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General Assembly Plenary
Tenth Emergency Special Session
28th & 29th Meetings (AM, PM & Night)

BY WIDE MARGIN, GENERAL ASSEMBLY EMERGENCY SESSION ADOPTS TEXT DEPLORING ISRAELI

MILITARY ACTIONS IN GAZA, CALLING FOR DISPATCH OF UN MISSION TO BEIT HANOUN

Israel Says 'Bloodshed Can Stop in One Second if Terror Stops': United States Says Organization Ill-Served When Members Use It as 'Anti-Israel or Anti-US' Forum

Deeply deploring the recent Israeli military actions in the Gaza Strip, the General Assembly, in an emergency session, overwhelmingly approved a measure calling on Israel to withdraw its troops from the territory, and asking the Secretary-General to send a fact-finding mission to Beit Hanoun and report back to the Assembly within 30 days on the circumstances surrounding last week's artillery shelling, which led to the deaths of Palestinian civilians.

Calling for an immediate cessation of military operations and all acts of violence, incitement and destruction between the Israeli and Palestinian sides, the Assembly tonight adopted a resolution by a vote of 156 in favour to 7 against (Australia, Federated States of Micronesia, Israel, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, United States), with 6 abstentions (Canada, Côte d'Ivoire, Papua New Guinea, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu), as it resumed its tenth emergency special session on illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Territory. (For details of the vote, please see annex).

The text, first introduced by Qatar this morning on behalf of the Group of Arab States, was substantially revised late in the day to include a call on the Palestinian Authority to "take immediate and sustained action to bring an end to violence, including the firing of rockets on Israeli territory". An adjustment was also made to the provision calling on the Quartet, together with the international community, to take immediate steps to help stabilize the situation and restart the peace process, including by adding the word "possible" in reference to the establishment of an international mechanism to protect civilian populations.

Arab and Non-Aligned delegations had called for the resumption of the Assembly's long-running emergency session after the United States vetoed a similar draft text in the Security Council less than a week ago. Ahead of tonight's vote, the Permanent Observer of Palestine said the Council's failure to act had sent a message to Israel that it could continue to commit crimes and acts of outright aggression with impunity. It also sent the message to the Palestinian people that violence was condoned. But no one was above the law, and the massacre in Beit Hanoun must be acknowledged, he declared, adding that Israeli aggression must be stopped.

But the representative of the United States said the new Arab draft, like the one that had been before the Security Council, was "one-sided, unbalanced" and raised questions about the United Nations' ability to confront global problems. The anti-Israel problem was endemic to the culture of the United Nations – it was a decades-old, systemic problem that permeated the whole panoply of United Nations organizations and agencies. The United Nations was ill-served when its members sought to transform the Organization into a forum that was "little more than a self-serving and polemical attack against Israel or the United States", he said.

Israel's Ambassador acknowledged that the incident in Beit Hanoun had been "a tragic accident", which Israel deeply regretted. But, he said the Assembly was being "abused and hijacked", because the resolution did not address the real source of the conflict. Palestinian rocket fire and the Palestinian-elected Hamas Government – which refused to acknowledge Israel or renounce violence – were to blame for the continuing Israeli military action in Gaza. "This bloodshed can be stopped in one second. If terror stops, there will not be one single victim, Israeli or Palestinian," he proclaimed.

In her opening address to emergency session, Assembly President Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa (Bahrain), said that the situation in the Occupied

Palestinian Territory was deteriorating, and that the killings of both Israeli and Palestinian civilians must be condemned. The escalation of violence carried disastrous consequences for both the Palestinian and Israeli people. It also widened the gap between the two. "A return to the negotiating table is the only path forward", not just by the two parties, but by the whole international community because the situation went beyond the boundaries on the ground, she stressed.

Also speaking in the debate were the representatives of Cuba (on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement), Azerbaijan (on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference), Indonesia, Australia, Russian Federation, Malaysia, Finland (on behalf of the European Union), New Zealand, South Africa, Switzerland, Pakistan, Venezuela, Japan, Turkey, India, Egypt, United States, Iran, Brazil, China and Zimbabwe. The Permanent Observer of the Holy See also spoke.

Senegal's representative addressed the Assembly in his capacity as Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, and Qatar's representative introduced the draft resolution before the Assembly on Illegal Israeli Actions.

Explaining positions after adoption of the resolution were the representatives of Finland (on behalf of the European Union), Canada, Iran and Israel. The Permanent Observer of Palestine also spoke after the vote.

Syria's representative spoke in exercise of the right of reply.

The Assembly will meet again at 10 a.m. on Monday, 20 November for a joint debate on follow-up to the outcomes of United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields and to the Millennium Summit; strengthening the United Nations system; and United Nations reform.

Background

Meeting at the request of Arab delegations and the Non-Aligned Movement, the General Assembly today resumed its tenth emergency special session to consider illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

In similar letters to the Assembly President (document A/ES-10/366 and A/ES-10/367) the representatives of Qatar, on behalf of the Arab Group, and Cuba, on behalf of the Movement, respectively, called the emergency session, so the Assembly could specifically consider "Israeli attacks in the Gaza Strip, particularly the killing of Palestinian civilians in Beit Hanoun on 8 November 2006."

Qatar's representative is expected to introduce for action in the Assembly, a draft resolution, which would condemn Israel for the civilian deaths that occurred in Beit Hanoun, and have the Secretary-General set up a United Nations probe into the incident. The text would call on the international community, as well as the diplomatic Quartet on the Middle East peace process – the European Union, Russian Federation, United States and the United Nations – "to help stabilize the situation and restart the peace process, including through the establishment of an international mechanism for the protection of civilian population."

