



Press Release

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SECURITY COUNCIL HEARS CALLS FOR END TO VIOLENCE IN OCCUPIED TERRITORIES ;

MANY SPEAKERS ALSO SUPPORT OBSERVER MISSION TO REGION

Expressing their deep concern over the deteriorating situation in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, Member States called for an immediate end to the violence in the occupied Palestinian territories today, as the Security Council held an open debate on the situation in the Middle East. Many governments also expressed support for the idea of an international observer mission to the region.

During the meeting, requested by the Group of Arab States, the Islamic Group and the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine, most speakers criticized Israel's use of excessive and indiscriminate force against Palestinian civilians. Several speakers also condemned all acts of lawlessness and terrorism. Almost all speakers urged an end to Israel's economic blockade of Palestinian towns and its encirclement of villages with troops and tanks.

Expressing sorrow for Israeli casualties of the violence, the Observer for Palestine emphasized, nevertheless, the huge difference between the numbers of Israeli and Palestinian victims. The occupation forces had used tanks, helicopters and other heavy weapons to kill and injure Palestinian civilians, he noted.

He said the aim of Israel's new policy of escalation was to impose a transitional solution to the question of Palestine rather than to negotiate a final solution. While the Palestinian side had accepted the measures spelt out in peace negotiations, the current Israeli Government violated the agreements. The Security Council's failure last December to adopt a draft resolution on an international observer force to protect the Palestinians was a great failure that sent the wrong message to Israel, he added.

Israel's representative said that, although peace was a genuine Palestinian aspiration, the intifada was incompatible with international protection. Not once in six months had Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat called for an end to violence. The only thing the Palestinians needed protection from was the consequences of their own actions. The Authority had encouraged violence rather than quelled confrontations.

He said the Palestinian call for intervention was a blatant attempt to obscure their own strategic choice. "The United Nations cannot be called on to put out fires on behalf of the same party that kindled the flames", he added. Sending United Nations personnel to the territories while the intifada continued had the potential to escalate the violence and further destabilize the region. The Council must refrain from any action that would undermine peace and security.

The representative of the United States, noting the volatile situation in the Middle East, said the violence could not be ended by efforts from outside. He recalled that Foreign Minister Shimon Peres had reaffirmed Israel's commitment to the fact-finding Commission established by former United States President Bill Clinton.

Pointing out that the Commission would be in Israel next week, he asked the Council to postpone further consideration of an international presence until its findings were known. The road to peace did not begin in the Council chamber. The parties must come together in peaceful negotiations and make the difficult choices necessary to reach a final status settlement, he said.

France's representative said the two parties appeared to have less and less control over events. The violence was especially troubling as, prior to its outbreak, the two parties had never been so close to peace. Negotiations had paved the path which must now be followed, and which would one day serve as the basis for a final settlement, based on Israel's right to live in peace and the right of Palestinians to a State, a territory and a capital. Arms must be silenced and dialogue resumed, he stressed.

The key to deciding what the Council could do was any action that contributed to restoring a minimum of trust, he continued. The Security

Council clearly had a part to play, as the situation was a threat to peace in the region, and, therefore, under its jurisdiction. Observers could be a useful mechanism to lower tension and to verify compliance with the parties' commitments, which was why France and the United Kingdom had originally proposed the idea. But observers would only be useful if they were accepted by both parties and enjoyed their cooperation, he said.

Sweden's representative, speaking on behalf of the European Union and associated countries, said the humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territory was of great concern. The current economic crisis was unacceptable and threatened regional stability, as well as the prospects for peace. Both parties had a duty to minimize tensions, an important element of which would be improving the economic situation. Deploing all acts of violence, he reiterated that Israel's policy on extrajudicial killings was unacceptable and encouraged President Arafat to consider a moratorium on the death penalty.

South Africa's representative, speaking on behalf of the Non-aligned Movement, said that a United Nations report on the impact of regressive Israeli economic measures directed against the Palestinian people estimated that 32 per cent of the Palestinian population now lived in poverty -- a 50 per cent increase since the onset of the crisis. Closures, restrictions and blockades had resulted in economic suffocation of the Palestinian people, thereby fuelling and fomenting dangerously high levels of frustration and violence, he said.

Malaysia's representative recalled that the killing of nearly 100 Palestinians since December could have been prevented had the Council acted decisively. It would be tragic and unfortunate if the Council were to continue to do nothing and the world were to witness more death and injuries in coming months.

The Council could not afford to sit on the sidelines, knowing full well that the two sides were not likely to resolve the problems by themselves any time in the near future.

Egypt's representative, in remarks addressed directly to his Israeli counterpart, said the problem was the occupation. At 7 a.m. today, the BBC had shown hundreds of Palestinians in the West Bank town of Ramallah trying to demonstrate peacefully. Israel's response had been bullets. "There will never be peace with Palestine until you recognize that they are not inferior and their blood is as sacred as Jewish blood", he added.

The Council also heard from members Tunisia, Russian Federation, China, United Kingdom, Norway, Ireland, Colombia, Mali, Mauritius, Singapore, Bangladesh, Jamaica, and Ukraine. Non-member States United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Algeria, Japan, Libya, Qatar, Sudan, Kuwait and Iraq also spoke.

Today's meeting began at 12 noon and was suspended at 1.17 p.m. Resuming at 3:15 p.m., it was suspended again at 6:57 p.m. and will resume again next week at a time to be announced.

Background

The Security Council met this afternoon to consider the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question.

