennett; Nehemia Lavi; Alon Govberg; Chaim Haviv; Yeshayahu Krishevsky; Richard Lakin; Omri Levy; Avraham Asher Hasno; Simcha Hodedtov; Benjamin Yakuvovich; Ya’akov Litman; Netanel Litman — his son; Reuven Aviram; Sharon Yesayev; Yaakov Don; Ezra Schwartz; Shadi Arafa — a Palestinian; Hadar Bucluis; and Ziv Mizrahi. Theirs are the faces of the innocent victims of Palestinian terror.

This is a shameful day for the United Nations. Instead of issuing a clear and categorical statement denouncing all acts of terror, this institution has granted legitimacy to Palestinian terror. The heinous murder of innocent Israelis, just because they are Israelis, is no different than the cruel massacre of innocents in France. Terror is terror is terror, and it must be fought against, not justified. Terror has no borders, and we must fight it wherever we find it, whether it is Hamas in Gaza, Palestinian terror on the streets of Israel, or attacks perpetrated by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham on the streets of Europe. Those terrorist attacks and killings are a direct result of incitement. Palestinian officials continue to use inflammatory rhetoric and dangerous incitement to intensify this wave of terror against Israeli citizens.

If the United Nations wants to play a constructive role, it must get a grip on reality and hold the Palestinians accountable, demand that the Palestinians leaders cease their incitement to violence, insist that President Abbas

finally respond to Prime Minister Netanyahu's repeated calls to negotiate, and make it clear that peace will come only once the Palestinians accept that Israel is the home of the Jewish people.

The General Assembly may have repealed the disgraceful resolution that equates Zionism with racism. However, 40 years later, many in this institution still display hatred and hostility towards Israel. The credibility of this institution depends on its integrity and impartiality. The bashing of Israel here at the United Nations undermines the very values and ideals that the institution was intended to uphold.

If members really want to understand how unique Israel is in the region, all they need to do is ask themselves this. If you are a woman, or if you are gay; if you are Jewish, Muslim or Christian, hoping to practice your faith openly and proudly, without fear, is there anywhere else in the Middle East region — from Khartoum to Kabul, from Tunis to Tehran — where you would rather live and practice your religion? This is the Israel that I know. It is the Israel that I am proud to represent today.

We look forward to the day when the Palestinians finally recognize the right of the Jewish people to a State in Israel. We look forward to the moment when Palestinian leaders follow the path of President Sadat of Egypt and King Hussein of Jordan, who bravely grasped Israel's extended hand for peace. Their example is a testament to the fact that peace can be achieved only through direct negotiations. We look forward to a time when the Palestinians will focus on building their own institutions, instead of attacking Israel in this institution. When that day comes, the Palestinians will find a partner for peace.

Mr. Khoshroo (Islamic Republic of Iran): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

Today is the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, a solemn occasion for renewing our shared commitment to a just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine and a durable peace in the Middle East. NAM fully supports the observance of this Day, as it provides an opportunity to reflect on the situation of decades of denial of the rights of the Palestinian people and nearly a half century of a foreign occupation that has subjected the Palestinian people to gross and systematic human rights violations and grave pain and suffering, which are at the heart of

the Palestinian question and so many other issues in the Middle East.

The Non-Aligned Movement takes this opportunity to reaffirm its long-standing solidarity with the Palestinian people and reiterates its support for the realization of their legitimate national aspirations and inalienable right to self-determination and the right to their independent and viable State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, on the basis of relevant international resolutions and references, as well as a just solution to the plight of the Palestine refugees in accordance with resolution 194 (III).

It is both regrettable and alarming that the situation in occupied Palestine, including East Jerusalem, has continued to dramatically deteriorate over the past year as a result of Israel's crimes and violations against the Palestinian people. Too many generations have already been scarred by that tragic conflict and too many innocents have suffered, and it is beyond time to bring the tragedy to an end. Peace and justice must prevail over ongoing occupation and conflict. That requires concerted, collective efforts, with international law and moral responsibility at the helm, to end the abhorrent Israeli occupation and impunity that has inflicted so much misery. In that regard, the Movement draws urgent attention to the dangerous situation being precipitated in occupied East Jerusalem, including at Al-Haram Al-Sharif — the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound — by the actions of Israel, the occupying Power, and Israeli extremist elements, including Israeli settlers.

NAM strongly condemns all the acts of violence, provocation and incitement committed by Israeli occupying forces and extremists at that sensitive holy site. Such acts may further destabilize the already fragile situation, with far-reaching consequences for the region and beyond. NAM calls on all parties to fully respect the sanctity of Al-Haram Al-Sharif and the historic status quo and arrangements at that holy site, as well as the right of Muslim worshipers to worship there in peace, free from violence, threats and provocation.

NAM believes that the continuation by Israel of its illegal settlement campaign, which is at the core of the occupation, remains the main obstacle to peace, undermines all efforts to resume a credible peace process, and casts serious doubts on Israel's alleged commitment to ending its occupation of Palestinian land and achieving the establishment of two States based on the pre-1967 borders, and a just, lasting

and comprehensive peace. NAM calls once again on the international community to act collectively and promptly to compel Israel, the occupying Power, to cease these destructive and illegal practices and to abide by all of its obligations under international law, including humanitarian and human rights law, in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. The Security Council in particular has clear responsibilities in that regard.

NAM is also gravely concerned about the critical situation of Palestinian refugees. According to the report (A/70/13) of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the occupation of Palestine continues to adversely define every aspect of the daily lives of young people and camp residents, from security and freedom of movement to livelihood and employment. Palestinian refugees continue to face serious protection challenges due to the ongoing occupation, armed conflict and displacement, and to sink deeper into poverty and desperation. NAM expresses its deep appreciation of the invaluable work done by UNRWA in all fields of operation to assist the Palestinian refugees, despite widespread instability in the region and serious financial challenges. Pending a just solution based on resolution 194 (III), we reaffirm that UNRWA remains essential to the improvement of the tragic plight of the Palestine refugees, and call upon the international community to support the Agency.

It is also necessary to highlight the extremely critical situation in the Gaza Strip, where the entire Palestinian civilian population, the majority of whom are Palestinian refugees, is being collectively punished by the illegal and inhumane Israeli blockade. The eight-year blockade continues to affect every aspect of life in Gaza, destroying the economy, obstructing the delivery of humanitarian aid and basic materials, impeding the reconstruction of the thousands of homes and infrastructure that have been destroyed, and obstructing economic and social recovery. At the same time, we must express our grave concerns over the plight of the thousands of Palestinian prisoners and detainees, including women and children, being held in the occupying Power's jails. We call for respect of their human rights, in accordance with international law, for international monitoring of the conditions of those jails, and for the release of those prisoners.

NAM calls on the international community to uphold its moral, political and legal responsibilities to

bring an end to Israel's illegal policies and practices against the Palestinian people, and on Israel, the occupying Power, to immediately and fully abide by its obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention and all relevant United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolution 1860 (2009).

Mr. Cardi (Italy), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Lebanon also continues to suffer from consecutive Israeli border violations and incursions into its territory, following years of occupation and aggression. Unfortunately, Israel continues to violate Lebanese airspace, intensifying its incursions. Such activities are a blatant violation of Lebanese sovereignty and relevant international resolutions, in particular resolution Security Council 1701 (2006). The provisions of that resolution should be implemented in a manner that guarantees the consolidation of the foundations of stability and security in Lebanon and prevents Israel from undertaking its daily violations of Lebanese sovereignty.

