

24 NOVEMBER 2014



General Assembly GA/11591

Department of Public Information • News and Media Division • New York

General Assembly

Sixty-ninth session
59th Meeting (PM)

In Year of Solidarity, Hope for Palestinian Statehood Dashed Due to Peace Process Collapse, Israel's Acts against Gaza, Speakers Tell General Assembly

This year of solidarity with the Palestinians, in which the international community sought to achieve their right to live as a free people in their homeland, had instead seen the peace process collapse and conditions deteriorate due to Israel's illegal actions, the General Assembly heard today as it opened an annual two-day debate on the question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East.

Riyad H. Mansour, Permanent Observer for the State of Palestine, said that a year ago, the two parties had been in the midst of yet another round of resumed peace negotiations. When the Assembly proclaimed 2014 to be the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, hopes had risen that Palestine could become a full Member State of the United Nations. But that hopefulness had faded due to Israel's destructive acts, including a war against the Gaza Strip. While waiting for the results of the investigations by United Nations subsidiary bodies, there was no doubt that gross human rights violations and breaches of international humanitarian law amounting to war crimes had been committed by Israel in its July and August military aggression in Gaza, he said. Also, he stressed that "Accountability is essential for ensuring justice for the victims and, in turn, justice is fundamental if genuine healing and reconciliation between the two peoples are ever to be achieved".

Mr. Mansour urged the Security Council to send a clear message to Israel that it would not tolerate the obstruction of a peace process, and to set a time frame to end the Israeli occupation.

Today's meeting began with a statement by Assembly President Sam Kutesa (Uganda), who expressed his disappointment that 2014 had not brought the progress the international community had hoped for, followed by the introduction of four draft resolutions, which outlined mandates and programmes of special importance to the Organization in bearing the permanent responsibility for a peaceful solution to the question of Palestine.

Ron Prosor (Israel) described the current debate as "not about peace", but a "hate and bashing festival" against Israel. The world's unrelenting focus on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was an injustice to tens of millions of victims of tyranny and terrorism in the Middle East, among them Yazidis, Bahai, Kurds, Christians, and Muslims who were being executed and expelled by radical extremists at a rate of 1,000 per month. That the Assembly had not passed resolutions or called for special sessions about those events spoke volumes about the international community's hypocrisy.

He asked why the Organization had completely forgotten the historical displacement of the Jews while the displacement of the Palestinians was the subject of an annual debate. The worst oppression of the Palestinian people took place in Arab nations, where they were denied citizenship, and discriminated against.

Yet none of those crimes were part of the resolutions before the Assembly.

Saudi Arabia's representative, speaking on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), recalled that two years ago the Assembly recognized Palestine as a non-member Observer State. Last year, the international community rallied behind the negotiation process aimed at putting an end to Israel's occupation and achieving lasting peace in the region based on the two-State solution. However, the negotiations ended before they could start due to Israel's refusal to implement international law.

The European Union's representative said the bloc strongly opposed the recent expropriation of land near Bethlehem, recent announcements of plans for new settlement construction, plans to displace Bedouins in the West Bank and the continued demolitions — including of projects funded by the Union and Member States, urging Israel to reverse those decisions.

Japan, its delegate said, had just welcomed 10 young leaders from Israel and Palestine into its Invitation Programme for Confidence-Building, which, since 1996, had invited more than 200 youths from both nations to strengthen mutual trust. Japan also pledged \$200 million in aid during the Conference on Cooperation among East Asian Countries for Palestinian Development (CEAPAD) held in Jakarta in March.

Fodé Seck (Senegal), Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, introduced four draft resolutions related to the question of Palestine while Christopher Grima (Malta), Committee Rapporteur, presented that body's related report.

Also speaking today were representatives of Oman, Sweden, Lebanon, Bolivia, Pakistan, Kuwait, Bahrain, Egypt, China and India.

The General Assembly will meet again at 10 a.m. Tuesday, 25 November to continue its consideration of the question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East. It would also take action on a number of draft resolutions on those matters.