Statements

M. NASSER AL-KIDWA, Observer for Palestine, cited a news report about six children who had suffered burns when Israeli soldiers fired a stun grenade into their school in the West Bank town of Hebron today. The Israeli Army had issued no explanation for the incident, he noted. Israel had escalated its campaign against the Palestinian people in violation of Security Council resolutions and international law.

He said the idea had crystallized that the Council should send an international observer force to protect the Palestinian people, but the draft resolution submitted last December on that issue had failed to obtain the number of votes required for adoption. That was a great failure by the Council and sent the wrong message to Israel.

During that same period, he recalled, members of the Arab Group had sent 30 letters to the Presidents of the Security Council and the General Assembly, describing Israel's actions, including violations of the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention. The occupation forces had killed and wounded Palestinian civilians, using tanks, helicopters and other heavy weapons to target them.

While expressing sorrow for Israeli casualties, he said there was, nevertheless, a huge difference between those casualties and the number of Palestinian casualties. In addition to Israeli security forces, the presence of Israeli settlers violated international agreements. It appeared that the lives of Israeli settlers were more valuable than those of the Palestinians.

He said that while the Palestinian side had accepted the measures spelt out in the principles underlying the peace process, the current Israeli Government was acting in contravention of the agreements already concluded. The Israelis said they could not continue to negotiate while the violence continued, as if the Palestinians were responsible for the situation.

Rather than negotiating a final solution to the question of Palestine, he said, Israel wanted to impose a transitional one. The policy of escalation adopted by the new Israeli Government was stifling the Palestinian people. It must stop the bloodletting immediately and negotiate a final solution, taking into account the progress that had been made in the peace process.

YEHUDA LANCERY (Israel) said today's meeting was no surprise to Israel. The recent actions of the Palestinians had made no secret of the fact that they wished to see the Security Council intervene in the matter. It was part of a larger strategy. Israel believed peace was a genuine Palestinian aspiration, but did not agree with the means to achieve that peace. "Do we wish to make peace through dialogue and negotiation, or through violence or terror?", he asked.

The situation was not one today of a threatened people in dire need of protection, he said. The only thing the Palestinians needed protection from was the consequences of their own actions. Since the last time the Council met on the subject, there had been wide acknowledgment that responsibility for the violence lay with the Palestinians. That had been Israel's contention all along, but recent months had made it incontrovertible.

He asked who was benefiting from the violence. The Palestinians benefited without question from the international attention they had attracted. Yesterday, Mr. Peres had described an intercepted message in which Palestinians were instructed not to throw stones until CNN reporters, caught in traffic, arrived at the scene.

The Israeli Government, under Ariel Sharon, wanted nothing more than to achieve just and lasting peace, he said. It had frozen settlement construction and decided against collective punishment out of a genuine desire for peace. Negotiations must quickly resume, though in an atmosphere of calm, not through a vicious cycle of violence.

The current Palestinian initiative was a blatant attempt to obscure their strategic choice, and the Council must not be party to it, he said. "The United Nations cannot be called on to put out fires on behalf of the same party that kindled the flames", he said. That would send disastrous message to the Palestinians and every other aggrieved people that violence and aggression would lead to sympathy and international protection. Sending United Nations personnel to the territories while the intifada continued had potential to further escalate the violence and further destabilize the region.

Israel had not and would never initiate conflict with the Palestinians, he said, but peace and violence were mutually exclusive. The Council should not intervene, but rather support the parties and their bilateral efforts for peace. He called on the Palestinian people to strive to rejuvenate the spirit embodied in the letters of recognition – to work with Israel to enhance goodwill and brotherhood between the two peoples. Israel's hand was extended, its leadership was willing, and its people eager.

MOHAMMAD SAMHAN ([United Arab Emirates](#)), speaking on behalf of the Arab Group, said that after rising to power Mr. Sharon had exposed his real intentions, which were even more aggressive than those of previous governments. Examples of his real policies were the 1982 massacres at Sabra and Shatilla in Lebanon.

He said Israel intended to partition the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and isolate them by transforming them into cantons. The Arab Group called for the highest level of pressure on the Israeli Government so as to stop its wanton aggression against the Palestinian people; an end to its economic and financial measures against the Palestinians; and urgent financial and economic assistance to alleviate the plight of the Palestinians.

The Arab Group reiterated its full support for and solidarity with the Palestinians, including their right to an independent State with Jerusalem/Al-Quds as its capital, he said. It requested Israel to adhere strictly to its political and legal commitments under agreements already concluded, including those relating to the reversal of the measures the Israeli Government had imposed in Jerusalem.

SAÏD BEN MUSTAPHA ([Tunisia](#)) said Israeli violence was stifling the Palestinian people through its military use of the most powerful, modern, lethal and destructive weapons against the Palestinians' stones. Another manifestation of Israeli violence was the economic blockade, which involved digging trenches around Palestinian villages and surrounding them with tanks to isolate them and starve their inhabitants. The new Israeli Government was beginning a policy of escalation and military intensification to bring the Palestinians to their knees and force them to make concessions that they had not made during the years of peace negotiations.

He recalled that the Israeli Foreign Minister had justified the policy before the Council yesterday by saying it was aimed at coping with lawlessness and terrorism. Considering the imbalance of forces in Israel's favour, there could be no comparison or justification. Israel's collective punishment measures could not, in fact, deter anyone intending to detonate a bomb. The basic problem was a decades-long Israeli colonization of the Palestinian people through denial of their rights to land, property and self-determination. That was the underlying cause of the violence. When that problem disappeared, the violence and bloodshed would end.

SERGEI LAVROV ([Russian Federation](#)) said the statements in the Council yesterday provided an opportunity to hear participant's positions on the search for a way out of the current violence. The Russian Federation's leadership continued to exert maximum effort for the settlement of the conflict and the resumption of dialogue.

