



# Press Release

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## **SECURITY COUNCIL BEGINS DEBATE ON ISRAELI DECISION TO CONSTRUCT NEW HOUSING IN EAST JERUSALEM**

### **Settlement Plans Violate Agreements Already Reached, Say Speakers ; Israel Says Status of Jerusalem Not Changed by Approval of Building Plans**

The Security Council this afternoon began a two-day debate on the situation in the occupied Arab territories, in particular the 26 February decision of the Israeli Government to begin construction of new housing in the Jabal Abu Ghneim area of East Jerusalem.

Meeting at the request of Egypt, the Council heard a number of speakers call upon the Israeli Government to reverse its approval of Har Homa, a housing project that will eventually contain 6,500 units. Many stressed that the settlement plans violated international law, previous Council resolutions and the agreements already in place between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. Several speakers urged restraint on the part of all parties in light of the current situation.

The Observer for Palestine said that Israel, the occupying Power, must halt the colonial settlement and cease all settlement activities and the confiscation of land, as well as any actions that would change the facts on the ground, especially in occupied East Jerusalem. He stressed there would be no peace in the region without the attainment of Palestinian and Arab rights in the holy city.

The representative of Israel said the approval of building plans within Jerusalem did not constitute a change in the status of Jerusalem. He went on to say the project was an essential part of a comprehensive municipal plan to construct 20,000 new housing units for the city's Jewish residents and 8,500 for the city's Arab residents -- a ratio comparable to that of the Jewish and Arab populations in the city.

The representative of the United States said the Israeli decision was not helpful to the peace process and undermined the trust and confidence that was so badly needed to achieve a lasting peace. However, it was now critically important that the parties and the Council remain focused on the need to sustain and enhance progress towards the goal of peace. No action should be taken which would detract from that objective and which would make the tasks of the parties that much more difficult, he concluded.

Statements were also made this afternoon by the representatives of Egypt, France, United Kingdom, Portugal, China, Russian Federation, Sweden, Republic of Korea, Chile, Japan, Kenya, Costa Rica, Guinea-Bissau, Poland, Norway, Turkey, Lebanon and Yemen. The Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People also spoke.

The meeting, which began at 3:52 p.m., was suspended at 6:34 p.m. It is scheduled to resume at 10:30 a.m. on Thursday, 6 March.

#### **Council Work Programme**

The Security Council met this afternoon at the request of Egypt to consider the situation in the occupied Arab territories.

The Council had before it a 27 February letter from the Permanent Observer for Palestine, Nasser Al-Kidwa (document [S/1997/165](#)), writing in his capacity as Chairman of the Arab Group of States, which requests, on behalf of the Group and the League of Arab States, that the Council meet to consider illegal Israeli settlement activity, particularly in East Jerusalem.

The request, states Mr. Al-Kidwa, was in response to the decision of the Government of Israel, the occupying Power, to begin construction of 6,500 housing units in the Jabal Abu Ghneim area to the south of occupied East Jerusalem, which was in blatant defiance of the position adopted by the international community.

In a 25 February letter to the Council (document [S/1997/157](#)), the Permanent Observer for Palestine, in his role as Chairman of the Group of Arab States for February, transmits the text of a 23 February communiqué issued by the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States. The General Secretariat reiterates that the persistence of Israel in establishing settlements in the occupied Arab territories will have serious consequences for the peace process. It urges the Council and the co-sponsors of the peace process, particularly the United States, to take prompt action to compel Israel to desist from these settlement activities in the occupied Arab territories, in general, and Al-Quds, in particular.

The communiqué notes "with grave anxiety" the decision of the Israeli authorities to establish in the southern part of East Jerusalem a new settlement "with the aim of tightening the stranglehold of Al-Quds", as part of an attempt to encourage Jewish settlement in the city and impose a fait accompli prior to the opening of the final-status negotiations in March. Furthermore, despite Council resolution [1073 \(1996\)](#) on the subject, the Israeli authorities have kept open the tunnel situated within the Haram al-Sharif (the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock). In addition, Israeli authorities continue to isolate East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank and increase the flow of settlers into Al-Quds, in direct violation of the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 and the provisions of The Hague Convention of 1907 and contrary to the resolutions adopted by the Council and the General Assembly on the Israeli-Arab conflict and the question of Palestine.