Last Saturday, the United States vetoed a similar draft resolution before the Security Council. That text would have had the 15-nation body condemn Israeli military operations in Gaza, "which have caused loss of civilian life", as well as condemn Palestinian rocket fire into Israel, while calling for an immediate withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip and a cessation of violence by both parties in the conflict. The text was defeated by a vote of 10 in favour to 1 against, with 4 abstentions (Denmark, Japan, Slovakia, United Kingdom).

Under its 56-year old "uniting for peace" resolution 377 A (V), the Assembly can immediately consider, and "make appropriate recommendations to Members for collective measures," when the Council, "because of lack of unanimity of the permanent members, fails to exercise its primary responsibility for the maintenance in any case where there appears to be a threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression".

The tenth emergency special session dates back to 1997, when Israel began construction of a new settlement south of East Jerusalem. The Security Council met twice on that issue, but failed to adopt resolutions. Using the "uniting for peace" formula, a special emergency session of the Assembly was convened in April, and again in July and November of 1997. It also resumed in 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003 and 2004.

President's Statement

Sheikha HAYA RASHED AL KHALIFA (Bahrain), President of the Assembly, said the situation in the Territory was deteriorating and the killings of both Israeli and Palestinian civilians must be condemned. The escalation of violence carried disastrous consequences for both the Palestinian and Israeli people. It also widened the gap between the two. A return to the negotiating table was the only path forward, not just by the two parties, but by the whole international community because the situation went beyond the boundaries on the ground.

She said that the situation called for real solutions starting with the cessation of violence. Just, global and lasting peace was attainable only if there was a serious compact that worked for both sides and was based on respect for both parties. The time had come for peace in the region at the present historic and decisive stage. That would come by working towards a solution, in which two states lived side-by-side in peace, thereby opening the door to peace for the region as a whole. Force and violence, therefore, would finally be replaced by prosperity and progress.

Statements

RIYAD MANSOUR, Permanent Observer of Palestine, said that the meeting today was being held in line with the "uniting for peace" principle as a final resort to defend the principles on which the United Nations was founded, and to allow States to collectively carry out what the Security Council was incapable of carrying out. The meeting had also been called to defend the Charter principles and the rule of international law, which were the safeguards of the principles of humanity, sending the message that no State was above the law. A serious and firm action was needed to respond to crimes, such as the massacre of civilians in Beit Hanoun, where Israeli occupying forces killed 82 Palestinians, 22 of them children. The six-day aggression by Israelis had culminated in the shelling of a residential neighbourhood as people slept soundly, killing 19 people, 16 of them members of the same family. The Council had rightfully carried out its job of maintaining peace and security by convening a meeting, yet the same permanent member had used the veto for the thirty-first time since the 1967 occupation began.

He said that the repeated use of the veto sent the wrong message to Israel that it was above international law. It also sent the message to the Palestinian people that violence was condoned. The principles on which the Charter was founded must now be respected. No one was above the law. The massacre in Beit Hanoun must be acknowledged, and the Israeli aggression must be stopped.

The Arab Group, the Non-Aligned Movement and the OIC had called the meeting to take the collective action needed to stop the "military madness" that

targeted children in their sleep, he said. The redeployment from Gaza had not been sincere because conditions had worsened for the Palestinian people, with increased shellings and withholding of revenues. Humanitarian workers on the ground had described it as a humanitarian disaster. The aggression had been expanded to include the systematic and organized destruction of the public infrastructure. Israel had imposed a "suffocating siege" on the Gaza Strip and isolated it from the world. Through the direct orders of the Israeli Prime Minister, psychological warfare had been made part of the collective punishment, with air force jets carrying out low altitude sorties and deliberately causing sonic booms.

Asking rhetorically what the Security Council had done, he said nothing; not even a condemnation statement had been issued. The Council had remained silent on all the Israeli violations. He wondered whether some victims were of lesser importance than others and how such an appalling crime as Beit Hanoun, committed by an occupying Power, had passed by the Security Council without it taking a position. What the Palestinian people did not understand was the readiness of some to speedily condemn any action on the Palestinian side, even those of the legitimate right to resistance, while the violations of Israel had literally transformed Gaza into a "large prison".

The circumstances surrounding Beit Hanoun had confirmed that the killing of Palestinian civilians fell into the category of war crimes, he concluded. The argument that the actions had not been intentional did not hold. In accordance with the relevant regulations of The Hague Convention and Geneva Conventions, there was a responsibility to punish those who committed war crimes. That applied to the Government, which was also responsible for war crimes committed by members of the Israeli army and settlers. The high contracting parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention had a clear responsibility to issue indictments and bring offenders to justice, including the Army Chief of Staff.

Introduction of draft resolution

Introducing a draft resolution on Illegal Israeli Actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory (document [A/ES-10/L.19](#)), NASSIR ABDULAZIZ AL-NASSER ([Qatar](#)), and speaking in his capacity as Chairman of the Group of Arab States, said that his delegation had requested an emergency meeting of the Security Council and submitted to it, a fair and balanced draft resolution; a resolution that had never seen the light, as one of the Council's permanent members had used its veto power.

He said that the last Israeli aggression represented a clear and flagrant violation of the relevant provisions of the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the protection of civilians in time of war, and contravened relevant Security Council resolutions. Use of armed force by the occupation forces, such as the firing at Palestinian women during a peaceful demonstration in Beit Hanoun, was proof that the military campaign had exceeded its declared objective. It had fallen within the context of policies of killing, suppression, intimidation, and collective punishment implemented by Israel against the Palestinian people.

Furthermore, the international community's silence only encouraged Israel to commit further offences, he added. The international community, as represented by the General Assembly after the failure of the Security Council to address the Palestinian issue, was called upon to take steps and consider actions to protect Palestinian civilians through an international mechanism, aimed at stemming Israel's aggression. In short, the Security Council's failure last week to adopt a resolution condemning Israeli aggression had increased the level of tension and resulted in the continuation of the cycle of violence.