The situation was exacerbated by the isolation of the West Bank and Gaza by Israel, he said. He took note of the Israeli statement, but stated that Israel's economic blockade of Palestinian territory must be lifted. The Russian Federation condemned all terrorist acts, but believed they did not justify Israel's action. It must be a priority to put a speedy end to the violence, and the Palestinians and Israel should exercise maximum restraint to that end. Compromise by the parties was important, as was flexibility and realism. Resolutions [242](#) and [338](#) and the Madrid principles would form the basis of any peace, but direct contact between the parties at a high level was required.

The Russian Federation noted the recent exchange of messages between Mr. Arafat and Mr. Sharon, and noted that those messages were constructive, he said. Both had reaffirmed their aspirations for peace, and that hope must be further developed in the near future. The need to promote a speedy settlement would guide the Russian Federation in its actions in the Council. He hoped the Council would achieve a consensus on the way it should act.

JEAN-DAVID LEVITTE ([France](#)) stressed his deep consternation over the tragedy unfolding in the Palestinian territories over the past six months. More than 400 were dead -- largely Palestinian. The situation was extremely serious, and the parties appeared to have less and less control over events. The current situation was marked by the despair of a population without prospects, by a disastrous economic situation, by negotiations that had broken down, and by the climate of deep-seated suspicion and hatred. The gains of the Oslo process were threatened.

It was crucial that calm be restored, he said. France condemned violence – the excessive use of force by the Israeli army and the

summary executions and also all acts of terrorism. He was concerned by Israel's measures to blockade the territories and its refusal to hand over taxes -- among many collective reprisals by Israel, which would only exacerbate tension. Israel must respect human rights and humanitarian law. The announced loosening of travel restrictions -- if it took place -- was a move in the right direction. However, the previous strategy only fuelled the conflict. The European Union had taken special measures to assist Palestinians, and the international community should join it in this.

The violence was especially troubling as, prior to its outbreak, the two parties had never been so close to peace, he said. An openness had provided a glimpse of agreement for the very first time. Negotiations had paved the path which must now be followed. One day, they would serve as the basis of a final settlement, based on Israel's right to live in peace and the right of Palestinians to a State, a territory and a capital. Arms must be silenced and dialogue resumed. He called on both leaderships to do all they could to halt the spiral of violence. If each waited for the other for the first move, that would only lead to a standstill. Respect for the Oslo agreements and a freeze on settlements would help. He also called for a resumption of the dialogues between Israel and Syria, and between Israel and Lebanon.

He asked how the Council could help the parties resume negotiations. The key was the restoration of a minimum of trust. The United States impetus was essential, but the United Nations and others could also contribute, as could the Secretary-General. The Security Council also had a part to play, as the situation was clearly a threat to peace in the region and, therefore, under the Council's jurisdiction. It was now up to the Council to think about how its proposals would facilitate contact between the parties and guarantee the results. Observers could be a useful mechanism to lower tension and to verify compliance with the parties' commitments. That was why France and the United Kingdom had proposed the idea. But observers would only be useful if they were accepted and agreed to by both parties and enjoyed their cooperation. Their work would be an extension of that of the Mitchell Committee.

WANG YINGFAN ([China](#)) recalled yesterday's briefings to the Security Council provided by Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and Nasser Al-Kidwa, Permanent Observer for Palestine. He said that if the Middle East situation was allowed to continue, Israeli and Palestinian efforts, as well as those of the international community, might come to nothing.

He said there had been broad support for the proposed observer force, which should ease tensions in the region. The new Government had indicated that true peace had become essential. However, the present opportunity could easily be missed. Peace and stability were in the common interest of all the region's peoples, as well as that of the international community. Land for peace was the basic principle for achieving peace, he stressed.

JAMES CUNNINGHAM ([United States](#)), noting the volatile situation in the Middle East, said the violence could not and would not be ended by efforts from outside. He recalled that Foreign Minister Shimon Peres had reaffirmed Israel's commitment to the fact-finding commission established by former United States President Bill Clinton.

Noting that the commission would be in Israel next week, he asked the Council to postpone further consideration of an international presence until its findings were known. The United States wanted the Council to support dialogue. The road to peace did not begin in the Council chamber. The parties must come together in peaceful negotiations and make the difficult choices necessary to reach a final status settlement. The United States was committed to that goal.

Sir JEREMY GREENSTOCK ([United Kingdom](#)) said the situation today was grim. Many roads in Gaza and West Bank were still closed today. Two Palestinians had died in the last two days after being stopped at checkpoints on their way to hospital. Pilgrims were not able to return from Mecca. Those were international concerns. The Council must live up to its responsibility to address breaches to peace, but it must also ensure it does not damage peace.

The European Union had pressed for an end to the closures of Palestinian territories and an end to extrajudicial killings, he said. Israel had said those were necessary for the protection of Israeli lives, but they radicalized Palestinians and fuelled violence. The Union would continue to press for their abolition. He welcomed Minister Peres' statement that they would not be part of the practice of the new Israeli Government. That Government must also stop withholding taxes. The Palestinians must make good faith efforts to end violence.

There was no alternative to the parties themselves deciding to arrest the violence and return to negotiations, he said. But the record showed they needed help, and that should be the basis of any Council action. He believed, with others, that an observer presence could be beneficial, but only with the acceptance of both parties. That issue of observers should not be allowed to be a totem dividing the parties or dividing the Council. It was the responsibility of both the traditional supporters of Israel and those of the Palestinians to prevent such a thing occurring. The parties had primary responsibility for pursuing their aim for peace. And the Council faced a challenge. It must make its common endeavour the maximization of the prospects for negotiations, and the movement away from violence.