The Council also had before it a letter dated 28 February (document [S/1997/172](#)) from the Acting Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights

of the Palestinian People, Ravan Farhadi, which deplores Israel's decision to build the new Jewish settlements and expresses support for Council meeting request made by the League of Arab States.

In the letter, the Committee reaffirms that, in accordance with resolution 465 (1980), all measures taken by Israel to change the physical character or demographic composition of the Palestinian and other occupied Arab territories, including Jerusalem, have no legal validity. The Committee considers that the growing expansion and consolidation of settlements creates facts on the ground inconsistent with resolutions [242 \(1967\)](#) and [338 \(1973\)](#), which the current peace process seeks to implement. While appealing to the Government of Israel to refrain from measures detrimental to the continuation of the peace process, the Committee asks all concerned to exert their influence on the Government of Israel not to carry out this ill-advised decision.

#### Statements

NASSER AL-KIDWA, Permanent Observer for Palestine, said the Israeli Government decision to build a new colonial settlement in the area of Jabal Abu Ghneim in the occupied Palestinian territory had been done in an illegal manner and in blatant violation of international law and Council resolutions. The area concerned was situated within territory that Israel annexed and considered to be a part of the extended municipal boundaries of the city of Jerusalem. The Israeli decision would bring 25,000 new Israeli settlers and would isolate the Arab quarters of Jerusalem from the southern part of the West Bank. That would complete an old Israeli plan of building several settlements around those quarters to completely isolate them from the rest of the West Bank.

The decision followed a series of Israeli measures and actions that were aimed at the continued Judaization of the city of Jerusalem, changing its legal status and its demographic composition, he continued. The Israeli authorities were also continuing their attempts to deprive the Palestinians of Jerusalem of their natural and inherited right to live in their city. Israel considered them foreigners and pursued all kinds of illegal measures to deprive them what it called "resident rights". In addition, Israel's violations in Jerusalem were being carried out at the same time the current Israeli Government was resuming its colonial settlement campaign in the occupied Palestinian territory.

He said that since the historical change following the signing of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements in 1993 the fruits of peace began to appear on the horizon for the peoples of the Middle East. Unfortunately, the current Israeli Government started to pursue policies that ran counter to the spirit and logic of the peace process, and started to take decisions and actions that were in gross violation to the agreements reached. It was agreed in the Declaration of Principles that the issue of Jerusalem and the settlements would be negotiated in the final stage. It implied that all parties should refrain from creating any new facts on the ground that would pre-empt the negotiations.

He said Israel, the occupying Power, must halt the colonial settlement in Jabal Abu Ghneim and promptly cease all settlement activities and the confiscation of land, as well as any actions that would change the facts on the ground, especially in occupied East Jerusalem. Israel was not the pure owner of Jerusalem, and there would be no peace in the region without the attainment of Palestinian and Arab rights in Jerusalem, which was of central importance to the Palestinian people and the Arab world.

DAVID PELEG (Israel) said that on 26 February his Government unanimously approved construction of Har Homa and construction in 10 predominantly Arab neighbourhoods throughout Jerusalem. The new neighbourhood of Har Homa would consist of 6,500 housing units -- 2,500 of which will be built during the first stage of construction. The neighbourhood would be located in an unpopulated area in southern Jerusalem within the city's municipal boundaries, and 75 per cent of the land necessary for the project was owned by individual Jews.