DAN GILLERMAN ([Israel](#)) said he was experiencing déjà vu hearing about terrorists' accusing the victims. The General Assembly was being "used, abused and hijacked". He had listened to the Palestinian statement – one word repeated time and time again was that of occupation. Though it was difficult to be weaned from that convenient term, he wanted to reiterate that Israel had left Gaza and did not occupy a single inch of Gaza. Furthermore, the Palestinian Authority had chosen to use Gaza as a launching pad for missiles into Israel.

The word missing from Palestine's statement, and the resolution, was Hamas. Hamas was the reason for what was happening, and for the suffering of Palestinians. Today's emergency was not in the Hall, but in Israeli cities, where residents were pounded daily by rockets. Ever since Israel had left Gaza, Palestinians had turned Gaza into a staging ground for war against Israel. Last year, more than 1,000 rockets were fired from Gaza into Israel.

The Hamas-led Palestinian Government refused to acknowledge Israel and aimed to destroy the State of Israel. "If that is not an emergency, please tell me what is," he said. While haggling over the biased text was going on, more Israelis were being wounded. While paragraphs were being debated, more Israelis were being evacuated from their homes. As the debate continued, the grave humanitarian situation was escalating further.

Israel responded in self-defence and had a right to do that, he continued. The war was against vicious and indiscriminate terror. The bloodshed could stop in one second; if the terror stopped, there would be not one single victim.

Regarding the United Nations, the action of putting procedure before substance had ultimately led to serious questions as to its ability to be an honest broker for peace, he said. The Security Council last week did not fail to act; rather the resolution had not adequately addressed the source of the conflict. Instead of pursuing terror, Hamas needed to fulfil the Quartet's three conditions, earning it a place among the nations, and a seat at the table. Hamas had a monopoly on the Assembly – a monopoly on its attention and sympathy.

He said that terror was fuelled by Syria and Iran in the Middle East region. The international community needed to put an end to those genocidal regimes. It was imperative to act with urgency, but not recklessness. Genuine consultation, negotiation and agreement between the parties themselves was imperative. He cautioned all those in support of the resolution by saying, "You will be accomplices of terror. The blood of more innocents will be on your hand."

PAUL BADJI ([Senegal](#)), speaking as Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, said that Beit Hanoun had been devastated and entire families were currently homeless. The excessive use of force in the Occupied Palestinian Territory signified that Israel had committed an act of war. The use of tanks, fighter jets and missiles against the Palestinians was indeed disproportionate.

He said that the resolution was a way to overcome what was a catastrophic situation. Though the text had not been adopted in the Council because of a veto by one permanent member, he condemned Israeli incursions into Gaza and the widespread destruction caused by its artillery. Acts against civilians could by no means be justified.

He called upon Israel to put an end to the use of force and on all parties to ensure that calm was restored. The Committee supported an international mechanism to protect Palestinians and hoped for the eradication of violence and chaos – the daily lot of innocent civilians.

Delegates should support the resolution in the Assembly and ensure that the humanitarian situation ceased to deteriorate, and that vital assistance continued to be given to those in need, he said. The Committee would continue to cooperate with the Palestinian Authority, and President Abbas, who

advocated non-violence and recognized the State of Israel. There was no military solution to the conflict. A dialogue could in fact break the deadlock. He hoped for the formation of a democratic state living in peace and security, side-by-side with Israel, and other neighbouring States.

RODRIGO MALMIERCA DIAZ ([Cuba](#)), speaking in his capacity as Chairman of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, said that, in requesting the emergency meeting, the Movement had acted in accordance with its consistent position that in cases in which the Security Council did not fulfil its major responsibility in the maintenance of international peace and security, the General Assembly should adopt corresponding measures, as provided for in Articles 10 to 14, and 35, of the United Nations Charter. The Movement was hopeful that the Assembly would adopt, without delay, recommendations on concrete collective measures, in the context of resolution 377 A (V) (the General Assembly resolution of 1950 "Uniting for Peace") to halt the actions of Israel, and address the distress of the Palestinian people. In the last few weeks, Israel, the occupying Power, had continued to escalate its military aggression against the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, particularly in the Gaza Strip. As a result of actions by Israeli forces in Beit Hanoun on 8 November, at least 19 Palestinians, including eight children and seven women, lost their lives while asleep in their homes. Fifty people were injured in the attack.

He listed seven measures the General Assembly must take, including a demand that Israel immediately cease its aggression against the Palestinian civilian population in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem; that the Secretary-General dispatch a fact-finding mission on the attack on Beit Hanoun on 8 November, and report back within 30 days; and that Israel scrupulously abide by its obligations and responsibilities under the 1949 Geneva Convention relative to the protection of civilian persons in time of war. The Assembly must also emphasize the urgency of ensuring that medical and humanitarian organizations were granted unhindered access to the Palestinian population at all times and allow the severely injured a speedy exit outside the Occupied Territory for needed medical treatment.

The Movement urged the Assembly to call upon the international community, including the Quartet (the United Nations, the European Union, United States and Russian Federation) to take immediate steps to stabilize the situation and restart the peace process, including through the establishment of an international mechanism for the protection of the civilian populations, he said. The Movement reaffirmed the permanent responsibility of the United Nations, including the General Assembly and the Security Council, for the question of Palestine, so long as it was not settled in all its aspects on the basis of international law. That included a just solution to the difficult situation of the refugees, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 of 12 December 1948.

ILGAR MAMMADOV ([Azerbaijan](#)), addressing the Assembly as Chairman of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) Group, said the resumed tenth emergency special session was important, in view of recent Israeli attacks in the Gaza Strip. The OIC Group was deeply concerned about the continued deterioration of the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Israel's recent aggressions in Beit Hanoun and Yamun village, and ongoing military assaults in the Gaza Strip and the occupied West Bank, were severe developments, which must be addressed.