OLE PETER KOLBY ([Norway](#)) said the peace process was the only viable way to resolve the difference between the parties. However, it would take a lot of time and effort to bring that process back on track. Building a sustainable peace meant finding a balance of interest and establishing mutual trust between the parties. To play a constructive role in that respect, the Council needed a common approach and a common platform. The priority at that stage would be to halt the violence and stabilize the situation. He also strongly encouraged confidence-building measures in order to re-establish the dialogue between Israel and the Palestinians. The Security Council should be a bridge-builder, striving to achieve the broadest possible agreement on issues related to peace and security in the region.

Norway had repeatedly urged the parties to resume the negotiations and renew their dialogue on security issues, he continued. It had also called on both sides to bring an end to violence. While he understood Israel's security needs, that country must also respect the safety and security of Palestinians. Furthermore, his country had urged the Israel Government to lift the closure of the West Bank and Gaza and transfer the outstanding tax revenues owed to the Palestinian Authority. It had also called on Israel to freeze its settlement activities.

The basis of any solution to the present crisis must be Council resolutions 242 and 338 and other relevant United Nations resolutions, he said. Norway also wanted to stress that the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 relative to the protection of civilian persons at the time of war was fully applicable to the Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem. He urged Israel, as the occupying Power, to comply with its legal obligations and

responsibilities under that Convention.

Norway supported the idea of an international observer presence, he said. To play a meaningful role, such a presence must have the full support of both parties. He, therefore, called on the Secretary-General to continue his consultations with the parties to ascertain when and within what framework such a presence might appropriately be established in the area. The Sharm el-Sheikh Fact-Finding Committee, of which the Norwegian Foreign Minister was a member, could play a moderating role in the present situation and assist in charting the way ahead.

RICHARD RYAN (Ireland) said his authorities were “concerned and horrified” at the widespread use of lethal force against Palestinians, and at the failure to use non-lethal methods that were so readily available, especially in the early stages of the current disturbances. He also condemned, in the strongest terms, the ongoing attacks on Israeli people. They were wrong in themselves and would do nothing to bring about the justice desired and deserved by the Palestinian people.

There was an urgent need for a committed return to the negotiating process, he said. That would require engagement, not disengagement, as well as the full support of all Members of the United Nations. The message that went out from the current debate must not be one of negativity or barren recrimination. There was a need to be forward-looking, and to offer understanding, encouragement and support.

He said the proposal for an international observer mission had the potential to help the parties in the current situation and stressed that there was no suggestion that such a mission could prevent individual acts of terrorism. Neither could it be regarded as an incitement to violence. The fear had been expressed that the presence of observers would induce Palestinians to stage violent events with the aim of provoking repressive action. On the contrary, experienced international military and police observers would readily detect riots or other forms of violence mounted with the object of inducing repression, and report accordingly to all sides concerned.

ALFONSO VALDIVIESO (Colombia) said it was unfortunate that violence was being seen in the region after months of hope, during which negotiations had been under way. The current wave of violence had taken the region back to the situation of 10 years ago. It had started as a street protest and had gradually acquired a momentum of its own. Violence bred violence, he noted.

It was crucial that Israel lift the blockade of Palestinian towns, since there was a risk of strangling the Palestinian economy, he said. That would have disastrous humanitarian consequences. It was also necessary to return to cooperation in ensuring security and to establish a minimum level of mutual trust.

He said that in view of the well known volatility of the Middle East, the Security Council must continue to review the situation. An international presence would be a catalyst towards restoring the situation.

ISSOUF OUMAR MAIGA (Mali) said his country was deeply concerned by the violence in the region. Mali firmly condemned acts of repression, as well as the excessive and indiscriminate use of force by the Israeli Army. In addition, the economic blockade had made the lives of Palestinians a daily nightmare. At the same time, Mali also condemned terrorism in all its forms.

He said the present round of violence could only end with a just and lasting peace negotiated and signed by both parties. Israel must ensure scrupulous respect for all places of worship, as well as for the norms of international law and international humanitarian law.

The situation in the region was tragic, he said. However, there were grounds for hope. Mali welcomed the announcement by Shimon Peres, Israel's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, that his Government would ease the economic blockade and urged Israel to allow Palestinians to enter and work in Israel.

ANUND PRIYAY NEEWOOR (Mauritius) said the Council had heard from the Foreign Minister of Israel and the Observer of Palestine. According to the Foreign Minister of Israel, it was high emotions rather than politics that were preventing the peace process from moving forward. The Observer of Palestine, on the other hand, had given the Council a vivid picture of the frustration of the Palestinian people and their sufferings under Israel's occupation and blockade.

He said the right of the Palestinian people to an independent State was unquestionable, as was the right of the Israelis to exist as a nation with secure borders. The best and surest way to end the ongoing cycle of violence was to deploy a United Nations observer force in the occupied territories as was suggested in the Council. He hoped the Israeli Government would respond favourably to that important proposal.

He emphasized that the starting point for resumption of negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority should be where the negotiations stood when the two sides last met. The important gains already achieved must be preserved and should constitute the foundation of future negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

KISHORE MAHBUBANI (Singapore) said the Charter gave the Security Council primary responsibility for international peace and security. Part of that role was the promotion of obedience to international law. Singapore had an interest in the maintenance of international law and, therefore, in a strong Council. That meant insisting on obedience to all Council resolutions. The Council should live up to the standards it set for itself. Its resolutions on the Middle East must be respected. He welcomed yesterday's acknowledgment of the Council's role in the Middle East by the visit of Minister Peres. It was now time for the Council to listen to the views of other members of the international community. Long-term protection of civilians must be undertaken if peace negotiations were to be put back on track.