NAM condemns all measures taken by Israel, the occupying Power, to alter the legal, physical and demographic status of the occupied Syrian Golan — measures that have intensified since the outbreak of the Syrian crisis. The Non-Aligned Movement demands once again that Israel abide by resolution Security Council 497 (1981) and fully withdraw from the occupied Syrian Golan to the 4 June 1967 borders, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

In conclusion, NAM once again appeals for urgent collective international action. We call in particular on the Security Council, on the basis of the duties entrusted to it by the Charter of the United Nations, to justly and decisively address the long simmering Arab-Israeli conflict, at the core of which lies the question of Palestine. NAM supports the resolutions of the Assembly for the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine and calls on the Security Council to implement its own resolutions to contribute to the realization of a just, lasting, comprehensive and peaceful solution and to the realization of long-overdue justice and independence for the Palestinian people.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Mr. Vrailas (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The candidate

countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia; the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina; and the European Free Trade Association country Iceland, member of the European Economic Area, as well as the Republic of Moldova, align themselves with this statement.

The European Union reaffirms its commitment to a just and comprehensive resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian question based on the two-State solution, with the State of Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous, sovereign and viable State of Palestine living side by side in peace, security and mutual recognition. There is no alternative to the two-State solution. A one-State reality would not be compatible with the legitimate national aspirations of Israelis and Palestinians alike. And yet, the viability of the two-State solution is constantly being eroded by new facts on the ground.

We have repeated time and again that the status quo is unsustainable. Recent events show that this is true. Last year, during the summer, for the third time in less than seven years we witnessed hostilities in Gaza and in southern Israel, which caused the death or injury of thousands of people, the majority of whom were civilians, and produced the catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza we continue to witness today. These past weeks, we have witnessed an increase in tensions, clashes and terror attacks in Israel and in the occupied Palestinian territory, which once again has left many innocent civilians dead and thousands injured.

In the region, the spread of radicalism, extremism and terrorism has created a context that makes solving the Israeli-Palestinian question more urgent than ever. The message is clear. We must make progress towards a just and lasting peace. A credible political horizon for the Israelis and the Palestinians alike is needed. This political horizon must point clearly at the possibility of putting an end to the conflict, thereby ensuring that the legitimate aspirations of both parties, including those of Israelis to security and those of Palestinians to statehood, are fulfilled.

The European Union believes that the only way to resolve the conflict is through an agreement that will end the occupation that began in 1967, ends all claims and fulfils the aspirations of both parties. The basis for this lasting solution can be found in the relevant Security Council resolutions, the Madrid

principles — including land for peace — the road map, the agreements previously reached by the parties and the Arab Peace Initiative. We believe that clear parameters defining the basis for negotiations are key elements of a successful outcome, and we remain convinced that the EU position on parameters, as set out in the EU Foreign Affairs Council conclusions of July 2014 on four final status issues — borders, security, refugees and Jerusalem — provides a basis for achieving consensus on the way forward.

I will make three points regarding the situation on the ground — on the present escalation of violence, on the need to preserve the two-State solution, and on the still dire situation in Gaza.

The European Union remains extremely concerned by the recent escalation in violence and tensions in Israel and in the occupied Palestinian territory. We condemn in the strongest terms all acts of terror. They are simply unacceptable and can never be justified. We insist that all perpetrators of crimes or acts of terror, be they against Israelis or Palestinians, be brought to justice. Both the Israeli and the Palestinian peoples have the right to live in peace and security.

We are also concerned at recurring tensions and clashes at the Al-Haram Al-Sharif/Temple Mount. We renew our appeal for full respect for the holy sites and underline that any change of the status quo would have deeply destabilizing effects. We also fully acknowledge the special role of Jordan in Muslim holy shrines in Jerusalem. We welcome the understandings that were reached last month between Israel, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority in that regard. We recall the agreements previously reached in October 2014, and call for their full implementation. Jerusalem is a city sacred to three religions and all should be working for dignity and justice for people of all faiths.

The preservation of the viability of the two-State solution is at the core of EU policy and will remain a priority. Settlements are illegal under international law and an obstacle to peace. We reiterate our strong opposition to Israel's settlement policy and actions taken in that context, such as building the separation barrier beyond the 1967 line; demolitions and confiscation, including of EU-funded projects; evictions; forced transfers, including of Bedouins; illegal outposts; settler violence and restrictions of movement and access. Those actions seriously threaten the two-State solution. Settlement activity in East Jerusalem seriously

jeopardizes the possibility of Jerusalem serving as the future capital of both States. The European Union will continue to closely monitor developments on the ground and their broader implications, and remains ready to take further action in order to protect the viability of the two-State solution.

The European Union and its Member States reaffirm their commitment to ensuring the continued, full and effective implementation of existing EU legislation and bilateral arrangements applicable to settlement products. We are also committed to ensuring that, in line with international law, all agreements between the State of Israel and the European Union unequivocally and explicitly indicate their inapplicability to the territories occupied by Israel in 1967.

The European Union is also extremely concerned that, more than one year after the tragic hostilities of summer 2014, the humanitarian and socioeconomic situation in Gaza remains dire and the root causes of the conflict unaddressed. Addressing the situation must be an immediate priority for the parties and for the international community. We welcome steps taken by Israel to ease restrictions in Gaza, including the resumption of limited trade from Gaza to the West Bank for the first time since 2007. However, further positive measures are now needed to enable the full delivery of humanitarian aid, reconstruction and economic recovery on a permanent basis. We continue to call for a fundamental change of the political, security and economic situation in the Gaza Strip, including the end of the closure and a full opening of the crossing points, while addressing Israel's legitimate security concerns. Rocket fire by militant groups is unacceptable and underlines again the danger of escalation. All stakeholders must commit to non-violence and peace.

The European Union has always supported intra-Palestinian reconciliation behind President Abbas. Palestinian unity is a fundamental element not only in reaching the two-State solution, but also in ensuring security for Palestinians and Israelis and to improving the situation in Gaza. Palestinian factions must make reconciliation and the return of the Palestinian Authority to Gaza a top priority. The Palestinian Authority must take greater responsibility in that regard and assume its Government functions in the Gaza Strip, including in the field of security and civil administration and through its presence at the Gaza crossing points. The European Union is ready to provide full support to those efforts, including through

the rapid reactivation and possible extension in scope and mandate of the EU Border Assistance Mission for the Rafah Crossing Point and the EU Coordinating Office for Palestinian Police Support.

Within the framework I have described, the challenge now is to build the conditions that could open the way to a resumption of meaningful negotiations and lead to a comprehensive agreement on all final status issues. An immediate end to all violence is clearly of paramount importance. Security measures alone, however, cannot stop the cycle of violence. We also need to work on finding a new entry point for the start of a political process that builds the conditions for credible negotiations, thereby providing a meaningful political horizon and maintaining a real perspective on the final and comprehensive settlement of the conflict.