He called for the provision of emergency assistance and development of confidence-building measures between the parties, noting the importance of reviving the peace process, in accordance with General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. Further, the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers of OIC member States would hold an emergency session on 18 November in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia to examine the repercussions of Israeli aggressions and consider ways to support the Palestinian people.

The OIC Group fully supported the draft resolution entitled "Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory," he said. In that context, he urged the international community, including the Quartet, to take urgent steps to stabilize the situation, resume peace talks and restart the peace process.

ADIYATWIDI ADIWOSO ASMADY ([Indonesia](#)) said his delegation condemned, in the strongest terms, last week's Israeli air strike, which killed some 82 Palestinian civilians in Beit Hanoun, as well as the indescribable horror wrought by other "brutal Israeli military operations and deliberate attacks on unarmed civilians". He expressed deep regret that, once again, the hopes of the Palestinians and other peace loving people in the Middle East had been dashed by the Security Council's failure to adopt a resolution reflecting on-the-ground realities. That failure had sent the message that the international community condoned Israel's aggression and collective punishment of the Palestinian people. Israel's defiance of international law might also heighten international resentment and prolong the cycle of violence.

By continuing to exercise its military muscle, Israel was risking the entire Middle East peace agenda, he said, expressing his delegation's belief that where the Security Council had failed to act, the Assembly could find alternative ways to halt and prevent the spiralling violence in the region, and ensure the speedy delivery of humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people. He called on the Assembly to move forward on a comprehensive settlement in the Middle East, based on the Quartet-backed Road Map, the Arab Peace Initiative, as well as relevant United Nations resolutions. He called on Israel to end its aggression and its "unrelenting military incursions", as a tool of coercion and intimidation, and added that destruction of civilian infrastructure, and indiscriminate attacks against civilians, could not be justified.

Simultaneously, the Palestinians must take "immediate and sustained action" to bring an end to the violence, including the firing of rockets into Israeli territory, as that could only be used as a pretext for Israel's continued collective punishment of the Palestinian people. The international community – and the Quartet – also had the responsibility to support the protection of Palestinians and of their institutions. And, while the Road Map had been plotted to lead to a comprehensive settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the reality was that the peace process could not get back on track unless Israel changed its violent and militaristic policies.

ROBERT HILL ([Australia](#)), noting his country's commitment to a just, lasting and comprehensive solution to the Middle East conflict, said he supported a two-State solution that recognized the legitimate aspirations of Palestinians and Israelis to live in peace within secure and recognized borders, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). Australia was concerned at the escalating violence since the kidnapping of an Israeli soldier by Palestinian militants in June, and called on all sides to avoid actions that would lead to further violence.

Recognizing Israel's right to self defence against terrorist attacks, he called for the halting of rocket attacks from Gaza into Israel. As neither the resumption of the emergency special session, nor a proliferation of resolutions would help to create peace in the Middle East, he also encouraged the General Assembly to address issues in a balanced manner. Singling out one side only for blame in a complex situation was a useless endeavour.

The key to reviving the Middle East peace process was for the Palestinian Government to renounce violence and recognize Israel, he said. Australia strongly supported continued efforts for peace and would look for practical ways to contribute new initiatives.

VITALI CHURKIN ([Russian Federation](#)) said that the incident in Beit Hanoun had demonstrated that civilians were the losers in situations of violence. Despite the long-standing conflict in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, it was in the interest of all in the international community to prevent a sense of fatality and hopelessness from setting in. Instead, both sides must renounce violence as an acknowledgment that there was no other alternative than peace as a way forward. Emotion must be kept out during deliberations on the political process and normalization of the situation in Palestine. The Quartet should meet at the ministerial level, and the Arab Ministers of the region should participate, along with Israel and Palestine.

However, he stressed, the excessive use of force on the part of Israel must end, along with the rocket attacks into Israel. The Palestinian Authority must take decisive measures to stop the firing of the missiles that provoked the Israeli authorities to resort to violence. It was unfortunate that the Council had not been able to adopt a resolution on the matter. Thus, the right course of action had been to bring the matter before the Assembly. He would support the resolution before it.

NAIMUN ASHAKLI MOHAMMED ([Malaysia](#)), aligning himself with the Non-Aligned Movement, the OIC and the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, and endorsing the statement by the Group of Arab States and the Permanent Observer of Palestine, condemned the killing, by Israel, of Palestinian civilians in Beit Hanoun and elsewhere in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Malaysia was disappointed by the negative vote cast by the United States in the Security Council on 11 November on the draft resolution concerning the latest developments in Gaza. That action had, in effect, given Israel a "carte blanche" to continue to commit such atrocities with impunity. That was detrimental to efforts to revive the stalled Middle East peace process.

He said that three years had passed since the Road Map was drafted. That period had been filled with death, destruction and despair on both sides. It appeared that the Road Map had been deliberately asphyxiated by Israel, clearly a power mightier than the Quartet members combined. Putting Israel in the driver's seat had done nothing but ensure that the Road Map led nowhere. In that connection, Malaysia supported the call by the League of Arab States for a new Middle East peace conference, and was ready to contribute towards that process. That effort should place the United Nations at its core, rather than in a subservient role. Meanwhile, an international mechanism must be established to protect the civilian population in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

KIRSTI LINTONEN ([Finland](#)), speaking on behalf of the European Union, condemned the recent incidents in Beit Hanoun, as well as all other acts of violence against civilians on both sides. She called on Israel to immediately cease its military operations against civilians, and for Palestine to stop the rocket attacks against Israel. She also called for an immediate cessation of all violence and for the release of both the captured Israeli soldier and the Palestinian ministers, along with other officials being held in Israeli prisons.