He welcomed the parties' assurances that peace remained their objective, he said. To make peace possible, the immediate priority was to stop the violence. He called on all the parties to renounce violence. The primary responsibility for stopping violence clearly fell on the parties, but the Council could help that by employing neutral and objective confidence-building measures. The Council was discussing the use of a United Nations observer force. A neutral and impartial international presence could play a catalytic role, by changing the chemistry of the region. It could complement the role of others, including the Secretary-General and other United Nations officials.

Singapore would like the Council to explore how such a force could be operationalized, he said. One way was to ask the Secretary-General to consult on mechanisms with the parties. Another was to dispatch a Council mission to the region. The Council could reciprocate visits made to it by Minister Peres and Chairman Arafat. Whatever was ultimately decided, the parties and the international community must take bold steps to put the Middle East back on the road to peace. It must build on peace initiatives and not undermine them.

SHAMEEM AHSAN (Bangladesh) said the situation in the Middle East had been deteriorating for some time now. Mindless violence continued, and Palestinian civilians bore the brunt of that violence. The excessive use of force had fuelled the violence, as did the policy of collective punishment. The net result of those had been to worsen the crisis of confidence, and thereby unravel progress that had previously been made towards a comprehensive, just and lasting peace. The Council could not watch that situation continue.

Further escalation of violence must be prevented, he said. The onus must be on those who used force against civilians. The Council must re-engage and explore an international way out of that crisis. An international observer force was a good basis for Council deliberations. He believed the Council was unanimous on the need for Israel to unconditionally and immediately lift the economic blockade.

Negotiations for a final Middle East settlement would not be easy, he said, but the parties must be encouraged, and the gains made thus far should be retained and built upon. Minister Peres' initiative to come to the Council was appreciated by all, as was recognition by Israel of the Council's role in addressing the Middle East problem. Bangladesh also supported the Secretary-General's role in addressing that problem.

M. PATRICIA DURRANT (Jamaica) welcomed actions to be taken by Israel, as outlined by Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, to begin to reverse a policy which had visited economic devastation on the Palestinians. She strongly urged Israel to take further actions to return the territory to economic viability, as well as other steps that would help restore the Middle East peace process, which Jamaica still strongly supported within the framework of relevant Security Council resolutions.

In that regard, she reiterated Jamaica's concern over the dire humanitarian situation of the Palestinians, its condemnation of excess force used against civilians and its support of a United Nations observer mission for Palestine. The deployment of such observers could act as a deterrent to further violence and as a confidence-building measure between the two sides. With lives still being lost, the Security Council must take additional action for peace.

She urged Israel to immediately remove all economic blockades and closures and called for both sides to put an end to the violence and to sit down together, face to face, to resume negotiation. In work on the upcoming Security Council resolution, she urged all parties to offer maximum flexibility and assistance.

VOLODYMYR YU. YEL'CHENKO (Ukraine), President of the Council, speaking in his national capacity, said that Ukraine remained deeply concerned over the Middle East situation, and it condemned, as before, excessive use of force against Palestinian civilians. It was encouraged, however, by the recent decision of the Israeli Government to start lifting the economic closure of the Palestinian territories, as well as its intention to stop settlement activity, as both those factors were exacerbating the current crisis. It also recognized the right of Israel to live within secure, internationally recognized borders, and denied the political legitimacy of any act of terrorism.

Ukraine, he said, still believed that an international presence in the Palestinian territory could speed up the restoration of secure conditions and the resumption of peace talks. The establishment of the United Nations observer mission, as advocated by France and the United Kingdom met the interests of both Palestinians and Israelis and deserved serious consideration. In practical terms, however, it could not be established without the cooperation of Israel, which should reconsider its current negative attitude towards it.

He also supported continued United Nations efforts at ending the current crisis, and hoped that the Fact-Finding Committee would continue to play a positive role in reducing the violence. He concluded by reiterating Ukraine's determination to contribute further to a comprehensive Middle East peace, which would only come about, he said, with the realization of the rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination and statehood.

AHMED ABOULGHEIT (Egypt) said the essence of the crisis in the occupied Palestinian territory lay with occupation. The occupation of that territory by Israel was, in essence, the detonator for all the bloody events that the world had been witnessing – events, which had not ceased since last September.

Israel could choose to portray the subject under many pretexts, he continued. It could also alter the facts and place blame in all directions to come up with a conclusion in which the occupied people were equated with the occupying Power which was imposing a stifling siege aimed at starving the former and bring them to their knees. All those pretexts and alterations of facts, however, should not allow the Council to deviate from the underlying reason behind the events – the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory.

He said the facts suggested that the conditions of the Palestinian people had not improved and would not improve, and that they would not enjoy stability until they were rid of the occupation in all its manifestations and forms. "We can even say that Israel has escalated its brutal treatment of the Palestinian people in a qualitative manner since the new Government assumed its tasks", he said. That Government had chosen to implement a policy of a "suffocating siege" of the occupied territories instead of what was called a "breathing siege" which was said to have been under implementation until a few days ago.

A siege of the occupied Palestinian territory meant the transformation of every Palestinian city and village, including those under Palestinian control, into a large prison for its residents – one from which they could not leave or enter. Israel never ceased justifying its actions under the pretext of security. Genuine security was a legitimate claim of all the people's of the region. The security of a neighbour, however, could not be obtained at the expense of neighbours. A State could not clamour for security when it was, at the same time, killing the children of its neighbours.

