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

Sixty-first General Assembly

Third Committee
34th Meeting (AM)

INNOVATIVE APPROACHES NEEDED TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES FACING HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

THIRD COMMITTEE TOLD, AS CONCERNS ARE EXPRESSED ABOUT OVERLAP, DUPLICATION

Other Speakers Say Human Rights Issues Continue To be Addressed in Selective, Politicized Manner

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Background

The Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural) met today to continue its general discussion of human rights questions.

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Statements

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NADYARASHEED, observer of Palestine, said it was painfully distressing to recount, year after year, the massive human rights violations committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian civilian population that it had held hostage for 39 years. Not a day, not a minute had passed without Israel deliberately violating international law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. Israel had committed war crimes and State terrorism. Each year, the lives of the Palestinian people had deteriorated in all aspects – political, security, economic, social and humanitarian. More than 10,000 Palestinians, including more than 350 children and 120 women, continued to be held in Israeli prisons with extremely restricted access to the outside world.

The occupying Power had continued with unlawful settler colonialism, more than doubling the number of settlers in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, she said. Israel could no longer justify its expansionist wall as a security measure, as it had acknowledged that its political purpose was to annex its illegal settlements. In Gaza, the Palestinians had continued to suffer declining economic and social conditions as a result of Israel's ongoing military campaign. The situation had caused immeasurable hardships to the refugee population. Everyone who respected international law should see eye-to-eye with the Special Rapporteur's statement that it remained difficult to reconcile Israel's commitment to the rule of law with the litany of violations of human rights committed against the Palestinian people. Israel could not continue to use the guise of security to continue to subjugate an entire people. Both Palestinians and Israelis deserved freedom and security; the only way for this to happen would be to bring an end to the occupation and to the colonization of Palestinian land.

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HENRI-PAUL NORMANDIN (Canada) said that the failure to address human rights issues did not make them disappear and that societies could not heal without the recognition of wrongs. In that context, Canada had recently offered a formal apology and compensation for the head tax that Chinese immigrants to Canada had been forced to pay between 1885 and 1923, and approved a process to assess claims of sexual or physical abuse suffered at school by indigenous peoples. Internationally, the Security Council, with the primary mandate to uphold international peace and security, was accountable for discharging the responsibility to protect.

The killing of over 60 journalists and media assistants so far this year had been disturbing and, in Belarus and Cuba, independent journalists had worked under the threat of criminal sanctions, he said. The General Assembly last year had decided it would continue its examination of human rights in Iran during the current

session, and that would be done in the weeks to come. Canada was also concerned with human rights in China, including an apparent crackdown on human rights defenders and shooting of unarmed Tibetans. The Government of the Sudan was urged to end suffering in Darfur and accept the United Nations mission called for in resolution 1706. Israel's right to defend itself against terrorism was recognized, but it had a duty to protect Palestinian civilians. In Haiti, there had been positive developments. In Afghanistan, there had to be a clear political commitment by the Afghan Government to take decisive action against those who most overtly defied the rule of law.

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HOSSEIN PANAHAZAR ([Iran](#)) said a few countries tended to divide the world into two confronting blocks -- human rights claimants, on the one hand, and human rights defendants, on the other -- with the former in the habit of attributing violations to the latter while portraying their own record as perfect. No country could claim perfection in its human rights record. The appalling situation in Guantanamo Bay, torture in Iraqi prisons, secret detention centres in Europe and inhumane treatment of the Palestinian people by the Israeli regime were but a few examples of gross violations of human rights by the so-called champions of human rights.

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