She said that a Government of National Unity for Palestine was the only solution. The Union would continue to contribute to the Quartet efforts to get the two sides to the conference table in cooperation with Arab partners. The political process was the only way forward, starting with an immediate cessation of hostilities, followed by the re-launching of the peace process, keeping in mind the urgent need to build the capacity of the Palestinian Authority, so as to enable it to carry out its responsibilities.

KIRSTY GRAHAM ([New Zealand](#)) said that the excessive and disproportionate use of force by the Israeli military, following the rocket attacks launched from the Occupied Palestinian Territory, was totally unacceptable. The futile cycle of violence underscored the fact that there was no military solution to the conflict. Furthermore, there was an urgent need to restore the capacity of the Palestinian Authority to govern, so that it could address the humanitarian situation and enforce the rule of law.

Stressing that Israel, the international community, and the Palestinian Authority needed to restore the flow of resources in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, she welcomed the move to put in place a National Unity Government. She also called for the release of Palestinian parliamentarians detained by Israel. For its part, the restored Palestinian Authority must take action to prevent further rocket attacks on Israel and intervene with the kidnappers of Corporal Shalit to help secure his release.

SIVUYILE MAQUONGO ([South Africa](#)), aligning himself with Cuba who spoke on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, said that he was deeply concerned by the escalation of the conflict in the Middle East. Recent attacks had raised tensions to new and dangerous heights.

He said his delegation believed that no party should take unilateral actions that sought to predetermine issues – those were only resolved through negotiation. He called upon the Israeli Government to refrain from unilateral action and act with restraint to avoid civilian casualties.

Although he respected a country's right to protect itself, there was no justification for the excessive actions of the Israeli Government, he said. He also called on Palestinians to stop firing rockets into Israel. At the same time, failing to give hope to the Palestinians would lead people in the region to think that more violence and counter-violence was their only option. Lastly, the international community needed to accept its responsibilities and re-ignite the peace process.

ANDREAS BAUM ([Switzerland](#)) said that his country was deeply disturbed by the current developments in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and in Israel, where the world community was witnessing yet another spike in violence and retaliation, taking place in a difficult economic, social and humanitarian environment. He regretted that the Security Council had been unable to reach a political decision over the weekend, and noted that the Human Rights Council had dealt with the issue in its own special session last Wednesday. "In the future, it would be beneficial that the UN main bodies act in a concerted fashion," he said.

Turning to the situation on the ground, he stressed that the Fourth Geneva Convention on the protection of civilians applied in all territories occupied by Israel. "Respect for [international] law and its implementation are not subject to negotiation," he declared, adding that Israel's responsibility to uphold international law implied respect for the principles of distinction, precaution and proportionality in the context of its military operations. While he regretted that Israel had not taken the required precautions during its military action in Beit Hanoun, he noted, nonetheless, that it had opened an inquiry to determine the cause of that tragedy, which had resulted in the deaths of 19 people, mostly women and children.

Furthermore, Switzerland considered that all acts of violence committed by armed Palestinian groups against the Israeli population, in particular the Qassam rocket attacks against Israeli civilian targets, which had caused the death of a civilian in Sderot on 15 November, to be flagrant violations of international law, he said. "The protection of civilian populations must be given the highest priority by all parties concerned," he stressed, calling on the parties to live up to their obligations to distinguish between civilians and combatants, as well as between civil and military infrastructures. "The only reasonable way forward is that of political dialogue, and the international community must commit to ensuring that the peace process be resumed as early as possible," he said. He called on Member States to support President Abbas in his efforts to form a Government of Palestinian Unity.

FARUKH AMIL ([Pakistan](#)), expressing support for statements made by Cuba and Azerbaijan on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and the OIC, respectively, said that each passing day of violence was a setback to the quest for a peaceful settlement of the Palestinian question. Durable solutions could not be imposed by force; the way needed to be paved for dialogue and negotiations.

He said that Pakistan supported the call for an immediate ceasefire – one that was credible, sustainable and verifiable – in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. His delegation also supported a request to establish a fact-finding mission on the Beit Hanoun attack.

Furthermore, he said that Israel should immediately end its military campaign in Gaza; release Palestinian prisoners, including cabinet members and legislators; and remove checkpoints and other obstacles to facilitate movement of civilians and humanitarian workers. He, likewise, appealed to the Palestinians to halt rocket attacks and violence, and secure the release of the captured Israeli soldier. Above all, the United Nations had a permanent responsibility towards the question of Palestine, until it was resolved in all its aspects, in a satisfactory manner, and in accordance with international legitimacy.

ROY CHADERTON MATOS ([Venezuela](#)) said the Security Council, charged with maintaining international peace and security, had taken four weeks to express its response to the situation in Lebanon. Now, as new evidence had come forward that massive violations of human rights had been allowed to continue for years, the Council had forced the holding of an emergency special session of the General Assembly to demonstrate further how crucial it was to revitalize the United Nations. The Council had failed to act on the matter, which had forced it to be taken up in the Assembly, where there was no right of veto.

He said that the responsibility to protect civilians in armed conflict was a serious international obligation. Israel should keep in mind that in self-defence, proportionality and legal concepts were not mutually exclusive. The justification for the use of force in self-defence required that the response be proportional to the threat.

The resolution before the Assembly was sure to meet with support from the international community, he said. The right to life was an inalienable right, and the Organization was called upon to defend that right on behalf of all citizens of the planet since it was no coincidence that there was one "universal" convention on human rights, which covered all people everywhere. History was littered with horrible deformations of societies. Anti-Semitism was one of those, but to keep things in perspective, that had been a primarily Christian deformation, and King Mohamed V of Morocco had given shelter to Jews during the Holocaust.