He said the conditions of the occupied territories had deteriorated to a level that compelled the Council to intervene, with all its authority in

order to halt the arrogant force demonstrated by the occupying Power in the Palestinian territory. In that context, the Council must look into, and without delay, establishing and deploying the international monitoring force requested by the Palestinian and Arab side a month ago.

In remarks addressed directly to Yehuda Lancry, the Permanent Representative of Israel, he said the problem was one of occupation. The BBC at 7 o'clock this morning had shown hundreds of Palestinians in Ramallah trying to demonstrate in a peaceful manner. Israel's response had been bullets. "There will never be peace with Palestine until you recognize that they are not inferior and their blood is as sacred as Jewish blood", he said.

ZAID AL-QUDS AL-SHARIF-HADIDI (Jordan) expressed grave concern over the deteriorating situation in the occupied Palestinian territory due to the Israeli aggression, which had taken on a serious dimension recently. The international community must shoulder its responsibilities vis-à-vis the Palestinian people. He called for an international observer force to protect the Palestinians and prevent a recurrence of similar violence in the future.

With tensions still rising, Israel must halt its use of force against Palestinians, lift its economic blockade on their towns and stop digging trenches around their villages, he said. Israel must return to negotiations with a view to ending the conflict in accordance with all agreements concluded.

He reasserted the necessity of focusing on the revitalization of dialogue between the two parties with the aim of establishing a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the region. He expressed Jordan's solidarity with the rights of the Palestinians, including their right to an independent State with its capital at Jerusalem/Al-Quds.

ABDALLA SALEH AL-ASHTAL (Yemen) said the issue before the Council was one of the oldest on the United Nations agenda. Current Israeli practices were senseless, illogical and unbelievably harsh. They had catastrophic effects on the lives of innocent civilians. Israel had been criss-crossing Palestinian villages and isolating Palestinian territories. It had increased its economic blockade and refused to pay revenues due to the Palestinian Authority. Settlements were being established and Palestinian homes destroyed. Excessive force was being used against children who were only guilty of refusing the illegal occupation. Those practices were telling. They required the Council to shoulder its responsibilities and take steps to urge Israel to respect the legitimate rights of Palestinians.

The Council should help to put an end to violence against children and defenceless civilians, he said. It should force the lifting of the blockade and ensure free movement of civilians. It should put pressure on Israel to pay revenues due to the Palestinian Authority. Those measures were direly needed. He asked the Council to deploy an observer presence under the aegis of the United Nations to protect the Palestinian people. It must also establish and field a fact-finding mission on Israeli practices against civilians in the occupied territories. Palestinians needed the United Nations. They needed someone to report what was happening in the occupied territories.

Yemen supported the Middle East peace process, and called for the resumption of negotiations between Palestine and Israel from the point at which they stopped, he said.

FAWZI SHOBOKSHI (Saudi Arabia) said Israeli massacres of Palestinian civilians were many and well documented. Israel terrorism had even followed Palestinians outside Palestinian territory to Shabra and Shatila. Israel had undertaken assassinations, including by bombing by helicopter and aeroplane. It had cut the West Bank into 43 sections and Gaza into four sections -- through deployment of occupation forces -- thus, causing isolation and limiting the movement of citizens and deepening the suffocating economic blockade. Israel had destroyed the Palestinian economy and infrastructure and sabotaged its national interest. Palestinians lived under blockade in cantons, separated from each other and from their brethren in the Arab and the greater world. That separation led to a dangerous deterioration in security situation.

Israel described the intifada as violence, he said. It turned a blind eye to the fact that it was resistance to occupation -- a legitimate right and national duty. It was a popular uprising rejecting surrender and rejecting usurpation of rights and territory. The uprising was a reflection of the impatience of Palestinians vis-à-vis the barrenness of the peace process. The Palestinians had only been offered a time-bomb peace thus far. Israel avoided the basic issues, so it could create facts on the ground. It emptied any agreement it agreed to, and prevaricated when asked to implement even those empty agreements.

It had become clear that Israel did not desire peace based on justice, because it refused to acknowledge the right of return, or the right of Palestinians to self-determination, with their capital in Jerusalem, he said. Israel had shown no desire to cohabit in peace. He called on the international community to denounce all Israeli measures that were inhumane and contrary to international law. He called on the international community to stop the Israeli transgressions against Palestinians. The Security Council must assume its responsibility and protect innocent Palestinian children from the bullets of the occupier. Saudi Arabia supported the Palestinian request that the Council send an observer force to protect Palestinian civilians. Peace could not be made by the hubris and arrogance of generals, but only by endorsing rights, and forcing aggressors to end their aggression. All Arab territories occupied since 1967 must be returned, so that peace and stability could return to the region.

HASMY AGAM (Malaysia) said that since 18 December last year, when the Council failed to adopt a resolution that would have led to the establishment of a force of United Nations observers, nearly 100 Palestinians had been killed and thousands injured. By some accounts, nearly 400 Palestinians had now lost their lives, mainly as a result of excessive use of force by Israeli security forces. The additional loss of lives and injuries could have been prevented had the Council undertaken its responsibilities and acted decisively on that day. Council members that abstained on that draft had argued that the Palestinians and Israel needed more time to arrive at an agreement themselves over larger issues. Malaysia had argued that that was subjecting the establishment of such a force to the vagaries of a torturous and uncertain peace process, and that should not happen. Rather, the establishment of the force would have calmed the situation and prevented needless deaths and injuries subsequently sustained by Palestinians.