The European Union welcomes and will actively contribute to initiatives of the Quartet aimed at engaging with the parties in order to explore concrete actions both sides can take to demonstrate their genuine commitment to pursuing a two-State solution. Together with our Quartet partners, we will encourage efforts to agree on significant steps, including concrete steps to implement agreements that have already been signed and that benefit Israelis and Palestinians alike. We need to look at transformative measures and steps on the ground that would help Palestinians to increase control over their own lives, while upholding the security of Palestinians and Israelis alike. We remain convinced that concrete and significant steps must be taken to stabilize the situation and reverse current trends by showing meaningful progress towards creating a two-State reality on the ground and restoring hope among Palestinians and Israelis that a negotiated peace is possible.

Securing a just and lasting peace will also require an increased common international effort. The EU will continue to work actively on a renewed multilateral approach to the peace process, in consultation with all relevant stakeholders, including partners in the Quartet, notably the United States, in the region and in the Security Council. We also underline the importance of engaging in joint work with regional partners on the basis of the Arab Peace Initiative, which provides a significant and important vision for a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict and an opportunity to build a regional security framework. We welcome the efforts of Quartet envoys in that regard.

International and regional support is crucial for a comprehensive peace, but ultimately the most important elements are the leadership and determination of the parties themselves. Israeli and Palestinian leaders need to prove their commitment to a two-State solution in deeds, not just words. They must avoid all actions that might call into question their stated commitment to a negotiated solution and refrain from incitement, provocation or retaliation. No one should ever condone violence. There can be no ambiguity on that question. Security forces must always strive to avoid loss of life.

Israeli and Palestinians leaders will have to make courageous choices. First of all, they have to do everything in their power to ease present tensions and contain violence, but they will also have to show that they are willing and ready to make the historic and difficult decisions that are needed if peace is to be reached. They must realize that waiting is not an option. Waiting presents a risk that the international community cannot afford. Even more so, it is a risk that the parties cannot afford.

Let me conclude by saying that the European Union will do all it can to support the achievement of a lasting and just solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. If the parties make the strategic choice of peace, the EU and the international community will support them at every step of the way. We reaffirm that in the event of a final peace agreement, the EU remains ready to offer to both parties an unprecedented package of political, economic and security support and a special privileged partnership with the EU. At the same time, we recall that the future development of our relations with both the Israeli and Palestinian partners will also depend on their engagement, aimed at a lasting peace based on the two-State solution.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait): I am honoured to address the General Assembly today on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). At the outset, I wish to express our gratitude to the President for his wise leadership of the work of the General Assembly. In addition, I wish to extend our appreciation to the Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the Rapporteur of the Committee for their efforts and their report (A/70/35).

Our meeting today takes place in a decisive historical context, as the occupied Palestinian territory and, particularly, the occupied city of Jerusalem have

been witnessing a dramatically deteriorating situation resulting from the escalation of Israeli military aggression against the unarmed and defenceless Palestinian people and their holy places. It has to be emphasized that Israel's ongoing oppression of the Palestinian people, its flagrant violations of all applicable provisions of international law, including humanitarian and human rights law, and its disrespect of agreements with the Palestinian side have brought the situation to a dangerous juncture.

We should also note that the recent escalation comes as an extension of the ongoing Israeli aggressions against Christian and Islamic holy sites in East Jerusalem, especially Al-Haram Al-Sharif, which houses the holy Al-Aqsa Mosque. We have warned on several occasions that the crimes and aggressions perpetrated by Israel, the occupying Power, its settlers and extremists against the holy sites in Jerusalem could spark a religious war. Israel alone would bear the responsibility of the consequences of such a war, which must be averted by all means.

The OIC condemns in the strongest terms the continuation of the Israeli aggression, especially the policy of execution and deliberate murder carried out by the Israeli occupation forces and extremist Israeli settlers against defenceless Palestinian civilians, including children. The OIC also condemns the Israeli persistence with its settlement policy, especially in occupied East Jerusalem, which is clearly aimed at illegally altering the demographic composition, character and status of the occupied Palestinian territory, in addition to creating de facto realities that could make the two-State solution impossible to achieve.

Furthermore, the OIC condemns the Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip, now in its eighth year, and calls for an end to that inhumane and massive collective punishment of the Palestinian people. Those Israeli acts of aggression constitute war crimes, and the perpetrators should be brought to justice. The OIC reiterates its call on the international community to act swiftly in taking measures to stop those violations and to provide protection for the Palestinian people. It is no longer morally acceptable for the international community, particularly the Security Council, to remain silent or only express concern about the horrendous Israeli war crimes and atrocities committed against the Palestinian people during Israel's 48-year military occupation. There is no doubt that Israel considers the silence of

the international community with respect to its crimes as encouragement to proceed with its State terrorism.

The United Nations has a permanent responsibility regarding the question of Palestine until it is justly resolved in all of its aspects. In the absence of a just solution, it must continue to ensure the necessary assistance to the Palestinian people, including to the more than 5.5 million Palestine refugees registered with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, and it must continue to demand that international humanitarian law and other relevant international mechanisms for the protection of civilians in situations of armed conflicts be fully upheld in Palestine.

We would like to emphasize that the failure to find a just solution to the question of Palestine, which is at the core of the Middle East conflict, will only exacerbate the already unstable regional situation. The OIC therefore urges the international community to work strenuously to achieve peace in accordance with the two-State solution, based on the pre-1967 borders, resolutions of international legitimacy and the Arab Peace Initiative. In that regard, we call on the Security Council to act immediately to set a well-defined time frame for ending the Israeli occupation — with international guarantees and binding implementation mechanisms — and to work to enforce its historical resolutions to ensure that the Palestinian people will be able exercise their inalienable and legitimate national rights, particularly their right to self-determination in their independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Mr. Salam (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): Undoubtedly, our meeting this year, coinciding with the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, is especially important, given that it is the first meeting on the question of Palestine following the raising of the flag of the State of Palestine at United Nations Headquarters, in accordance with resolution 69/320.

Despite the symbolism of that step, which is part of a natural progression in accepting the State of Palestine as a non-member observer State at the Organization, we must not allow ourselves to be distracted from the fact that the State of Palestine remains under the yoke of occupation. On the basis of the Charter of the United Nations and its role in promoting the principles and provisions of international law, the Organization

must provide all means of assistance and support to the State of Palestine towards ending the occupation and achieving independence. Furthermore, the acceptance of the State of Palestine as a non-member observer State at the United Nations must not divert our attention even momentarily from its right, like that of other nations, to full membership of the Organization.

Allow me to commend the recent decision of the European Union for requiring the clear labelling of products coming from Israeli settlements in the occupied territories. That important decision was undoubtedly a move in the right direction. There is a need for international concerted efforts to end settlement activities in all of their forms. In no uncertain terms, ongoing settlement activities are not only a flagrant violation of the Charter; the principles and provisions of international and international humanitarian law; the resolutions of the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council; and the advisory opinion of the International Criminal Court of Justice; they are also a primary reason why attempts to revive the peace process have failed.

We gather here today as the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories continues to deteriorate, in addition to the expansion of settlements and the rise in terrorist settlement operations targeting Palestinian civilians, lives and property, without even sparing innocent children. Israel pursues its provocative practices in occupied Jerusalem against Al-Haram Al-Sharif as part of a broader policy of aggression aimed at changing the character and identity of the holy city. This dangerous situation clearly proves that Israel is not only ignoring its responsibility under international humanitarian law to protect the population of the occupied Palestinian territories and their property, but is increasing its attacks on them and threatening their livelihoods.