He said the project was an essential part of a comprehensive municipal plan to construct 20,000 new housing units for the city's Jewish residents and 8,500 for the city's Arab residents -- a ratio comparable to that of the Jewish and Arab populations in the city. Concurrent to the construction of Har Homa, infrastructure work would begin on projects that would result in the construction of 3,000 housing units in 10 predominantly Arab neighbourhoods in the city. The comprehensive project was designed to alleviate the shortage of housing for both Jewish and Arab residents of Jerusalem.

Regrettably, some speakers failed to differentiate between the issue of Jerusalem and its neighbourhoods and the issue of settlements in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, he said. Both issues would be negotiated separately, within the context of the permanent status negotiations. Jerusalem was a city comprised of many different religious groups, and its centrality to Judaism transcended geographical boundaries.

The coming years would be crucial for the Arab-Israeli peace process, he continued. The international community must exhibit restraint and trust in the determination of Israel and its neighbours to advance the peace process. The international community must not predetermine and prejudge the outcome. He regretted that the Council had chosen to discuss issues of contention between Israel and the Palestinians. The appeal by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) to the Council was inconsistent with its explicit agreement to settle all issues under dispute through negotiations.

Israel and the Palestinians were currently making progress in the process of negotiation and reconciliation, he said. The peace process, based on the principle of reciprocity, had thus far succeeded in establishing a new modus vivendi between the two peoples. Israel and the Palestinians had agreed that the Palestinian authorities had no power or responsibility in Jerusalem.

The parties recognized Jerusalem as a separate issue, which did not constitute a part of the agreed arrangements for redeployment and transfer of authorities in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

In other words, he said, life in Jerusalem, and all that entailed, continued, with the status of the city remaining unchanged, so long as nothing to the contrary was done in the permanent status negotiations. The approval of building plans within Jerusalem neither constituted a change in the status of Jerusalem, nor created a situation that could adversely affect or influence the permanent status negotiations. In any event, the existing agreements did not accord the Palestinians any standing with regard to any actions taken in Jerusalem.

NABIL ELARABY (Egypt) said the Council was addressing a very important issue related to the future of the Middle East peace process. The issue of settlements was most complicated, and the Israeli Government's decision to build settlements in Jabal Abu Ghneim should be discussed. The current Government had not hesitated to confiscate lands without regard to the repercussions of such action. The Council had stood up to Israeli attempts to annex the city of Jerusalem, and such attempts should not conceal the fact that the lands had been acquired by occupation and were held illegally. Lands occupied by force had to be "deoccupied", and the international community should not recognize such occupation.

Reviewing the history of the occupied lands and the international law related to those lands, he said Israel should take no action on those lands. Relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions called on Israel to fulfil its obligations regarding the lands it had occupied since 1967. All measures taken to change the structure or status of those lands were illegal. The proposed settlements would deal an abortive blow to the peace process and prejudge the final negotiations. Israel should not make any changes in occupied East Jerusalem, he said. The parties must abide in good faith with the international instruments related to the occupied lands. The Council must stand up against any attempt to ignore international obligations, particularly when such an action would have a negative impact on the maintenance of international peace. Israel's action would lead to confrontation. The Council should adopt whatever necessary to reaffirm the principles related to the occupied territories.

HERVÉ LADSOUS (France) said the implementation of the Oslo accords had been the foundation for lasting peace in the Middle East. Dialogue and negotiation had outstripped violence and confrontation. Many had paid with their lives for the progress in the peace process, which demonstrated that the path to peace was often torturous. The decision of the Israeli Government to establish the settlement in Jabal Abu Ghneim ran counter to international law, and he deplored such action. It created tension on the ground and undermined the confidence that should exist between the parties, who had agreed to negotiate the status of the city. The international community could not accommodate unilateral decisions or decisions that changed the status quo. He urged all parties to refrain from action that would slow the peace process.

Sir JOHN WESTON (United Kingdom) said he was concerned by the fact that the international community had had to revisit the situation in the occupied territories so often since last summer, and in response to what appeared to be increasingly serious incidents. The issue of settlements had become central to the whole Middle East peace process, and settlement activity damaged that process. Not only did it violate the spirit of the Oslo accords and the Hebron agreement, but it established facts on the ground that prejudged the final status negotiations. The United Kingdom could not condone actions that unashamedly changed the status of Jerusalem ahead of those negotiations.