It would be tragic and unfortunate, he said, if the Council were to continue to do nothing and the world were to bear witness to more death and injuries in coming months. Draconian and inhumane measures by Israel had made life for Palestinians a daily struggle for sheer survival, and thereby increased tension and led to a further crisis of trust between the two parties. He recalled that in December Council members had made the

point that the force was still on the table and could be revisited. Malaysia, therefore, called on the Council to revisit the proposal and act now to stop the killing of Palestinian civilians in the occupied territories. It could not afford to sit on the sidelines, knowing full well that the two sides were not likely to resolve the problems themselves any time in the near future, especially following the election of Ariel Sharon -- the man who precipitated the crisis.

Malaysia did not subscribe to the theory that such a force would interfere with the peace process, he said. Rather, it would contribute to stability and easing of tensions and thus contribute to the peace process. The Council could not set a different standard for intervention in the Middle East than it employed elsewhere. Its very credibility was at stake. A decision to take no action by the Council would consign the Palestinian issue and the current grave situation in the occupied territories to continued neglect and indifference, and to further manipulation by Israel.

JASSIM MOHAMMED BUALLAY (Bahrain) said the Security Council was meeting under difficult conditions for the Palestinian people. Considering the incredible advances made since the Second World War, it was difficult to imagine the events occurring in the occupied Palestinian territory.

He said Israel had been given more than one occasion to change its ways, but to no avail. The Security Council must show its commitment to the maintenance of international peace and security and exert pressure on Israel, whose brutality did not distinguish between men and women, or adults and children or the elderly.

The Security Council could not just stand by in the face of the Israeli occupation of Palestine and of what was happening to Palestinian civilians, he said. The Council had sent international forces to protect others, why could it not do the same for Palestinians? The Council must shoulder its responsibilities, he stressed.

ABDALLAH BAALI (Algeria) said the provocation that had triggered the current conflict had clearly been aimed at sabotaging the peace process. The political changes in Israel seemed to indicate that the peace process had had its time, especially since the stiffening of conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory.

He noted that besides the all-out war being waged in the occupied territory, hundreds of schools had been closed, and there was a serious shortage of food, medicine, humanitarian and basic emergency services. Furthermore, Israel had flagrantly violated its obligations, including through its obstinate refusal to pay much-needed revenues owed to the Palestinian Authority.

In spite of the great flexibility shown by Arab and other States during negotiations, the Security Council had decided not to act, he said. That was an unexpectedly passive stance towards a Member State that had refused for decades to honour decisions of the very body that had created it. However, despite the difficult times, there was still time for the Council to rise to its responsibilities and fulfil its mandate towards the Palestinian people. It must end the use of live ammunition against Palestinian demonstrators, and deploy United Nations observers in the occupied territory, including Jerusalem/Al-Quds, to ensure the protection of Palestinian civilians in accordance with the Fourth Geneva Convention.

YUKIO SATOH (Japan) said any escalation of violence might cause a disaster in the whole region and was damaging to the political atmosphere, and thereby worked against peace. All parties should make determined efforts to put an end to the violence. A negotiated peace was the only realistic option for both parties, so he urged them to make all efforts to renew their negotiations. He was encouraged that the new Israeli Government had said it would pursue peace with the Palestinians, Syria and Lebanon. But too strict a link between the cessation of violence and the resumption of negotiations played into the hands of those who did not want peace. Resuming dialogue was an essential first step to rebuilding confidence, and he called on the parties to resume their talks.

The serious deterioration of the Palestinian economy was of great concern, he said, and was undermining the Palestinian Authority. That undermining would have a negative effect on peace, and he asked Israel to do its best to allow Palestinian economic activities to resume. The international community must also contribute, as Japan had recently done.

ISA AYAD BABAA (Libya) said the solution to the Middle East problem could not be achieved without the return of the Palestinian people to their homeland and the establishment of their State. Very little was known about what happened in the occupied territories, as Israel blocked media access. Media representatives had condemned the Israelis for that. Some Israeli media were also critical of the use by Israel of collective punishment. Every day he saw reports on the killing in cold blood by Zionist snipers, and other practices similar to those employed by the Nazis.

He cited a number of newspaper references. If the Zionist occupation forces claimed they were just defending themselves, he asked why they refused to receive international inquiry commissions. Palestinians were expected to accept the peace of slaves, in less than 15 per cent of their traditional homelands, and -- as in Hebron -- confined to their homes. The Council should not expect any response from the Zionist occupation army because its leaders were war criminals. In Israel itself, there were calls to put the Army Chief of Staff on trial.

The arms of General Sharon were bloodstained, and the General was proud of that, he said. Now he was in power in Tel Aviv and able to impose his mandate of "fait accompli" on the Palestinians and use his scorched earth policy. Palestinians would continue to resist an alien occupation unique in history. Israelis would not enjoy their lives because of what they usurped. The Zionists continued to violate the Geneva Convention. He called on the Council to fulfil its responsibility by agreeing to form an observer force and deploy it in the occupied territories, including Jerusalem, and to condemn the Nazi-like practices of the Zionist forces. Failure to take such decisions would send a message to the occupier that it could continue to pursue its policy of confiscation and suffering.

ABDULLAH EID SALMAN AL-SULAITI (Qatar) said that Israel's provocative actions had led to the creation of cantons in the Gaza Strip, the deployment of troops and tanks, and the digging of trenches in Palestinian cities, aimed at entrenching the siege and subjugating the Palestinian people. Besides damaging the local economy, the closures, restrictions and other punitive measures had also had an adverse impact on families, due to the closure of schools and other actions.

He stressed the need for adequate protection for the Palestinians, and pressure to make Israel abide by agreements reached through the peace process and to ensure Israeli's acceptance of accords that had been agreed by previous Israeli governments. There would be no peace until Israel honoured Security Council resolutions 242 and 338, as well as the principle of land for peace. It must be understood that the Palestinians were not the cause of Israel's security problems, he said. Those were caused by the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory, and they would not be resolved until the occupation ended.