TAKAHIRO SHINYO ([Japan](#)) expressed his delegation's deep concern over the deteriorating situation, particularly the continuing rocket attacks by Palestinian military groups and the recent military operations by the Israeli Defense Forces. Saying that the situation was at a "critical juncture," he called on all parties concerned, especially Israel and Palestine, to exercise maximum restraint. While Japan deplored Israel's 8 November military action in Beit Hanoun, it also recognized Israel's right and obligation to protect its citizens.

However, he stressed, the Israeli Government should avoid any actions that might cause civilian casualties, and he hoped that Israeli officials would make serious efforts to determine the cause of the Beit Hanoun incident. He also urged the Palestinian Authority to take appropriate measures to bring an immediate end to the violence by Palestinian extremist groups, including rocket attacks against Israel.

Hopefully, recent efforts to establish a new Palestinian Government would continue, he said, adding his expectation that Israel would support the initiative of President Abbas, aimed at achieving a breakthrough in building a new Palestinian Authority and in advancing the Middle East peace process. Japan would continue to support the Middle East peace process. At the same time, it would continue its efforts to launch its "corridor for peace and prosperity," which sought to facilitate coexistence and mutual prosperity between Israel and Palestine, through consultations among the Palestinian and Israeli Governments and the Governments of Japan and Jordan. Japan had dispatched a mission to the region to find ways to fast track that plan.

BAKI ILKIN ([Turkey](#)), aligning himself with the European Union's statement, said that what had transpired in the Gaza Strip was unacceptable. His country recognized Israel's right and obligation to defend its own citizens and, accordingly, condemned the Qassam rocket attacks into Israeli territory. But it equally condemned the disproportionate use of force by Israelis against Palestinian civilians, which bred nothing but more violence, hatred and insecurity. For that reason, Turkey joined others in calling on Israel to immediately cease its military operations in Gaza and to bring to justice those responsible for the tragedy in Beit Hanoun. He reiterated his appeal to the Palestinian Authority to do whatever was needed to stop rocket attacks against innocent Israeli civilians.

He added: "The more we rely on military means, the more we aggravate the chances for a lasting peace." The international community should create conditions that would allow the Palestinian people to look at the future and see a reliable prospect for security, prosperity and stability. No less was deserved by the Israeli people, for they should also be able to live in peace and security with their neighbours. The only viable way to achieve those objectives was through the resumption of meaningful negotiations between the two sides on the basis of the Road Map. President Abbas' effort to bring about national unity on the Palestinian side was an important step in the right direction, and no effort should be spared to support him.

NIRUPAM SEN ([India](#)) said that some form of action was essential to avoid further tragedies. Hopefully, the results of the inquiry into the loss of 19 lives on 8 November at Beit Hanoun would be publicized, and action would be taken swiftly against those responsible. Regarding the fact-finding mission proposed in the draft resolution, he hoped that would return not only with a reconstruction of events, but also with suggestions as to how to avert the repetition of similar tragedies.

He said that long ago the situation in the Middle East had looked more promising. Tragically, the outcome had been the opposite. Everyone agreed that violence would produce no durable solution; that could only come from meaningful, sincere and result-oriented dialogue. Jawaharlal Nehru had envisaged as early as April 1948, a federation in Palestine with fully autonomous Israeli and Palestinian units. It had been in that context that India had consistently urged a resumption of direct dialogue, based, in recent years, on the Quartet principles. The Road Map, as endorsed by Security Council resolution 1515 (2003), remained the fundamental framework to resolve a bitter conflict.

MAGED ABDEL AZIZ ([Egypt](#)) said the Security Council's failure to protect Palestinian civilians from aggression required the General Assembly to send a strong message that it did not agree with the Council's protection of Israel. Condoning Israeli attacks in Occupied Palestinian lands was unacceptable, as was interpreting the right of self-defence as the killing of innocent people. Egypt expressed sorrow over the use of the veto against two consecutive Security Council resolutions, aiming to protect the Palestinians. The new vision of respecting human rights without distinction had imposed a responsibility on the General Assembly to guarantee that those aggressions not be repeated.

He said that Egypt supported all steps in the draft resolution calling for the immediate cessation of Israeli military attacks, its withdrawal to the 28 June boundaries in Gaza, the establishment of a Beit Hanoun fact-finding mission and the creation of a mechanism to protect Palestinian civilians. Moreover, confidence-restoring measures were needed, including towards Israel's compliance with the Fourth Geneva Convention, the lifting of its blockade against Palestinians and swift action to address the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza and the West Bank. Israel must also stop construction of the wall and resume work under the Access and Movement Agreement. The international community should avoid double standards, and the Security Council should dispatch a fact-finding mission to investigate Israeli violations.

Talks should resume for the mutual release of the abducted Israeli soldier and Palestinian prisoners, and the immediate release of Palestinian ministers, parliamentarians and others, he said. All relevant actors, including the Quartet, should bring Palestinians and Israelis back to the negotiating table, with a view to establishing a sovereign Palestinian state, which would coexist with Israel in peace and security.

JOHN BOLTON (United States) said he would request a recorded vote against a resolution that only exacerbated tensions by serving the interests of elements hostile to Israel's inalienable and acknowledged right to exist. Just yesterday, the Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural) had passed a resolution stressing the need to avoid country-specific human rights resolutions. With resolutions such as that, the United Nations contributed to the conclusion that the Organization was incapable of playing a helpful role in the region.

He said that the challenge of advancing towards the vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side-by-side in peace and security, required serious and determined efforts by the parties and the constructive support of countries in the region and the international community. Regrettably, he continued to see little in the way of constructive support for genuine efforts to move towards the two-State goal. However, in a larger sense, the United Nations must confront a more significant question – that of its relevance and utility in confronting the vast array of global challenges in the twenty-first century.