Therefore, pending the end of the occupation, the international community must fulfil the requirements of such protection. Given the Security Council's failure to take the necessary measures to fulfil that protection, the General Assembly must rise to the challenge by adopting the necessary resolutions in that regard, as it has done on many occasions in the past when the Security Council has failed to fulfil its duties in the maintenance of international peace and security.

The situation is dangerous not only in occupied Palestine, but throughout the world, especially given

the spread of terrorist threats and operations. Now more than ever, must unify and accelerate international efforts to confront the challenges posed by terrorists and eradicate terrorism. I reiterate again, as we have reiterated on more than one occasion, that success in confronting terrorists will be achieved not merely by providing financial, security or even military assistance alone. We must address the root causes of terrorism, which are clearly diverse and include extreme poverty and the rise of unemployment in addition to feelings of frustration, despair, isolation and oppression.

However the main causes of terrorism also include a prolonged feeling of injustice and despair. In order to uproot terrorism, our message is that we must not underestimate the dangers posed by the prolonged sense of injustice that is felt only by the Palestinians as a result of the violent occupation and its threats to their lives, livelihoods, identity and holy sites, but also by most Arabs and Muslims. The most important thing is that we must not allow the Palestinians to lose hope.

Ms. Lodhi (Pakistan): As we mark another International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People today, let us start by acknowledging that the tragedy of Palestine — including the occupation of some of Islam's holiest sites, in East Jerusalem — has been at the heart of the turmoil in the Middle East. It is this conflict that has contributed most significantly to the anger and frustration of the people of the Arab and Muslim world. The resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is essential for peace and stability throughout the Middle East. It is also essential to enable us to address the drivers of extremism and terrorism.

The Palestinian people, who have endured a serial tragedy for over 70 years, deserve the full solidarity and support of the international community. They have suffered decades of foreign occupation, repression and humiliation. They have been subjected to targeted killings, collective punishment, arbitrary detention and countless other violations of their human rights and international humanitarian law. But sadly, there seems to be no end to their suffering in sight.

Israeli restrictions on Palestinian freedoms and rights; harassment and violence by Israeli settlers; the construction of illegal settlements; terror and provocation in and around the holy sites, including the Al-Aqsa Mosque; and bleak prospects for peace are compounding the plight of the Palestinian people. The collective punishment of Gaza continues for the eighth

year. The warning that Gaza could become unlivable by 2020 has gone unheeded. The situation deteriorated further when the Israeli offensive last year pushed many more Palestinian families into poverty and worsened their economic conditions. Together with delays in reconstruction and continuing curbs on movement, the warning is already becoming a reality. All of that, coupled with the continuing persecution of Palestinian youth, will inescapably lead to more violence and a deepening of their sense of despondency.

We believe that durable peace can be achieved only through political solutions, and not through heavy-handed tactics and the use of brute force against unarmed civilians. A just, sustainable and equitable resolution of the Middle East conflict is possible only through the establishment of an independent and viable State of Palestine, based on the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. The resumption of negotiations is the best way forward. But the talks should be meaningful and results-oriented, rather than a means to provide space to Israel to further shrink the prospects of a contiguous State of Palestine through its illegal settlement construction on Palestinian lands. The international community must work with determination towards resuming a process with clear timelines and parameters.

The Security Council, of course, has the primary responsibility to maintain international peace and security. While it continues to procrastinate and dither for political reasons, the prospects for a two-State solution continue to fade. Israel's intransigence and belligerent actions continue to undermine the possibility of reviving the peace process. The Security Council has an obligation to play a role. It must act on this most potent threat to international peace and security. We support the Palestinian demand for international protection. The paper on the subject, which the Secretary-General shared with the Council last month, provides options that need to be seriously considered.

But the Palestinians cannot simply be asked to wait until another peace process takes shape. Immediate steps must be taken to alleviate their immense suffering and give them hope for their future. Pressure must be mounted on Israel to immediately, first, lift the blockade of Gaza; secondly, irrevocably end all illegal settlement construction; thirdly, release all Palestinian detainees; and fourthly, end the demolition of Palestinian houses and the expulsion of Palestinians from their properties.

Those steps, of course, are not ends unto themselves. They are simply the means to prevent the situation from falling into the abyss.

Another dimension of conflict in the Middle East is the Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan. Israeli settlement policy and illegal practices of controlling resources and changing the demographic composition and legal status of the occupied Syrian Golan constitute blatant disregard of United Nations resolutions. Lasting and sustainable peace in the Middle East requires bold decisions. The withdrawal of the occupation forces from all Arab lands, including from Lebanon and the Syrian Golan Heights, is vital not only to the future of the next generation of Palestinians, but to international peace and security themselves.

All of that will need visionary diplomacy, especially on the part of those who wield power and influence with the principal parties. Such diplomacy is essential if we are to defy the dire predictions of disaster in the Middle East which, sadly, abound today.

Mr. Mukerji (India): I thank the President for convening this important meeting on the question of Palestine, in which my delegation has participated since the first special session in April and May 1947.

We are marking the International day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. On this important occasion, our Prime Minister has sent a message reaffirming India's support and solidarity. In his message, the Prime Minister states:

“The International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People is an important occasion for us to reaffirm our support for the Palestinian people's struggle for a sovereign, independent, viable and united State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living within secure and recognized borders, side by side and at peace with Israel. I would like to take this opportunity to extend our heartiest congratulations to the people of Palestine on the historic installation of the national flag of Palestine at United Nations Headquarters on 20 September. It is a step forward in realizing Palestine becoming a State Member of the United Nations, which India fully supports.

“India's ties with the friendly people of Palestine are rooted in our common history. India has always stood by the Palestinian people in the pursuit of their legitimate goals and efforts aimed at economic and

social development, with dignity and self-reliance. India has been extending political and diplomatic support to Palestine bilaterally, as well as at international forums. We also extend budgetary support and render assistance in capacity-building and human resource development initiatives of the Palestinian Government.

“The President of India, His Excellency Mr. Pranab Mukherjee, visited Palestine in October. That first-ever State visit provided us an opportunity to reiterate our commitment to Palestine and to review overall developments in the region. We remain hopeful that talks and Israeli-Palestinian negotiations will resume soon, leading to a comprehensive peace process and an amicable resolution of the conflict”.

India continues to support the development and nation-building efforts of Palestine by consistently extending technical and financial assistance. During his visit, the President of India inaugurated the India-Palestine Centre For Excellence In Information And Communication Technologies at Al-Quds University and provided assistance in the amount of \$5 million as budgetary support to the Palestinian Authority. India has also announced its decision to set up another such centre for information and communications technologies in Gaza, with similar aims and at an estimated cost of \$1 million; an international technology park in Ramallah at an estimated cost of \$12 million; and a Palestinian institute of diplomacy at an estimated cost of \$4.5 million.

I mention those contributions as a way in which we, as a Member State, can play a larger role in capacity-building efforts in Palestine. We believe that such contributions, including India's annual \$1-million contribution to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, have been a positive response to the situation on the ground, where we are engaged with Palestine in undertaking important bilateral development projects in health care, education, skill development and vocational training, and in providing budgetary support to the Government of Palestine. India has been contributing material and technical assistance to the Palestinian people, and has recently completed two projects. One is in the in the area of higher education, at the Al-Azhar University in Gaza City, and the other is the Mahatma Gandhi Library/ Student Activity Centre at the Palestine Technical College in the Gaza Strip. Over 12,000 Palestinians

have graduated from Indian universities. Apart from the scholarships that we have made available, we have increased the number of positions for technical and economic cooperation, including training to Palestinian Government officials and diplomats.