Whatever Israel's position on Jerusalem, it was not in Israel's interests to set back the Palestinian track, he continued. The strength of the Palestinian feeling on the issue was understandable, but those feelings must be expressed peacefully and responsibly. The international community commended them for their restraint. Israel must bear the consequences of its decision to proceed with the construction of new settlements in East Jerusalem. The Council could not ignore that dangerous turn of events. It was the Council's responsibility to make clear to the Israeli Government that it must exercise caution and good sense, so that the situation could be restored to a more even footing.

It was not too late for the Israeli Government to suspend or even rescind its decision in principle to go ahead with Har Homa, he said. If the Government showed

signs that it was willing to change its hard-line stance, the Council would be willing to consider a delay in its reaction. However, if the Israelis were determined to proceed, the Council would and should be compelled to respond. His Government had urged the Israeli Government not to proceed with their plans, which would only detract from the positive atmosphere created by the Hebron agreement and undermine the successful negotiations of final status issues.

JOSÉ TADEU SOARES (Portugal) said the Israeli Government's decision on building a new settlement constituted a violation of numerous resolutions of the Council and the Assembly. The measure was inconsistent with the terms of reference upon which the peace process was based. No decisions could be accepted that aimed at creating facts on the ground and prejudging the outcome of the final status negotiations. Such measures could only undermine the indispensable trust and confidence that the parties must build in order to achieve a just, comprehensive and long-standing political settlement. He called upon the Israeli authorities to refrain from any concrete action at Jabal Abu Ghneim, which would have a negative impact on that process.

QIN HUASUN (China) said the question of Jerusalem should be settled by the parties concerned through negotiations on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions. Any unilateral move contrary to that approach should be avoided, since it would further complicate the question instead of rendering help to its proper settlement. He expressed the hope that the parties concerned would avoid taking any move that might aggravate conflicts and undermine the Middle East peace process. He encouraged all positive efforts that helped ease tension, thereby creating a favourable atmosphere for the further advancement of the peace process.

SERGEY V. LAVROV (Russian Federation) said the step taken by Israel to proceed with construction of a new neighbourhood in East Jerusalem was inconsiderate and untimely. Such a unilateral action, with a view to changing the demographic composition of East Jerusalem in favour of the Israeli population, consolidated the policy of fait accompli with respect to the holy city and would rule out a negotiated search for compromise. Those actions were at variance with the trend that had existed in the peace process since the 1991 Madrid Conference.

Those with strong religious belief, especially Muslims, were extremely sensitive to changes in the status quo of East Jerusalem, he said. Such changes contradicted relevant Security Council resolutions and raised additional barriers to peace in the Middle East. Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) said that acquiring foreign territories by force was inadmissible. They were applicable not only to the current situation, but also to a further solution of the East Jerusalem problem. The issue of Israeli settlements in the Palestinian territories would be emphasized during the forthcoming contacts with the Israeli leaders in Moscow. As a co-sponsor of the peace process, Russia was convinced that the situation required resolute action, so as to avoid relapses that increased tensions in Palestinian-Israeli relations, similar to the events of last September. An early settlement of the situation in East Jerusalem would ensure the progress of the peace process and would be in the interest of both parties, as well as that of the international community.

PETER OSVALD (Sweden) said the Hebron Protocol of 17 January, concerning Israeli redeployment in and from Hebron and aspects of the further implementation of the Declaration of Principles, constituted an important step towards strengthening confidence between the parties. The parties should continue to base their efforts on what had been achieved so far and refrain from measures that could threaten the peace process. In particular, that applied to measures that could prejudice the outcome of the final status negotiations, including steps that would change the status of the occupied territories. Accordingly, the Government of Israel should reverse its settlement policy. The construction of settlements in the occupied territories was a grave obstacle to peace and incompatible with the Declaration of Principles.