The United Nations was ill-served when its members sought to transform the Organization into a forum that was little more than a “self-serving and polemical attack against Israel or the United States”, he said. Moreover, the nature of group dynamics in the United Nations was “seriously hampering” the principles on which the Organization was founded. While there were many who would prefer to see improved cooperation, a more effective General Assembly and relevance of its actions to the real world, the resolution before it was “another example of moderate elements being held hostage by a few extreme States or those whose parochial political agendas distort the ostensible purpose of this and other resolutions”, he said.

He said that, since its inception earlier this year, the Human Rights Council had quickly “fallen into the same trap and delegitimized itself” by focusing attention almost exclusively on Israel. It had failed to address real human rights abuses in Burma, Darfur, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and other countries. “Sadly, the Human Rights Council appears to be developing into an organ that is worse on this score than its predecessor,” he said.

The problem of anti-Israel was not unique to the Human Rights Council; it was endemic to the culture of the United Nations, he said. It was a decades-old, systemic problem that permeated the whole panoply of United Nations organizations and agencies. Beyond the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Human Rights Council, the sponsors of today's resolution had diverted the efforts of non-political United Nations bodies, such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the International Postal Union and the International Labour Organization, with one-sided polemics irrelevant and harmful to the non-political mandates of those agencies, and unhelpful to the cause of the Palestinian people and regional peace. Those efforts served only to erode the United Nations' credibility and undermine the goal of resolving the underlying conflict.

He warned that the consequences of that persistent, unconstructive, biased approach were painfully clear – not one single Palestinian was helped, and the United Nations continued to be discredited by its inability to confront the serious challenge of the Israel-Palestinian conflict in a serious, responsible manner. Member States must choose: did they desire a viable United Nations system composed of agencies respected for their role in conflict resolution, human rights, economic development, education and culture, or would it continue to acquiesce to a narrow agenda of bias, stalemate and polemics? Member States must demonstrate the will to break with the past and make the United Nations a relevant voice, not only for the Israel-Palestinian conflict, but for other conflicts and issues worldwide, he declared.

JAVAD ZARIF (Iran) said the latest action by the United States to “torpedo” the Security Council should be seen in the wider perspective of United States efforts to turn the United Nations into an exclusive tool in the service of its narrow-minded politics. It was incumbent on the international community and the Assembly, therefore, to effectively deal with the illegitimate designs, unlawful policies and atrocious crimes of the Israeli regime and to put an end to its aggression, as well as its persistent unlawful occupation of the Palestinian Territory. It was up to the Assembly to strongly condemn the crimes, demand the immediate cessation of the Israeli military assault, establish a fact-finding mission into the latest tragedy and address the dire humanitarian situation of the Palestinian people.

He said that no amount of mudslinging and recycling of baseless and tired allegations by Israel, as had been done this morning, would distract the international community's attention from the Israeli barbarism in Palestine. In the face of the aggression having plunged the entire region into a protracted and growing chaos and in view of the ill-intended support of certain permanent Council members had rendered the Council incapable of tackling the situation, the Assembly must deal with the Israeli crimes in an effective and prompt manner, in the interest of international peace and security.

RONALDO SARDENBERG (Brazil) said that his country deplored the deaths at Beit Hanoun. It welcomed the decision of the Human Rights Council to establish a fact-finding mission, and it expected Israel to carry on its own investigations. The stalemate in the peace process had kept the whole region in a state of permanent instability. Virtual diplomatic paralysis posed a renewed challenge to the United Nations and particularly the Security Council; unless prompt and concrete measures were adopted, the Organization might face a full-scale crisis beyond its control. Inaction accentuated the perception of ineptitude.

He urged that particular attention be paid to the sensitive issue of Palestinian prisoners detained in Israel. As a confidence-building measure, Palestinian political leaders detained in Israel should be released. The abducted Israeli soldier should also be returned, and the launching of Qassam rockets against Israelis should be halted. The United Nations had a duty to offer a peaceful solution to a conflict that had such a powerful symbolic and emotional burden for so many peoples in the world, and which had dragged on for so long. Brazil would vote in favour of the draft resolution presented by the Arab Group and others.

LIU ZHENMIN (China) said he was deeply concerned with the humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the increasing military aggression. “Military attacks cannot guarantee Israel's security,” he stated. The Council on Saturday had perpetuated the view that the United Nations could not act. The emergency special session and its result were hopeful actions that showed the world the Member States could find the way to make the Organization effective and responsive to pressing situations.

SOPHIA NYAMUDEZA (Zimbabwe), associating herself with the Non-Aligned Movement's statement, said the convening of the special session was the international community's expression of the utter dismay at the wanton violation of all acceptable norms of international law by Israel. Noting the loss of innocent civilian life in Beit Hanoun after the shelling by Israeli Defence forces on 8 November, she was particularly saddened that in light of that situation, one super-Power purporting to champion democratic and just principles had condoned that act by casting its veto against a balanced Security Council resolution. That action had lent credence to Zimbabwe's call for Security Council reform. She would have expected that member to abide by the principle of universality.

She said that that had not been the first time that member had blocked the adoption of Security Council resolutions aimed at permanently resolving the problem of Palestine. In light of the deteriorating situation and the Council's failure to adopt a modest resolution, she pledged strong support for the draft resolution and urged other civilized nations to do the same.

CELESTINO MIGLIORE, Permanent Observer of the Holy See , said that such horrendous acts had formed part of a much larger issue that had festered far too long. Each time that there had been an emergency meeting, a seemingly endless list of difficulties and differences separating Israelis and Palestinians had been recited. It was hardly helpful to either party to make a litany of symptoms without addressing the root cause.