I mention all of that against the backdrop of continued violence around the holy sites of the old city of Jerusalem, which is a cause of concern for India. We call on all parties to show restraint, avoid provocation and unilateral actions, and return to the peace process so that we can realize the benefits of the aforementioned bilateral cooperation. We firmly believe that dialogue is the only viable option in the search for a just, durable and comprehensive peaceful solution of the Palestinian issue. We hope that both sides will demonstrate the necessary political will to return to the negotiating table and resume dialogue so that all of us States members of the Assembly can assist Palestine in its arduous task of nation-building.

Mr. Bamrungphong (Thailand): On 9 September at the High-level Forum on the Culture of Peace in the Trusteeship Council Chamber, a duet made up of an Israeli and a Palestinian musician performed several melodious and joyful songs. That beautiful moment gave us a glimpse of hope for the peaceful coexistence of those two great nations, despite the current heartbreaking and hope-dimming reality on the ground.

We are alarmed by the escalating violence at holy sites in the West Bank and Jerusalem, as well as other violent incidents in several cities. The numbers of deaths and casualties on both sides give us all cause for grave concern. The long-standing conflict in the Middle East has for decades claimed too many innocent lives and deprived young generations of hope for a bright future. Neither side can afford the further loss of its invaluable human capital, let alone the destruction and damage done to holy sites, humankind's historical heritage, public facilities and private property.

The confrontations have been fuelled by incitement and hate speech. Irresponsible rhetoric and distorted facts in social media have worsened the vicious cycle of tension and inflamed violence. They also create profound mistrust that erodes the possibility of a political solution and the path towards a just and lasting peace. Thailand joins the international community in calling on all sides to respect the sanctity of all holy sites and to cease any attempt to change their status quo. We also

stress the importance of ending inflammatory rhetoric and provocative actions that will further exacerbate the tensions.

The current crisis cannot be resolved through security measures alone. Moreover, violence cannot be countered by violence; that only heightens tensions and leads to catastrophic outcomes for all concerned. Only by working towards a lasting solution through political means will we ensure the safety of the people and achieve true peace and security in the region. It is important to promote and support meaningful dialogue and negotiations. The parties involved must exercise maximum restraint and refrain from provocative actions. We urge both sides to sincerely commit to the path of negotiation and reinvigorate the peace process so as to achieve a comprehensive solution to the decades-long conflict without further delay. In the absence of the peace process, at present it is essential to rebuild trust and confidence and create an atmosphere conducive to future negotiations. In that regard, Thailand firmly supports the continued efforts of the Secretary-General and regional leaders to normalize the situation on the ground. We also believe that the Quartet and the Arab Peace Initiative can play a crucial role in contributing to progress towards the resumption of the peace process.

Violence results in human misery. The dire humanitarian situation on the ground is of grave concern to us. We call on all parties to respect international law, in particular international human rights law and international humanitarian law. We also join the international call for the release of Palestinian detainees, the lifting of the blockade against Gaza, and unimpeded access for the delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza, which must be reconnected to the rest of the world.

There is also an urgent need to address the issue of Palestinian refugees. We take this opportunity to commend the countries in the region and beyond that have generously embraced and sheltered those in need.

On our part, Thailand swiftly responded to the Gaza flash appeal by contributing \$100,000 to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, and an additional \$100,000 to the Palestine Red Crescent Society, to alleviate the humanitarian crisis caused by the deteriorating situation in Gaza, the West Bank, Jerusalem and East Jerusalem. In addition, Thailand joined several countries to commemorate the International Year of

Solidarity with the Palestinian People. An exhibition entitled “Solidarity and Support for the Palestinian Refugees” was organized in Bangkok in December last year to highlight their plight and increase support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

We believe that the General Assembly resolutions on this important issue, when duly observed and implemented, constitute an effective means to prevent the exacerbation of this protracted conflict. We therefore support, and will vote in favour of all, draft resolutions under these agenda items. As a friend of both the Israeli and the Palestinian peoples, we hope for an end to their suffering. We reaffirm our support to advancing a two-State solution, with Israelis and Palestinians living side by side in peace, harmony and prosperity.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Our meeting under this agenda item today, just as our meetings in previous years, comes at a time when we are experiencing regrettable events in the Palestinian territories. Once again, we are witnessing confusion in defining principles and concepts. Some try to equate those who are unjust with those who are being treated unjustly — the aggressor and the aggressed, the heavily armed occupying Power that is Israel and the unarmed, occupied Palestinian people.

The fact that this item has remained on the agenda for a number of years reflects the fact that justice and truth are not upheld in the international community. Following decades of occupation of the Palestinian territories, we are still awaiting a solution. Yet there is no sign of any solution in the foreseeable future. Some are now habituated to accepting the situation, which runs counter to the most basic principles of international law, and some are used to blatantly riding roughshod over those principles.

In recent times, we have not only witnessed illegal occupation, but also unprecedented settlement activity. We have been witnessing an inhumane tendency to demolish Palestinian homes and confiscate their land. Settlers have taken it upon themselves to brutally attack women and children. All of those practices have remained unpunished. It is now acceptable to desecrate holy sites, in particular the Al-Aqsa Mosque, without any consequence.

The violation experienced in the Haram al-Sharif, the first Qibla for 1 billion Muslims every year, will remain etched on the collective memory of Muslims for a long time. Wrong are those who believe that other

conflicts in the Arab world will divert our attention from the desecration of holy sites. Wrong are those who believe that such conflicts can be used as a pretext to entrench the occupation and accept a new reality.

The international community’s stalemate regarding the Palestinian question portends serious repercussions. Needless to say, loss of rights is the ammunition used by shady terrorist forces to recruit young people. That is why we are awaiting an end to settlement activity, the lifting of all restrictions on free movement in Palestine, the lifting of the Gaza blockade and the restoration of the rights of the Palestinian people.

I can only stress the most basic demand of the Palestinian people, namely, protection. Protection is the least that the international community can offer, or that the Organization can offer. Contrary to those who believe that such a demand might not be genuine, I stress that the concept of the protection of civilians is not vague, rather, it is provided under international law. The Secretary-General has prepared a study on previous cases related to that demand. I believe that the Security Council should at least consider that study.

The Palestinian question will remain at the top of the priority list of the Arab countries. Even if other concerns and conflicts are weighing heavily on the Arab world, that issue will remain of the utmost importance. We need to regain the rights of the Palestinian people and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital, based on the pre-1967 borders.

The Arab Peace Initiative is the proof of our insistence on achieving peace. The current situation means that we are facing a dilemma. We must redouble the efforts of the international community to return to the path towards peace, before it is too late.

Mr. Dabbashi (Libya) (*spoke in Arabic*): It has been 67 years since the beginning of the tragedy of the Palestinian people. Their suffering began when migrating Jews invaded their territory in 1948, forcing them to leave their homeland. They established the Israeli entity without any borders — to this day — so it has continued to expand at the expense of the Arab and Palestinian territories, as they gained ever-more power.

That power has never lacked, due to the unlimited support they receive from countries, some of which were the cause of the tragedies of the Jews in different historic eras; while others were and still continue providing

them with weapons, using the power of the veto in the Security Council to protect them from punishment, or even criticism when they violate international law or commit crimes against the Palestinian people.