PARK SOO GIL (Republic of Korea) said the Israeli decision to construct housing units in East Jerusalem was inconsistent with relevant international conventions and Council resolutions. It would also slow the acceleration of the peace process, especially in light of the well-known political sensitivities associated with the city. It was crucially important to prevent any weakening of the bonds of trust and cooperation that had been built between Israelis and Palestinians. Both sides should adopt a prudent approach under the current circumstances. What had happened thus far was indeed a cause for serious concern, but it in no way justified a violent response.

JUAN SOMAVIA (Chile) said political will had shown that there could be solutions that could open the path to a new era on the Middle East. During the past few years, vital steps had been taken towards peace in the Middle East, prompting great hope. The international community had paid tribute to those who had helped push the peace process forward. Recent developments, however, seemed to indicate that the spirit of Oslo was losing ground. The latest Israeli decision had caused the Council to again take up the issue of East Jerusalem. Jerusalem was not just any city; it was a city that prompted many emotions. A delicate balance must be maintained on the issue.

East Jerusalem was occupied territory, and he deplored the Israeli decision to build settlements in Har Homa/Jabal Abu Ghneim. It was a violation of international law, endangered the peace process and touched the sensitivity of the Palestinian people. It seemed to be a fait accompli, giving Israel total control. He called for direct negotiations between the parties to avert the need for the Council to meet regularly on such matters. Israel should reconsider its actions. The peace process should not be halted at the current stage. He would support a Security Council resolution on the matter. It was a time to build history, not allow a minority to prevail.

HISASHI OWADA (Japan) said that, viewed against the background of recent developments, his Government felt bound to state that the decision of the Israeli Government on the construction of housing at Har Homa/Jabal Abu Ghneim was regrettable. The action would seem to run the risk of jeopardizing the basic situation concerning the occupied territory and prejudging the outcome of the final status negotiations. His Government had urged the parties involved to make their utmost efforts not to allow the present situation to develop into a major obstacle to the peace process and to do their utmost to push that process forward.

His Government had been actively involved in the Middle East peace process, he continued, in particular through active participation in the multilateral talks that began in 1991. As a member of the steering group, it had been instrumental in providing a favourable environment that would assist the direct talks among the parties concerned. His Government had also been implementing various projects, worth approximately \$250 million, to promote Palestinian self-rule in its initial phase after the Oslo accord, and had been calling for meetings to ensure that the Palestinian track proceeded smoothly following the Hebron agreement. He hoped that, at this stage in the peace process, the parties would not lose sight of the critical importance of overcoming small differences for the sake of promoting the cause of lasting peace and stability in the region.

NJUGUNA M. MAHUGU (Kenya) said the progress of recent years in the Middle East peace process had been encouraging. Any threats to the ongoing process were a cause for great concern. He urged the parties to exercise restraint and continue negotiating on all outstanding issues, including the permanent status of Jerusalem.

FERNANDO BERROCAL SOTO (Costa Rica) said all parties in the peace process should behave in accordance with the Oslo accord and execute the agreements through implementation of concrete and positive actions. The parties must start, as soon as possible, the last part of negotiations towards the full conclusion of all the agreements required to establish the issue of permanent status. He supported the right of the Palestinian people to a national State and the just demands of Israel for secure borders. However, some positions taken by certain radical Israeli political factions made the desire of the people of Israel for peace more difficult to realize. A firm and stable peace must address all the disagreements that were objects of controversy. Furthermore, all the governments in the area that had some influence must be involved.