Background

As the General Assembly met today to consider the question of Palestine, it had before it the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People ([document A/69/35](#)), and the Secretary-General's report on the Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine ([document A/69/371](#)). Also taking up the situation in the Middle East, the Assembly had before it the Secretary-General's report on that topic ([document A/69/341](#)).

Opening Remarks

SAM KUTESA (Uganda), President of the General Assembly, said as the peace talks in the Middle East had been suspended, 2014 had not brought the progress the international community had hoped for. Member States must condemn acts of violence against civilians. He remained concerned about the current impasse in the peace talks, and said it was important to resume them. The international community should continue to support the parties in the talks and in the effort to achieve a just, comprehensive negotiated agreement, with the eventual goal of the two States living side-by-side in peace. He commended the

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) for its work in the region. Violence in the region had affected the Agency's ability to provide services. He reiterated his strong appeal to States to increase their financial commitments to the Agency's work.

Introduction of Reports and Draft Resolutions on the Question of Palestine

FODÉ SECK (Senegal), Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, introduced the following four draft resolutions: Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People ([document A/69/L.21](#)); Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat ([document A/69/L.22](#)); Special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat ([document A/69/L.23](#)); and Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine ([document A/69/L.24](#)).

He said that one year ago, the Assembly designated 2014 to be the "International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People" in the hope that, following the recognition of Palestine as an Observer State in 2012, it would serve as a further step in revitalizing and supporting the negotiations between Israeli and Palestinian leaders. The 193-nation body had also expressed the hope that, by now, the State of Palestine would be a sovereign and independent Member State of the United Nations. However, that was not the case. The four draft resolutions outlined positions, mandates and programmes of special importance for the Organization bearing the permanent responsibility for a peaceful solution to the question of Palestine.

CHRISTOPHER GRIMA (Malta), Committee Rapporteur, introducing that body's report ([document A/69/35](#)), said it contained factual accounts of developments related to the question of Palestine from 7 October 2013 to 6 October 2014, as well as detailed actions by the Committee and its conclusions and recommendations. Among them, the Committee welcomed the establishment of a commission of inquiry by the Human Rights Council to bring accountability for violations of humanitarian and human rights law committed in recent months in Gaza. It also welcomed the Palestinian leadership's request to the Secretary-General that the "Territory of the State of Palestine" be placed under an international protection system by the United Nations. The Committee called on the Human Rights Council and the Assembly to take practical steps to follow up on previous fact-finding missions, and it called on all Member States to support the administration of Gaza by the Palestinian national consensus Government under President Abbas, in order to stabilize the situation there. Further, the Committee called for innovative approaches and proposals that would help break the deadlock, accelerate the end of the 47-year Israeli occupation and bring about the realization of the rights of the Palestinian people, in particular their right to a sovereign State based on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, he said. Convinced that the sustainable development of the Palestinian economy could not take root under the current Israeli occupation, the Committee called on the Assembly to create a mechanism to document the costs of the occupation. In 2015, the Committee would focus on promoting accountability for Israeli violations and mobilizing increased international scrutiny of on-the-ground developments, among other actions in the region. It would also continue to encourage civil society to work with Governments and other institutions to gain support for its work.

Statements

RIYAD H. MANSOUR, Permanent Observer for the State of Palestine, said that a year ago, despite many challenges and harsh realities faced by the Palestinian people, delegates had come before the Assembly with greater hope. Israel and Palestine had been in the midst of yet another round of resumed peace negotiations, under the auspices of the United States and with the support of the Arab Ministerial Follow-up Committee, Middle East Quartet and concerned States from every corner of the world. When the Assembly proclaimed 2014 to be the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, hopes rose that the necessary momentum and political will could be mobilized to finally fulfil the right of the Palestinian people to live as a free people in their homeland and for Palestine to take its rightful place among the community of nations. Yet, that hopefulness had faded in a year that had witnessed instead the collapse of the peace process and a dramatic deterioration of conditions due to Israel's illegal and destructive actions, reckless provocations and incitement, and flagrant intransigence and bad faith in negotiations.