The Palestinian people have travelled far and wide in attempts to regain some of their rights, within the framework of what is known as the Middle East peace process. However, the Israeli entity has continuously used all possible measures to continue looting what remains of the Palestinian land, until they took over almost 90 per cent of the historic Palestinian territory. They have transformed the attempts to maintain peace in the Middle East into a farce, and the two-State solution into an impossibility, despite numerous resolutions of international legitimacy stressing the right of the Palestinian people to return to their land and their right to establish an independent State of Palestine on the entire Palestinian territory.

We are not here to enumerate the practices of the Israeli occupation that aim to alter the history and demography of usurped Palestinian land and to Judaize Jerusalem, as they are known and have been documented by United Nations bodies and numerous international organizations.

However, it could be of interest to recall that the Israeli entity was established through a policy of terrorism and the emptying the territory of its people. To that end, they have terrorized the Palestinians, disappropriated and levelled their land, demolished their homes, forcefully displaced them and established settlements that were expanded to further accommodate extremist Zionist settlers from all four corners of the worlds.

The extortionist Israeli entity has proved over the past seven decades that it was not established based on terrorism per se; however, terrorism is a concept instilled in its practices and is a main pillar to its existence. That is clear from the war crimes, crimes against humanity and continuous violations of human rights, particularly in the Gaza Strip and Jerusalem, and the excessive violence used by the Israeli military against women and children everywhere in Palestine, as are the crimes of the settlers against Palestinians and the mass detentions and other gross violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.

It is high time for the international community to stand by the Palestinian Authority to allow all those Israeli officials who have committed, or were

responsible for, serious crimes against the Palestinian people to be prosecuted before the International Criminal Court and punished, thereby putting an end to impunity.

The recurrent Israeli military offenses against the Gaza Strip and the resulting casualties among civilians, the destruction of infrastructure, including private and public property, as well of as the schools of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, have all contributed to exacerbating the plight of Palestinian civilians under the yoke of the occupation.

The unjust Israeli siege of Gaza, imposed since 2007, demonstrates disrespect for international law and constitutes a gross violation of the rights of the Palestinian people. It has led to increased unemployment and a deterioration in civilians' livelihoods, a deterioration of infrastructure in the Gaza Strip, as well as extreme lack of food, medicine and basic medical services and enormous shortages in the supply of electricity, fuel and drinking water. It is high time for the international community to end the unjust siege as soon as possible.

In that context, we renew our call on the Israeli authorities, the occupying Power, to provide protection to civilians in accordance with the Fourth Geneva Convention and to ensure their access to food assistance and medical services, as the Israeli occupation has continuously violated all such obligations. In that context, we call on the international community to take all the necessary measures to provide protection for the Palestinian people. We must establish a timeline to end the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories, recognize the State of Palestine and accept it as a full-fledged Member of the United Nations.

We stress that ending the conflict in the Middle East requires an end to the Israeli occupation of all Palestinian and Arab territories. The international community must shoulder its responsibility by compelling the Israeli occupation authorities to comply with United Nations resolutions supporting the rights of the Palestinian people, including their right of return, right to self-determination and right to establish their independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The occupation of the Syrian Golan is connected to the occupation of Palestine, and therefore the practices of the occupying Power are the same. My country condemns the continued occupation of the Syrian Golan and the brutal practices undertaken by Israeli settlers

under the protection of the occupying forces against Syrians in the Syrian Golan. It constitutes a violation of international humanitarian law and the Geneva Conventions. Accordingly, that occupation must end immediately to allow the Syrians to enjoy freedom and all of their rights.

Mrs. Kawar (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I wish to begin my statement by expressing our thanks and appreciation to the President for his efforts and leadership of the General Assembly at its seventieth session. We also extend our appreciation to the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for his tireless efforts.

Every year we gather in this Hall to celebrate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people. We view it as another occasion to reaffirm our full commitment and solidarity with that unarmed and steadfast people and to defend them. We renew that commitment daily in all international forums, to ensure that the Palestinian people obtain their legitimate and inalienable rights.

Over the past decades, Jordan has spared no effort, at every level, to meet the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people in establishing their independent, sovereign and viable State along the lines of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with a just and final settlement based on a two-State solution and in compliance with the resolutions of international legitimacy and the Arab Peace Initiative and all its elements. That is the only rational solution to ending the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and to ending the division, frustration and hatred that has been increasing lately and threatening the future of upcoming generations.

Due to the continuing Israeli occupation and absence of a just solution to the question of Palestine, the situation is becoming ever-more dangerous in the Palestinian territories, with the increasing frequency of illegal Israeli practices, including the use of excessive force, settlement expansion, confiscation of territories, demolishing of homes, displacement of Palestinian citizens and other violations of international humanitarian law, in particular the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949.

Israel must bear the legal responsibility for the violations it is perpetrating against the Palestinian people, otherwise it will continue its unilateral practices; it will continue challenging the international community and ignoring the resolutions of the Security

Council and the General Assembly; it will continue to control the fate of the peace process and of the Palestinian people, including the Palestinian refugees that are still being denied the right to return and compensation.

Jordan calls upon all Member States to fulfil their obligations and responsibilities and transform their support to the Palestinian people into genuine, serious steps to provide legal protection to the Palestinian people and prompt Israel to end its occupation of the Palestinian territories. That is the only way to ensure Israel's security and its acceptance in the region.

Israel must also match its statements with actions on the ground by taking tangible, credible steps, including measures aimed at building trust with the Palestinian authorities and efforts towards creating peaceful conditions favourable to resuming serious negotiations without any preconditions.

The sanctity of Islamic and Christian holy sites must not be violated. They must not be the subject of political disputes. In that regard, Jordan reiterates its rejection and condemnation of Israel's continued desecration of the holy sites, especially the Al-Aqsa Mosque, and its illegal attempts to change the historic status of the mosque, which dominated the holy city of Jerusalem before the occupation, by allowing Israeli settlers to storm the mosque under the protection of the Israeli police. Meanwhile, more restrictions are imposed on Muslim worshippers who are denied the fundamental and exclusive right to pray in the mosque.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate Jordan's full solidarity with the Palestinian people. I would like to renew our commitment to continue our historic and legal right to provide protection to the Al-Aqsa Mosque on the basis of the historic Hashemite custodianship carried out by His Majesty Abdullah II bin Al-Hussein over Islamic and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem, and of Jordan's right to provide them with protection.

Mr. Phansourivong (Lao People's Democratic Republic): The question of Palestine has been on the agenda of the United Nations for over six decades, and the dream and aspiration of the Palestinian people for independent statehood and freedom have not only not materialized, but they seem to be further from realization. The time has come to take a historic step towards ending the occupation of Palestinian land and paving the way for the peaceful solution to the conflict.

We believe that sustained and active international involvement is needed to achieve peace between Israelis and Palestinians. We must acknowledge that the acquisition of United Nations status and the right of the Palestinian people to a recognized State have served to illustrate their firm commitment to resolving the conflict through constructive dialogue and peaceful means. We welcome the raising of the flag of the non-member Observer State of Palestine at the United Nations Headquarters in September, which signified the growing support to the Palestinian cause for independence. We also welcome the fact that many countries have recognized the State of Palestine. We hope that more will follow suit in the near future.