ALFREDO LOPES CABRAL (Guinea-Bissau) said the hopes regarding peace in the Middle East had arisen because so many obstacles had been overcome. Decades of exclusion and hatred had made the path of peace difficult. It was the duty of leaders to overcome the growth of intolerance and the creation of the idea of the "other", which caused such hostility. The Israeli decision on settlements in East Jerusalem was an injustice that heightened tension and deepened differences between Palestinians and Israeli settlers. Israel must shoulder its responsibilities. The decision to build new housing for the Jewish population in East Jerusalem was a senseless provocation and should be reversed. The peace process must continue under the terms already defined, and the rights of all parties must be taken into account. The rights of the Israelis in Jerusalem must not be protected at the expense of the well-being of the Palestinians.

BILL RICHARDSON (United States) said recent developments such as agreement on Israeli withdrawal from Hebron and the Israeli release of dozens of Palestinian women prisoners were evidence of great progress in the peace process. Such developments underscored that the parties retained the will, commitment and ability to move forward. Unfortunately, the announced decision by the Government of Israel on the proposed Har Homa settlement construction did not accord with the progress the parties had thus far achieved. The United States was concerned by that decision and did not believe that it was helpful to the peace process. It undermined the trust and confidence that was so badly needed to achieve a lasting peace.

He said the international community must respect the will and the commitment of the parties to move forward together along their chosen path of negotiations. All parties shared the goal of finding ways to advance peace. Everything possible must be done to foster a supportive environment for permanent status negotiations, which would begin later in the month. There must be sensitivity to any actual or implied interference in those negotiations. The Council had a special responsibility in that regard. It was critically important that the parties and the Council remain focused on the need to sustain and enhance progress towards the goal of peace. No action should be taken which would detract from that objective and which would make the tasks of the parties that much more difficult.

The Council President, ZBIGNIEW M. WLOSOWICZ (Poland), speaking as his country's representative, said there was no alternative to the peace process in the Middle East. It was extremely important that the entire peace process be implemented smoothly and in a way that would help to enhance confidence among the parties. The parties should strictly abide by the agreement already reached and continue their efforts to advance the peace process. Stressing that all sides should

refrain from any action that could have negative implications for the peace process, he said the recent decision by the Israeli Government to approve the construction of the settlement in East Jerusalem, if carried out, posed a danger for the peaceful future in the region. He joined others in appealing to the Israeli Government to reconsider its position. The existing international obligations and commitments should be respected. That was of paramount importance on the eve of the resumption of the final status negotiations.

His Government was aware of the efforts undertaken by several States aimed at defusing the present tension and safeguarding the achievements of the peace process. He welcomed and supported those initiative and called upon the parties to cooperate. The Security Council should send an appropriate message to the parties reaffirming its interest in the situation in the occupied Arab territories and calling upon them to overcome the predicament in which the peace process now found itself.

JAKKEN BJØRN LIAN (Norway) said the meeting of the Security Council came at a crucial point in the Middle East peace process. Last year saw serious difficulties in the process, that at long last seemed to have been overcome. The signing and swift implementations of the Hebron Protocol in January was a long awaited, practical reconfirmation by the parties of their commitment to the Oslo accords. He was gratified that the parties had yet again demonstrated their capacity to transcend disagreements and conclude agreements. The United States deserved praise for its active support during the negotiating process. The consequent establishment of a multilateral observer corps in Hebron, manned by personnel from Denmark, Italy, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and Turkey, also served to underline the undiminished international support for the parties in their quest for peace, he continued. Against that background, he was deeply concerned by the decision taken by Israel's Government to establish a new settlement in Jabal Abu Ghneim or Har Homa in East Jerusalem. Such settlement activities would not only contravene the present legal status of East Jerusalem, but would also be in conflict with the spirit of the Oslo agreements. At the current critical juncture of the peace process, when negotiations on final status issues were to be initiated shortly, it was more important than ever that the parties show restraint.

He urged the Israeli Government to reconsider its decision. Further, he called upon both Israel and the Palestinian Authority to refrain from any action that could change the facts on the ground and, thus, preempt the outcome of the negotiations on the final status of Jerusalem. Rather than make unfortunate unilateral decisions, the parties should now promote understanding between their peoples and advance the negotiations towards a peaceful settlement. That was their moral and political obligation.