The current situation in Occupied Palestine was perilous, he said. In the wake of Israel's war against the Gaza Strip, the third in six years, and due to the intensification of its illegal colonization campaign in the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem, tensions had risen to extreme levels. Violence had escalated in a highly incendiary situation that threatened to implode. The urgency of international action to avert a complete destabilization — and consequences of such an outcome — and salvage the prospects for peace could not be overstated. While waiting for the results of the investigations by the Human Rights Council's Independent Commission of Inquiry and by the Secretary-General's Board of Inquiry, he had no doubt that gross human rights violations and breaches of international humanitarian law amounting to war crimes had been committed by Israel in its July and August military aggression in Gaza.

"Accountability is essential for ensuring justice for the victims and, in turn, justice is fundamental if genuine healing and reconciliation between the two peoples are ever to be achieved", he said. The international community, foremost the Security Council, must send a clear message to Israel, the occupying Power, that it would no longer tolerate the obstruction of a peace process. The Security Council must implement its resolutions and act responsibly and timely on the initiative for setting a timeframe to end the occupation and achieve a comprehensive and just solution. The value of hope for human perseverance could not be quantified. At the same time, the consequences of the loss of hope were unimaginable, he said, urging the international community to not let the Palestinian people lose hope.

RON PROSOR (Israel) said the world's unrelenting focus on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was an injustice to tens of millions of victims of tyranny and terrorism in the Middle East, among them Yazidis, Bahai, Kurds, Christians, and Muslims who were being executed and expelled by radical extremists at a rate of 1,000 per month. That the Assembly had not passed resolutions or called for special sessions about those events spoke volumes about the international community's hypocrisy. The conflict had never been about the creation of a Palestinian State, but rather about the existence of a Jewish one. He asked why the Organization had completely forgotten the historical displacement of the Jews while the displacement of the Palestinians was the subject of an annual debate. The worst oppression of the Palestinian people took place in Arab nations, where they were denied citizenship and discriminated against. Yet none of those crimes were part of the resolutions before the Assembly. Today's debate was not about peace; it was a "hate and bashing festival" against Israel.

European leaders had proclaimed that Israel had the right to exist within secure borders, but Israel had learned it could not rely on others, particularly Europe, he said. Israelis would never forget the year 1973 when their country's existence was at stake; only the United States had come to its aid. European Parliaments that had voted to prematurely and unilaterally recognize a Palestinian State were rewarding unilateral actions and taking away any incentive for the Palestinians to negotiate. Israel's Government recognized that Jerusalem had a special meaning for other faiths and would ensure access to the city's holy sites for all people of all religions and nationalities. The Palestinian leaders were the ones trying to change the status quo at the Temple Mount. No one wanted peace more than the Israeli Government.

The past month should make it clear to anyone that Israel had immediate, pressing security needs, he said. Palestinian terrorists had shot and stabbed Israeli citizens and twice driven their cars into crowds of pedestrians. A few days ago terrorists armed with axes and a gun attacked Jewish worshippers during morning prayers. Hamas's "genocidal" charter called for the destruction and murder of Jews worldwide. The Palestinian Authority was leading a systemic campaign of incitement. On Palestinian national television, a twisted figure dressed up as Mickey Mouse danced in an explosive belt and chanted, "Death to America and death to the Jews." Members of the international community must make a choice to either recognize Israel as the nation-State of Jewish people or permit the Palestinian leadership to deny Israel's history without suffering any consequences. States could prematurely recognize a Palestinian State or encourage the Palestinian Authority to break its pact with Hamas and return to direct negotiations.

