
SPECIAL SESSION OF HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL ON ISRAELI MILITARY INCURSIONS IN NORTHERN GAZA OPENS

Speakers Call on Council to Condemn Israel's Attack on Beit Hanoun and to Send a Fact-finding Mission to the Town

15 November 2006

The Human Rights Council this morning opened its third special session which is looking at Israeli military incursions in Northern Gaza and the assault on Beit Hanoun, hearing speakers call for the Council to condemn the human rights violations of Palestinian people, provide Palestinians with protection and send a fact-finding mission to Beit Hanoun.

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour told the Council that she would soon be visiting Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory where she would emphasize the obligation to protect civilians during armed confrontation, and the entitlement of all, Palestinians and Israelis alike, to live free from fear, free from want, and free from harm.

Palestine said Beit Hanoun seemed today as if it had been hit by a strong earthquake. Once again, the Israeli army had unleashed its lethal power against defenceless Palestinian civilians in Beit Hanoun, shelling their homes while they slept and targeting and shelling again those civilians fleeing the earlier bombardments. The perpetrators of this horrendous war crime should be brought to international justice.

Israel blamed the Palestinian Authority and its Government because they did nothing to stop the brazen firing of Kassam rockets at Israeli civilian communities from within Beit Hanoun, setting the stage for an Israeli response which became inevitable. Israel accused the Council of one-sidedness, double standards and politicized decision-making, adding that those who pushed for the special session were conspicuously ignoring tragedies in other parts of the planet.

Most speakers condemned Israel's military operations in Northern Gaza in the past few months which had left more than 350 Palestinians dead. There were accusations that Israel was using disproportionate force and resorting to collective punishment. The attack on Beit Hanoun was strongly condemned, and many called for a high-level fact-finding mission to the town.

A number of speakers, led by the United States and Canada, expressed their concern and regret for the deaths of civilians in Beit Hanoun, but said the draft resolutions being circulated provided an unbalanced view of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. They called on the Palestinian Authority to take concrete measures to address Israel's security concerns and eliminate attacks against Israel.

Speaking at this morning's meeting were Representatives of Palestine, Pakistan on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, Bahrain on behalf of the Arab Group, Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, Algeria on behalf of the African Group, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Ecuador, Finland on behalf of the European Union, Israel, Malaysia, Bangladesh, Algeria, Cuba, Indonesia, Mauritius, Tunisia, Brazil, China, Zambia, Morocco, Switzerland, Canada, India, Uruguay, Russian Federation, Jordan, Chile, Qatar, Oman, United Arab Emirates, Costa Rica, Egypt, Kuwait, Libya, Sudan, Belarus, Iran, United States, Turkey and Venezuela.

The Council will resume its special session at 3 p.m. this afternoon to continue to hear statements by speakers.

Statement of High Commissioner for Human Rights

LOUISE ARBOUR, [United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights](#), reminded the Council of her forthcoming visit to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory in which she would have the opportunity to examine developments on the ground, and would conduct field visits, as well as hold briefings and meetings with authorities, civil society and non-governmental organizations, and with United Nations partners.

Ms. Arbour said her primary concern would be to emphasize the obligation to protect civilians during armed confrontation, and the entitlement of all, Palestinians and Israelis alike, to live free from fear, free from want, and free from harm. She looked forward to a productive mission and welcomed the opportunity of sharing with the Council the results of her visit at the third session of the Human Rights Council upon her return.

Statements

MOHAMMED ABU-KOASH (Palestine) said that Beit Hanoun seemed today as if it had been hit by a strong earthquake, just like the refugee camp of Jenin had looked following the Israeli massacre and destruction there. Once again, the Israeli army had unleashed its lethal power against defenceless Palestinian civilians in Beit Hanoun, shelling their homes while they slept and targeting and shelling again those civilians fleeing the earlier bombardments. The perpetrators of this horrendous war crime should be brought to international justice. This crime was on top of the weeklong spate of Israeli destruction and killing in this bereaved town. The sight of torn bodies including those of children amid a pool of blood should prompt swift action by this Council to stop the series of Israeli atrocities committed against Palestinian civilians, and to shoulder its responsibility by pressing for international protection of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

The world lived in an era in which double standards and manipulation of international law had been elevated to the rank of virtue. Palestinians were not bemused by the so-called right of Israel to defend itself while depicting Palestinian resistance as terrorism. Palestinians were not going to invade Israel. It was Israel that has been utilizing for decades various custom-made flimsy pretexts to prolong its notorious occupation of Palestinian land and thereby deny Palestinians their national rights including their right to live free of the yoke of occupation.