We are deeply concerned about the ongoing conflict and violence in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and Jerusalem. We call on the parties concerned to exert their utmost efforts to avoid further exacerbating the already fragile situation, and to take all the necessary steps to create conditions for the resumption of peace negotiations. The Lao People's Democratic Republic wants to see a just, lasting, comprehensive and peaceful solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, consistent with the relevant United Nations resolutions and major initiatives undertaken in the past decades that envisage a sovereign, independent and viable State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side in peace with Israel, based on the Arab Peace Initiative and recognized borders, as stipulated in the relevant Security Council resolutions. We therefore call upon the parties concerned to resume direct peace negotiations in order to reach a final peaceful settlement on that basis. We urge the international community to redouble its efforts to help Palestine return to normalcy as soon as possible. To that end, I commend the work of United Nations agencies, especially the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East in assisting the Palestinian people all these years amid multiple difficulties.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic has long recognized the State of Palestine. I wish to reaffirm our continued support to the Palestinian people in achieving the long-delayed goal of a viable, peaceful and prosperous State of Palestine that is a full-fledged Member of the United Nations. I wish the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People every success in its noble tasks in searching for a peaceful, just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the question of Palestine.

Mr. Reyes Rodríguez (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Cuba associates itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Iran on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

We thank the Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the Committee's Rapporteur for presenting the Committee's report (A/70/35), as well as for the draft resolutions (A/70/L.10, A/70/L.11, A/70/L.12 and A/70/L.13) that will be taken up by the General Assembly.

The violations by Israel of the human rights of the inhabitants of the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, and also of the civilian population of the occupied Syrian Golan, have worsened in the course of the period under consideration. Israel has continued with its illegal policies and practices in a deliberate and systematic manner against the Palestinian population. That has led to widespread human suffering and the destabilization of the situation, as is reflected in the report before the Assembly. The situation includes the death and wounding of civilians, including children; the arrest and detention of over 1,000 persons in the past month alone; forced displacement; and provocations and incitement to violence in East Jerusalem, especially in Al-Haram Al-Sharif, as well as a wide range of collective punishment.

Israel has intensified the construction of settlements, the confiscation of land and the appropriation of natural resources, among other illegal actions. That colonization campaign is fragmenting the Palestinian territory even further. It also undermines very seriously the viability of a two-State solution and continues to be the greatest obstacle to the achievement of peace. The report of the Committee very aptly questions the impunity of Israeli settlers and the exponential increase in violence against Palestinian civilians, against their homes and property.

In the Gaza Strip, 1.8 million Palestinians continue to live under an Israeli embargo, which, together with the military aggression of the summer of 2014, when the forces of the occupation killed and wounded thousands of Palestinian children, women and men, caused the destruction of thousands of homes, schools, businesses, hospitals, civilian infrastructure, including United Nations facilities — all that has created an unprecedented humanitarian crisis and has had negative repercussions on every aspect of life, with severe socioeconomic consequences. Just to

mention some data: 360,000 persons need treatment for mental health problems, which means that 20 per cent of the population of Gaza and 400,000 children need immediate psychosocial support. In terms of unemployment, it has reached 43 per cent in the Gaza Strip, the highest level in the world, and youth unemployment is at 60 per cent. The overall poverty rate is at 25 per cent. Today, the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip continues to be an illusion. To date, only one of the 12,620 houses completely destroyed have been rebuilt.

Cuba reiterates its unequivocal solidarity with the Palestinian people and condemns the continued military occupation by Israel of Palestinian territories. We also condemn the illegal policies and the settlement-building practices by Israel in occupied Palestinian territories, including in East Jerusalem; the violations of human rights; and the systematic crimes committed that cause tremendous suffering to the Palestinian people. Only ending the policies of colonialism, releasing Palestinian prisoners and recognizing the legitimate and inalienable rights of the Palestinian people will enable the establishment of a significant political process that can lead to lasting peace in the region.

The situation in the Middle East affects all Member States in one way or another. The international community must fulfil its duty to promote peace through political and negotiated solutions, encourage the development and welfare of all peoples and promote and protect the human rights of all, including the right to development, a right that we should never allow the Palestinian people to be deprived of.

The question of Palestine, including Jerusalem, and that of ending the Israel's occupation and illegal practices in the occupied Syrian Golan, are issues that require an urgent and definitive solution through implementation of the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. Only then will we be able to achieve a definitive, just and lasting peace for all the peoples of the Middle East.

The entire moral force, prestige and legitimacy of the United Nations should be directed towards achieving those goals. Cuba categorically and unhesitatingly rejects war and any use of force, just as we reject and firmly condemn every act, method and practice of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, by whomever, against whomever, wherever they may occur

and whatever their motivation, including those cases in which States are directly or indirectly involved.

Cuba will continue to fight and advocate for those who struggle for justice, peace and the full and free exercise of self-determination for all peoples. We demand the immediate recognition of that exercise for the Palestinian people, who deserve it, just like every other people of the world.

Mr. Hermida Castillo (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation associates itself with the statement delivered earlier by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

We would also like to express special recognition to the Committee on the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the Division for Palestinian Rights. We are committed to continuing our efforts until the Palestinian people have achieved their inalienable right to their own Palestinian State. On this International Day of Solidarity with Palestine, we commemorate the Palestinian people's more than 67 years of glorious struggle and resistance in the face of a criminal economic blockade that has continued to suffocate them as they live in subhuman conditions, without the economic conditions they need to enable them to meet even their most elementary basic needs, from health care and education to decent housing. We would like to know how the Palestinian people will ever be able to exercise their right to development, let alone achieve the Sustainable Development Goals we have agreed on, without the political and economic territory that has been occupied and usurped by Israel.

Palestine's economy is an economy of occupation, particularly in the Gaza Strip, one that applies at every level and every area of life for the Palestinian people who live there, from the illegal occupation of their lands and natural resources and the denial of their right to free movement, to the citizens' confinement and the daily destruction of their infrastructure, among other things. The people of the Gaza Strip cannot devote themselves fully to their economic and social development if their first concern is survival, while the international community stands by passively and offers no firm response to the people's suffering.

The numbers of the dead have continued to rise this year, and the current precarious situation in East Jerusalem, including vis-à-vis Al-Haram Al-Sharifa and the Al-Aqsa Mosque, also demands that we urge

the Security Council and the international community to avert escalation, call for respect for the right to religious freedom and halt incitements to violence and extremism through religious conflict.

My Government also extends its fraternal greetings 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 for freedom and the exercise of their inalienable right to self-determination, through the creation of a Palestinian State based on the borders existing prior to 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

We would like to emphasize once again that we cannot continue with this vicious circle of aggression, followed by reconstruction, followed by aggression, while Israel continues in impunity regardless of the ban on actions that violate international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention, the relevant resolutions of the United Nations and the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (see A/ES-10/273). On this day of solidarity 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 in urging for the release of Palestine's prisoners and political detainees. We also condemn the illegal practices of building more settlements, which illegally alter the demographic composition of the occupied Palestinian territory, in addition to the recent provocations by some settlers and extremists at various religious sites, particularly the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

Finally, bearing in mind that this is the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations as well as the year of the launch of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1), Nicaragua calls on the international community to lead us in fulfilling the historical responsibilities of the United Nations by adopting a draft resolution that defines a specific time frame for the creation of a Palestinian State, based on the pre-1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital, and that lays the foundations for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

Mr. Alrowaie (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to thank the members and Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for the valuable report before us (A/70/37). I would also like to thank the Department of Public Information for the steps it has taken to raise

public awareness of the Palestinian question, including implementing its own media programme, in accordance with resolution 69/22.