HÜSEYİN E. ÇELEMLİ (Turkey) said he was seriously concerned about the latest decision of the Israeli Government to approve a housing construction project in the Jabal Abu Ghneim region, in defiance of the relevant United Nations Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. Although it was sugar-coated with the simultaneous approval of scattered housing construction projects for the Arab population of Al-Quds, everyone was aware that the Israeli Government viewed the project as a method to pre-empt the outcome of the negotiations on the final status.

Unilateral actions that might adversely affect the peace process must be avoided at all costs, he said. So far, much had been achieved in peacemaking between the Arabs and the Israelis. At a time when the commitment demonstrated by the Israeli Government to the established parameters of the peace process was rekindling hopes for the future of the Middle East, the decision to allow construction in Jabal Abu Ghneim had once again caused deep worries for the success of the process. Any decision that could affect the outcome of the final status talks should not even be considered until the successful conclusion of the talks.

How long could such vacillations continue before the process was dealt a blow from which it could not recover? he asked. He urged the Government of Israel to reconsider and reverse its policy to resume such settlement activities in Jabal Abu Ghneim and other occupied areas.

SAMIR MOUBARAK (Lebanon) expressed concern about the persistence of the Israeli Government in setting up illegal settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories. They violated international law and Council resolutions and were a threat to the overall peace process. The new Israeli Government had delivered a nearly fatal blow in stepping back from previous commitments and by pursuing settlement policies. Israeli policies sought to change the demographic status of Jerusalem. The current problem was the result of an official attitude of the new Israeli Government, he continued. Indulging the Israeli leaders in that course had caused violence and destruction. The Council must place all of its decisions on an equal footing, including those taken in the Middle East. Specific measures should be taken to convince Israel to follow the will of the international community. The arguments used by the Israeli Government to substantiate its policies were not valid. Israel must withdraw from all occupied territories back to its 1967 borders. It must not continue with its occupation plan.

ABDALLA SALEH AL-ASHTAL (Yemen) said that the Israeli decision to build settlements in East Jerusalem created a new and acute crisis. The decision was a clear violation of the principles on which the peace process had been built and a violation of all the relevant Security Council resolutions, which reaffirmed the illegality of such action. Attempts to change the status of Jerusalem ran counter to the peace agreements signed by both parties and constituted an attempt to impose a fait accompli on Jabal Abu Ghneim. The Security Council should take pre-emptive measures to prevent Israel from proceeding with the settlements. It should take a clear decision on the matter expeditiously.

Quoting from a communiqué from his Government, he said the Yemen Government condemned the recent Israeli action. It did not facilitate a climate of confidence. He called on the Security Council and all States concerned with the peace process to pressure Israel to change its position. Reaffirming the importance of the peace process and of restoring Arab rights, including the withdrawal of Israel from all Arab lands, he said the Council must bear its responsibility, based on its own resolutions, and move expeditiously.

IBRA DEGUENE KA (Senegal), Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, said his Committee deplored the recent Israeli decision on the construction of settlements in East Jerusalem. It was a violation of international law, including many Security Council resolutions. The Hebron agreement had brought a new dynamic to the Middle East peace process. The recent decision came as Israel was delaying its withdrawal from some territories in the West Bank, as well as taking action contrary to the peace process. Those measures were, in a way, a fait accompli which was creating tension at a crucial stage in the negotiations on the occupied territories.

The Committee joined in the disapproval of the international community, he said. It called on Israel to refrain from changing the demography of East Jerusalem and to comply with all agreements already signed, as well as the relevant resolutions of the Security Council. The Committee believed that real political will was needed to bring about peace in the Middle East. There was no alternative to the agreements already reached. Denying the legitimate rights of the Palestinians was contrary to the aims of the peace process. The Committee hoped that at the end of the present debate the Council would demonstrate to international public opinion that Israel could be encouraged to reverse its decision.

The meeting was suspended at 6:34 p.m.

\* Reissued for technical reasons.

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