PIERRE SCHORI (Sweden), speaking on behalf of the European Union and associated countries, stressed the need for new security talks. The Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority must re-engage immediately on security cooperation to reverse the spiral of violence.

The humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territory was of great concern, he said. The current economic crisis was unacceptable and threatened regional stability, as well as the prospects for peace. Both parties had a duty to minimize tensions, an important element of which would be improving the economic situation. He stressed the need for Israel to end the withholding of due revenue payments to the Palestinian Authority.

He said the progress made on all major issues during the last negotiations should form the basis for future permanent status talks. The basis of negotiations, and of a just and lasting peace, must be Security Council resolutions 242 and 338 and other relevant resolutions. That basis must also include the inadmissibility of acquisition of territory by war, the need for every State in the area to be able to live in security, and the principle of land for peace.

The European Union deplored all acts of violence, he said, reiterating its strong opinion that Israel's policy on extrajudicial killings was unacceptable. Such killings were an obstacle to peace and could provoke further violence. The Union also encouraged President Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority to consider a moratorium on the death penalty.

ELFATIH MOHAMED ERWA (Sudan) said the situation in occupied Palestine continued to worsen, because the occupying Power persisted in excessive use of military force against unarmed Palestinians. Israel continued its criminal plan to tighten the blockade against Palestinian towns and villages, to strangle the economy and to starve the people. It aimed at isolating Palestinians inside the occupied territory and cutting them off from the outside world. That, in addition to measures to change the demographic composition of the territories designed to create new realities difficult to reverse in the future.

The primary responsibility for the rising death toll fell squarely on the Security Council, he said, which had failed to adopt a resolution in December to protect Palestinian people. The Council had offered untenable justifications for that failure, which cast doubts on its credibility and confirmed its lack of evenhandedness. It had implicitly stated that Israel was exempt from the application of the Charter provisions for international peace and security. Daily criminal acts committed by Israel and its violations of international resolutions and humanitarian law put the Council to a real test. He expected the Council to rise to its responsibility and reassess its previous position.

It must mandate a force to protect the Palestinian people. Any failure to do that, he said, would be backing away from its obligations to protect the innocent and would serve as an encouragement to the aggressor. The long sought- after peace would not be achieved while Israel persisted in expansionist policies, aggression and efforts to change the demography of Jerusalem. Peace would only come through real commitment to the land for peace formula and to conform to Security Council resolutions.

FADL NACERODIEN (South Africa), speaking on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, said that last month the United Nations Special Coordinator, Terje-Roed Larsen, had issued a report on the impact of regressive Israeli economic measures directed against the Palestinian people. He said that United Nations estimates put the loss to Palestinian gross domestic product (GDP) at over \$900 million and said that over \$240 million had been lost in labour income. As a result, 32 per cent of Palestinian population now lived in poverty -- a 50 per cent increase since the onset of the crisis.

Closures, restrictions and blockades had resulted in economic suffocation of the Palestinian people, thereby fuelling and fomenting dangerously high levels of frustration and violence, he said. The international community could not remain silent while the militarily superior occupying forces violated international humanitarian law. He asked how many more lives must be lost before the international community would take action.

The Non-Aligned Movement called on Israel to act with restraint and to act within its obligations under the Geneva Convention, he said. Achievement of their rights by Palestinian people was pivotal to any possible sustained and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. Peaceful negotiation was the only means to achieve such a peace. He urged the parties to cease hostilities, restore calm and re-establish mutual trust, as only then would an atmosphere conducive to the resumption of negotiations be created. The Non-Aligned Movement believed it was the responsibility of the United Nations to remain involved in the Middle East until peace was achieved.

MOHAMMAD ABULHASAN (Kuwait) said the illegal Israeli actions in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, reaffirmed the provocative action by Ariel Sharon, now Prime Minister of Israel, in visiting Al-Haram Al-Sharif on 28 September 2000. After the killing of civilians, including children, Israel blockaded Palestinian towns beginning on 7 March, aggravating the living standards of the Palestinian people in an unacceptable manner.

He said the suffering of the Palestinians called for a firm international response. Israel's statement that it was taking measures to alleviate the effects of the blockade should not be trusted. Kuwait supported the establishment of an international force to protect the Palestinians and to confirm the actions perpetrated against them.

Kuwaitis could not understand how Israel could claim it was not responsible for the violence, he said. If that was the case, it would not oppose an international observer force. Kuwait supported all peaceful initiatives to find a just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine in accordance with international legitimacy, the relevant Security Council resolutions and the principle of land for peace.

MOHAMMED A. AL-DOURI (Iraq) said that despite holding formal and informal sessions on the situation in the Middle East, the Security Council had been unable to take any action due to the influence of the United States, which had used flimsy pretexts to prevent any change in the situation. The Council's failure to deter the aggressor was the main reason for the continuation of bloodshed and the increase in the number of martyrs in full view of the international community.

He said it was not surprising that a long-time terrorist was responsible for the current bloodshed. He had desecrated Al-Haram Al-Sharif on 28 September 2000. Israel's irresponsible and criminal measures called for the Security Council to take up its responsibilities in accordance with the United Nations Charter. On 4 October 2000, it had been pointed out that the issue was not about forcing the Palestinians into an unbalanced negotiations that would not restore their rights. The key was the occupation of Palestine, which had been occasioned by the promise of a homeland made by a British citizen named Balfour to another Briton called Rothschild under the pretext that the land was uninhabited.

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