ABDULMOHSEN F. A. ALYAS (Saudi Arabia), speaking on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), recalled that two years ago the Assembly recognized the State of Palestine as a non-member Observer State. Last year, the international community rallied behind the negotiation process aimed at putting an end to Israel's occupation and achieving lasting peace in the region based on the two-State solution. However, the negotiations ended before they could start due to Israel's refusal to implement international law. The OIC called upon the international community to hold Israel accountable for its violations of international law and called on Israel to cease its illegal and unjust acts and policies. The OIC also held Israel responsible for the escalation of violence in the city of Al-Quds due to the latest unprecedented acts against the Al-Aqsa Mosque, including the storming of the Mosque by Israeli soldiers and settlers, closing it and forbidding entry to worshippers. The time had come to put an end to Israel's occupation of Arab lands, he said, calling on the international community to support the efforts in the Security Council to set a timeline for Israel to end its occupation and withdraw to the 1967 borders, as well as implement the two-State solution and grant independence to the Palestinian people.

THOMAS MAYR-HARTING, Head of the European Union Delegation, expressed grave concern about the growing tension and increasing violence on the ground.

He called on all political leaders to work together through visible actions to de-escalate the situation. Actions that questioned stated commitments to a negotiated solution had to be avoided. The Union deeply deplored and strongly opposed the recent expropriation of land near Bethlehem, recent announcements of plans for new settlement construction, plans to displace Bedouins in the West Bank and the continued demolitions — including of projects funded by the Union and Member States. He urged Israel to reverse those decisions, which ran counter to international law and directly threatened the two-State solution. Recent settlement activity in East Jerusalem seriously jeopardized the possibility of Jerusalem serving as the future capital of both states. The European Union underlined its concern about the dire humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip, which still had to be adequately addressed by urgently restoring basic infrastructures and services. He welcomed the international community's pledges towards the reconstruction of Gaza. The European Union urged the parties to fully implement the temporary mechanism for monitoring and verification of reconstruction materials negotiated by the United Nations, Israel

and the Palestinian Authority, as an important step towards the necessary urgent opening of all crossing points. The European Union supported the efforts of the Palestinian national consensus government and President Abbas and strongly encouraged the Palestinian Authority to progressively assume its government function in the Gaza Strip. The European Union welcomed U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry's renewed efforts to help the parties return to the table and called on the parties and all major stakeholders, including the Quartet, the League of Arab States, and the Security Council, to take the necessary steps to that end. LYUTHA S. AL-MUGHARY ([Oman](#)) called upon the international community to compel the occupying Power to implement the relevant resolutions and to withdraw from all occupied Arab territories, including the Syrian Golan. By proclaiming 2014 the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the international community declared its intention to seek a just peace resulting in national independence for the Palestinian people. However, the occupying Power had chosen the path of indiscriminate use of excessive force that brought death to Gaza Palestinians. Oman applauded Sweden's decision to recognize the State of Palestine and commended the British and Spanish Parliaments for urging their Governments to do the same. She expressed deep concern about the tragic situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory due to Israel's blockade and practices in the Nobles Quds. Security and stability could not be achieved through military force; it could only be realized through partnerships in peace between the Palestinians and the Israelis. It was necessary to return to dialogue, she said, and called upon all concerned parties, the Security Council, and the Quartet to play an active role to reach a comprehensive solution leading to the establishment of an independent State of Palestine.

ANNIKA SÖDER ([Sweden](#)), stressing that recognition of the State of Palestine was long overdue, said her country's efforts aimed to improve the prospects for a negotiated final status agreement by making a modest correction to the present imbalance between the parties. She voiced hope that such recognition would strengthen constructive and moderate forces on both sides and contribute to an end of the occupation. The conditions in Gaza were unacceptable and unsustainable and a return to the situation before the Gaza war was obviously not an option. Status quo meant that the two-State solution was fading away during the rapid deterioration of the situation on the ground, both in Gaza and in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. The borders of Gaza had to be opened and the export possibilities had to be increased. The time had come for a more active involvement by the international community. The Security Council, the United States, the European Union, the Arab League and the Quartet had to assist the parties with clear parameters and a defined time frame, aimed at the realization of a just, lasting and comprehensive settlement of the conflict.