He said that the centrality of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the persistent instability in the Middle East could not be ignored. It was a sad fact that the international community had failed to engage the Israelis and Palestinians in significant and substantive dialogue, along with resolution of disputes. It was a time of urgency and opportunity – urgency, because the situation had been deteriorating by the minute, and opportunity, because civilian populations were surely more willing than ever for an honourable peace. Only a truly comprehensive peace, involving all major players in the Middle East, and based upon bilateral peace treaties and multilateral agreements, would have a chance of lasting.

The President of the General Assembly then suspended the meeting, due to consideration by the Fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary) of the programme budget implications of the draft resolution before the Assembly.

When the emergency special session resumed, the Assembly President drew delegations' attention to a resolution that had just been adopted by the Fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary) – which had been meeting parallel to the Assembly – determining that recommendations in the draft text being considered in the Assembly would not give rise to any additional budgetary requirements, should the text be adopted.

Mr. Al-NASSER, representative of Qatar, the draft resolution's main sponsor, then introduced technical corrections in the form of an oral revision to the text.

Action on text

The resolution was then adopted by a recorded vote of 156 in favour to 7 against (Australia, Federated States of Micronesia, Israel, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, United States), with 6 abstentions (Canada, Côte d'Ivoire, Papua New Guinea, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu). (See annex.)

Speaking in explanation of vote after the vote, the representative of Finland, on behalf of the European Union, said her delegation had voted in favour of the text and had appreciated the spirit of cooperation that had been shown during the negotiations. She underlined that an immediate cessation of violence was necessary in order to restart the peace process.

She said that the European Union strongly deplored Israel's recent military actions in Gaza, which had led to increased violence in that region. At the same time, the Union recognized Israel's right to protect its civilians, and strongly deplored the firing of rockets into Israeli territory by armed groups. Violence was not the answer, and she called on all parties to exercise the utmost restraint and return to the negotiating table as soon as possible.

Also explaining his position after the vote, the representative of Canada said that he was deeply concerned with the tragic loss of life in the Middle East. The road to peace was through a negotiated settlement. His Government had abstained, as there already existed a number of resolutions dealing the issue concerned. It was imperative to decrease the number of resolutions and have the remaining texts deal with the core concerns.

Explaining his vote in favour of the draft, the representative of Iran said that his delegation supported the cause of the Palestinian people, and reiterated that it still did not recognize the State of Israel.

The Permanent Observer of Palestine thanked those who voted in favour of the resolution, as that overwhelming support had sent a significant message to the Israeli delegation, whose insulting statement earlier had disregarded the collective wish of the international community. The message sent had been that the cause of justice was a very strong cause in the General Assembly. Israelis could not be above international law as respectable members in the United Nations system. He hoped that the day when occupation would end would come soon.

The representative of Israel said that, most of the day, the delegations had been dealing with procedure – the misuse of it. That compelled him to note that an observer mission, which was not a voting member of the Assembly, had just taken the floor. While he was in no way trying to disrespect that delegation, it should not have been allowed to make a statement at this point.

He went on to say that his delegation had no intention to insult the people of Palestine or the Assembly. What the people of Israel did not respect was terrorism and the people that fought Israel. His country would continue to protect itself. It would continue to fight back. The problem was not reflected in the text just adopted. The problem was on the ground. He hoped that very soon Israel would be able to get together with its neighbours and solve the problems in the region without unhelpful interference from outside. The United Nations was not the real world, he added.

It had been no surprise that the resumed emergency special session had "continued its business as usual" by adopting a biased resolution and engaging in harsh polemical language, he said. The Assembly had sadly missed another chance to promote peace by pandering to States that wished to condemn Israel. It had missed the chance to curb terrorism and had "written a blank check to terrorists" to carry on as they pleased.

Exercise of the Right of Reply

Speaking in exercise of the right of reply, the representative of Syria said that 156 delegations had taken the floor today to defend Palestine, which Israel had just tried to prevent from speaking in the Assembly. He hoped the vote would change Israel's position regarding cooperation with the will of the international community. Now was the time to strengthen the cause of peace and ask Israel to end its crimes against and punishment of the Palestinian people. The international community had voted in favour of countless resolutions calling on Israel to end its occupation of Palestinian Territory, but that had only been met with repudiation, and today, a "Hollywood-style" accusation that delegations that voted for the present text were supporting terrorism.

That distorted view of the situation was what prevented the Palestinian people from creating their own state, he said. Israel desperately attempted to convince everyone that the suffering of the Palestinians only began some 15 months ago, in the wake of democratic elections and Israel's subsequent withdrawal from Gaza. But the truth was that Israel's cruelty against the Palestinians ran deep and had been ongoing – from its military incursions, to its illegal building of a separation wall and its arrogance – all of which deserved the adoption of a resolution condemning it.

He said that the international community desired peace above all, and when that principle was evident in Israel's policies, the Assembly would not need to meet in special session. The fact that the Human Rights Council had met three times on Israeli practices in recent months proved that the situation in the Occupied Territory was weighing heavily on the international community's conscience. He also rejected the Council's failure to act on the matter last week, and said that it was time for Israel to stop hiding behind a country that pretended to be a "super-Power". No country was above international law, he said.

Vote on Draft Resolution on Illegal Israeli Actions

The draft resolution on illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory (document A/ES-10/L.19) was adopted by a recorded vote of 156 in favour to 7 against, with 6 abstentions, as follows:

In favour : Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Moldova, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Syria, Tajikistan, Thailand, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against : Australia, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Palau, United States.

Abstain : Canada, Côte d'Ivoire, Papua New Guinea, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu.

Absent : Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Dominican Republic, Equatorial Guinea, Fiji, Grenada, Honduras, Kiribati, Liberia, Madagascar, Nicaragua, Rwanda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, Sao Tome and Principe, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, Turkmenistan, Uganda.

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