His Majesty King Hamad bin Issa Al Khalifa of the Kingdom of Bahrain stressed in his His Majesty's letter on the occasion of the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People that the occasion reminds us all of the responsibility of the United Nations and of the international community at large to the Palestinian people, to their just cause and the need to settle it, particularly after suffering has reached unprecedented levels. We should therefore stand by them during the ongoing crisis and shoulder our responsibilities.

The Kingdom of Bahrain has condemned the continued violations by the Israeli occupying Power and extremist groups that have violated the sanctity of the Al-Aqsa Mosque and other holy sites. Such illegal and inhumane acts will lead to further tension, violence, extremism and hatred and do not contribute to building relations or the bridges of respect that all religions call for. It will also not lead to peaceful communities that respect dignity, culture and peaceful coexistence among nations.

The events taking place in occupied Palestine — aggression and continuous violations by the Israeli occupation forces — require effective steps to prevent further deterioration of the situation and to provide protection to all the Palestinian people, respecting and preserving the different religious sites in Al-Quds, in particular the Al-Aqsa Mosque. We must end the Israeli occupation of Arab land, stop the building of settlements and establish the independent State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital, along the lines of 4 June 1967, according to the resolutions of international legitimacy and the Arab Peace Initiative.

The Kingdom of Bahrain will work with our brothers and friends to reach the objectives that respond to past aspirations that call for peaceful coexistence and peace and security according to the well-known international principles in that domain.

Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

Once again, the General Assembly has brought us together to discuss the issue of Palestine on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. We value greatly that Member States have been able to express their support for the just cause of this courageous people. But we are saddened and dismayed that, 70 years after the creation of the United Nations, the question of Palestine, which has been on the agenda of the Security Council and the General Assembly, is still unresolved. Against that backdrop, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela believes that the international community needs to react to the inertia that threatens addressing this issue at the United Nations. But while we continue to make statements in the Assembly Hall in favour of the rights of the Palestinian people, the occupying Power — Israel — continues to disregard our diplomatic arguments and to build settlements on Palestinian territory, tirelessly carrying out aggression against a defenceless people, while turning our words into vain rhetoric and shredding the credibility of the Organization, whose goal is to ensure international peace and security.

As we debate here at the General Assembly, once again Israeli planes are bombing the Gaza Strip. The international community needs to go beyond mere words and assume its responsibility and take effective and immediate steps to resolve the problem. The first step in that direction is to call a spade a spade. Israel, as an occupying Power in the Palestinian territories, has taken advantage of the inaction of the United Nations and, in particular, the blocking of the issue in the Security Council, to commit various atrocities and illegal acts that violate the human rights of the Palestinian people with impunity. The Palestinian people are thus denied their right to self-determination in a free, independent and sovereign State. The strategy of the occupying Power is clear. On one hand, it seeks to provoke and assault the Palestinians in order to generate cycles of violence and then it takes advantage to act brutally and disproportionately against the Palestinian people to maintain its oppression. On the other hand, with its constant policy of aggressive settlement building in the West Bank and destruction in Gaza, the Israeli Government strives to sow division and demoralization among the Palestinians and ultimately make the creation of a Palestinian State impossible.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela expresses its concern about the current cycle of violence in Palestine. The escalation of attacks in the occupied territories

cannot simply be qualified as attacks by Palestinians against Israelis or vice versa. They must be seen as the result of a prolonged and illegal occupation lasting over 70 years that has denied the Palestinian people their human rights and right to self-determination. As long as Palestinians continue to be denied their human rights, we will continue to see cycles of violence that only cause more civilian victims and increase the bitterness, pain and frustration of Palestinian youth, which then makes them easy prey for the extremist and terrorist groups that are contributing to instability in the region. We strongly condemn the systematic policy of repression against the Palestinian population and the brutal and cowardly attacks by Israel on innocent people, including women and children, which are in contravention of international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Such acts are acts of State terrorism, war crimes and crimes against humanity. With that in mind, we reiterate our support to the request made by Palestine to the International Criminal Court to have the perpetrators of the such acts brought to justice.

Accountability is one of the essential preconditions to ensuring peace and stability in the region. Once again, we denounce and deplore the Israeli policy of attacking Palestinian children, which includes murder, persecution, illegal detention and imprisonment. The international community cannot remain passive as the future generation of Palestinians is wiped out and subjected to emotional and physical trauma, having committed no crime other than being born and trying to live in dignity in the occupied territories, in the hope of one day being able to live freely as Palestinians.

We reject the attacks by settlers and Israeli fundamentalists against the sacred sites or any attempts to change the status quo. We demand that an end be put to the demolition of homes and the selective expulsion of the Palestinian population as a punitive measure by the occupying Power, as well as the Israeli settlement policy. It is time to put an end to the collective punishment against Palestinians and end to the inhuman blockade against Gaza, which forecloses the possibility of progress and undermines the development of Palestine. We have made that request before in the Security Council and the General Assembly. We appeal to the conscience of the world so that we stop making pointless calls and take action once and for all in favour of the Palestinian people.

Venezuela reiterates its full support for their right of the citizens of Palestine to self-determination, as well as their inalienable right to live in internationally recognized borders, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council. Bearing that in mind, we support all initiatives aimed at achieving a political, negotiated, inclusive and definitive solution to the conflict as part of a two-State solution.

On the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, we should recall that the raising of the Palestinian flag here at the United Nations last September took place following the adoption of resolution 69/320 by an overwhelming majority of the members of the General Assembly. That was a historic milestone that undoubtedly reflects the global solidarity with the Palestinian people. However, commitment cannot end at that symbolic gesture. The General Assembly, and in particular the Security Council, needs to act with the celerity and urgency required by the situation in order to push forward peace negotiations, bearing in mind that the failure to resolve the issue gravely affects the peace and stability of the entire Middle East.

Of course, political negotiation based on the two-State solution requires the creation of a Palestinian State and its recognition at the same level as the other party to the conflict. To that end, it is essential to admit Palestine as a fully-fledged Member of the United Nations. If we truly believe in the two-State solution, the time

has come for the General Assembly, and the Security Council in particular, to live up to their responsibilities and commit themselves to admitting Palestine as a fully-fledged Member of our Organization, with the same rights as all other Members.

The United Nations should demand that Israel put a stop to its violence against Palestinians, and end this new cycle of violence, destruction and massive violation of human rights. The necessary steps should also be taken to put the Palestinian population under international protection, in accordance with the Fourth Geneva Convention and Security Council resolution 904 (1994). It is essential to support Palestine's appeal to protect the lives of its citizens in the face of the recurring and systematic aggression by the occupying Power. In that way, we will avoid the double standard that has, unfortunately, characterized how the Palestinian question is addressed in the Security Council.

From this rostrum, we appeal to the United Nations in favour of peace, and we repeat our demand made at the Security Council, namely, that the Council live up to its responsibility and stop blocking the Palestine question and demand that Israel stop its violence and the military occupation of Palestine. The Security Council has at its disposal the tools to promote a political solution based on two-States to achieve a just and lasting peace. The United Nations needs to demonstrate the requisite political will to achieve the dream of a free and independent Palestine.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.