NAWAF SALAM ([Lebanon](#)) welcomed the decision of the Parliaments of Sweden, United Kingdom and Spain to recognize the State of Palestine. He recalled the international community's responsibility to put an end to the Israeli occupation, since Israel continued its policy of aggression, in flagrant violation of international law. The conflict in Jerusalem represented a microcosm of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, where separating faith and politics was difficult. Israel continued its blatant defiance of the Assembly, Security Council, Economic and Social Council and other bodies by rejecting international law and the Geneva accords, which denounced Israel's activities in Jerusalem, especially its decision to annex East Jerusalem. In Jerusalem and other occupied areas, Israel continued to create settlements and to destroy Palestinian houses. In occupying East Jerusalem, Israel's first step had been to destroy Arab neighbourhoods and displace people; it had demolished more than 2,000 homes over the years. Moreover, Palestinians were not allowed to rebuild. Obtaining a building licence was very difficult. The apartheid wall, which encircled East Jerusalem with settlements, blocked access for people in the West Bank to East Jerusalem.

Peace in Jerusalem was crucial for a just and comprehensive peace in the region and for a peaceful settlement to the crisis. Only by the elimination of occupation in East Jerusalem, would Jerusalem become a city of peace.

DAYANA ANGELARIOS REQUENA ([Bolivia](#)) reaffirmed her Government's support for the self-determination of the Palestinian people, an end to the occupation of the Palestinian territories and the formation of a two-State solution. She condemned the blockades that had subjugated the Palestinian people as well as the "terrorist and genocidal aggression perpetuated by Israel in Gaza last summer." That conflict had resulted in deaths and injuries, the bombing of homes, the attacks on the central electric system and the psychological torture of civilians. Citing statistics, she said that most of the Palestinian economy had suffered from the conflict. The reconstruction of Gaza would cost \$8 billion.

MASOOD KHAN ([Pakistan](#)) said the Palestinians continued to pass through a dark chapter in their history, but should not lose hope. While condemning the recent acts of violence at places of worship, he said the restrictions on worship had to end. More than 2,100 Palestinians died this past summer. Forced displacements on the West Bank had increased by 24 per cent. Efforts to revive the peace process had failed. The viability of the two-State solution was being questioned. It was "now or never", he said. The parties had to step back and make hard choices, with real deadlines. It was imperative that Israel vacate all Arab lands, including the Syrian Golan. Among steps needed to be taken, he said that the blockade of Gaza needed to be lifted, the demolition of Palestinian homes must stop, and Palestinian prisoners must be released. As well, State pledges to reconstruct Gaza needed to be honoured. His Government had contributed \$1 million to UNRWA, with hopes that it would alleviate suffering in the region.

MANSOUR AYYAD SH A ALOTAIBI ([Kuwait](#)) said illegal harassment continued in the West Bank and in Jerusalem. He condemned the attack against the Al-Aqsa mosque, and the Israeli authority's refusal to allow access to that holy site to the Arab people. He also strongly condemned the 50-day war in Gaza that had left thousands dead or wounded and the area completely devastated, in flagrant violation of human rights law. He commended the efforts of the Secretary-General and the United Nations in recognizing Palestine as an Observer State, and reaffirmed the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to set up an independent state with the pre-1967 border. Positive steps must be taken to achieve peace and the Arab Group had sent a proposal to the Security Council to set up a clear timetable. He was deeply concerned over the construction of new settlements and called on the international community to end such practices and on Israel to respect the Geneva Conventions. Addressing the Israeli representative's statement, he said that it seemed Israel believed it was above international law. Kuwait called on the international community to ask Israel to stop its occupation and aggressive policies, to lift the blockade on Gaza and to respect international law. Israel should also withdraw from all occupied Arab territories and release all Palestinian detainees, especially the sick and elderly. His country supported the Palestinian people's aspirations and paid tribute to their fight to exercise their rights.

MOTOHIDE YOSHIKAWA ([Japan](#)) commended the efforts made by the Jordanian Government to calm the situation and called on Israeli and Palestinian leaders to use political leadership and courage to ease tensions and refrain from unilateral action as well as incitement. Noting that the recent crisis in Gaza was the third large-scale conflict in the last six years, he emphasized that the vicious cycle of mistrust and violence had to end. In order to nurture mutual confidence of future generations, 10 young leaders from Israel and Palestine had just been welcomed into Japan's Invitation Program for Confidence Building, an initiative of his Government which, since 1996, had invited more than 200 youths from Israel and Palestine. Japan had pledged to provide more than \$20 million in aid for Palestine during the Gaza Reconstruction Conference held in October, in addition to the \$7.8 million already disbursed in August. That was part of Japan's \$200 million pledge, announced at the Conference among Cooperation among East Asian Countries for Palestinian Development (CEAPAD), held in Jakarta in March. Those commitments would support the parties involved in attaining a sustainable ceasefire, peaceful co-existence and prosperity in the region. He also recalled the importance of an international follow-up mechanism that addressed the issues of security, humanitarian aid and good governance.

JAMAL FARES ALROWAEI ([Bahrain](#)) said the world was once again celebrating the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. His country's brethren, the Palestinian people, were suffering tremendously. The King of Bahrain had presented a letter on that occasion, emphasizing that a just solution would only happen with the establishment of a full Palestinian State with the pre-1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as the capital. He commended the Swedish decision to recognize the State of Palestine, and he called upon all Nations to follow suit. The condition of the Occupied Palestinian Territory was of great concern. The King had reiterated the necessity to implement international resolutions, and to continue to march towards granting the Palestinian people their sovereign rights.

AMR ABDELLATIF ABLOUTATTA ([Egypt](#)) expressed regret at the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the recent war on Gaza, resulting in thousands of deaths, without any respect for international law. The establishment of new settlements and the attacks on the holy site in Jerusalem had been condemned by Egypt and the entire international community. Those violations threatened the peace process as a whole. Increasing the number of settlements endangered the two-States solution. He called on Israel to stop those practices. He welcomed the success of the pledging conference in Egypt for Gaza reconstruction and called on all donors to respect their respective pledges so that the Palestinians of Gaza could return home. During the conference, many actors had reiterated that the conference should be the last pledging conference on Gaza reconstruction. That could only be achieved through a just and peaceful solution, including creation of an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital. Without a peaceful solution, the cycle of destruction would repeat itself. Egypt was committed to continue working to find a just solution and requested that the General Assembly and the Security Council continue their efforts towards that end. Egypt reiterated its support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

WANG MIN ([China](#)), noting that the talks between Israel and Palestine had landed in a stalemate, said that the international community needed to step up and find solutions to the problem. In 2013, China's President had put forth a four-point proposal to solve the problem, with the formation of an independent Palestine State, and the two States living side-by-side, and had also sent a message to express his empathy and support for the Palestinian People. Voicing hope that the two sides would resume peace talks, he urged that the international community provided more support for the creation of peace between Israel and Palestine. In addition, his Government supported Syria and Lebanon in their national sovereignty and in the right to recover lost territory.

ASOKE KUMAR MUKERJI ([India](#)) said the links between India and Palestine were historical. His country supported a negotiated solution for a united State of Palestine, side-by-side and in peace with Israel. The people of Gaza had suffered since the summer, and it was important that the blockade be lifted completely. He also expressed concern about the rising tensions in East Jerusalem, emphasizing that diplomacy had to prevail. His Government continued to support Palestine by contributing directly and indirectly through UNRWA and other means in construction and development. "An eye for an eye will make one man blind," he said quoting Mahatma Gandhi, encouraging the parties to return to the negotiating table and resume their dialogue towards peace.

* * * * *

For information media • not an official record