MASOOD KHAN (Pakistan), speaking on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), said that the OIC looked forward to the visit of the High Commissioner to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory. It was under exceptional circumstances that the OIC had requested a special session of the Human Rights Council. Some said that too frequent special sessions would devalue the currency of the Human Rights Council. The OIC said too frequent human rights violations targeting one particular region made a mockery of the human rights machinery if it could not respond or take action in real time. It was eerie how gross and systematic violations of human rights of Palestinians had been unleashed with regularity and precision before, during and after Council sessions. In the face of such violations, convening the Human Rights Council, which was a standing body was not an abuse of its mandate. Silence would be an unforgiven dereliction.

A grave human rights situation had been raging in Beit Hanoun in the last fortnight. Recent violations in Beit Hanoun were egregious, without a doubt. Since June this year, continuous military strikes had left more than 350 Palestinians dead. The assaults in Beit Hanoun had intensified killings of civilians and destruction of houses, properties and infrastructure or whatever was left of them after earlier incursions. The use of disproportionate force and resort to collective punishment had broken humanitarian law by targeting unarmed civilians, mostly women and children. The Council should meet its minimum obligations. It should condemn the Israeli killings, call for immediate protection to the beleaguered Palestinian civilians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and dispatch a high-level fact finding mission to Beit Hanoun to investigate the horrors inflicted on its people.

ABDULLA ABDULLATIF ABDULLA (Bahrain), speaking on behalf of the Arab Group, said the Arab Group condemned the continued violation of the Israeli aggression and Israeli assaults in Beit Hanoun, among other places. The deterioration as a result of these Israeli attacks and military operations in northern Gaza which led to the killing of 18 civilians in Beit Hanoun was evidence of the violations by Israel of human rights and international conventions. Continued Israeli violations of human rights reflected more evidence of its disrespect for the Human Rights Council. This could have been avoided if the Council had lived up to its role it set last June to send a fact-finding mission to the Occupied Palestinian Territories. All the actions of the Israelis in the Occupied Palestinian Territories constituted violations of a number of international treaties and of human rights law. The Council should exert pressure on Israel to respect the mandate of the Council. The Arab Group called on the international community to provide protection to the Palestinian civilians and to bring an end to the Israeli violence and send a high-level fact finding mission called for in the resolution.

JUAN ANTONIO FERNANDEZ PALACIOS (Cuba), speaking on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, said the Non-Aligned Movement had historically maintained a clear and unequivocal principled position concerning the recognition of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, the rejection of the illegal occupation of Arab territories by Israel, and the condemnation of mass, flagrant and systematic violations of human rights and international humanitarian law committed by the occupying power. The Israeli escalation against the Palestinian people continued to intensify. More than 280 Palestinians had been killed since 25 June, including more than 60 children. The massacre at Beit Hanoun was another example of the terrible suffering of the Palestinian people as a result of the illegal occupation of their territory by Israel. The Non-Aligned Movement reiterated its deep concern about the continuing deterioration of the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, especially as a result of the excessive, indiscriminate and disproportionate use of force by Israel, the occupying power.

IDRISS JAZAÏRY (Algeria), speaking on behalf of the African Group, expressed dismay at the current situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and condemned the Israeli military intervention in Gaza and in particular the atrocities in Beit Hanoun, with over 300 Palestinian civilians killed or injured including children, women and elderly people. The African Group expressed its deep concern at the continued deterioration of the situation in the occupied territories in Palestine and the use of excessive force by the Israeli army. The African Group urged Israel to respect all existing United Nations resolutions and human rights conventions, in particular, the right to life and property. Algeria urged the Council to dispatch a fact-finding mission to Beit Hanoun to investigate human rights violations resulting from the recent Israeli assaults.

ABDULWAHAB A. ATTAR (Saudi Arabia) said Saudi Arabia was deeply concerned about the deteriorating situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and the total absence of the international community to try to stop the Israeli practices. The international community had not lived up to its obligations to force Israel to respect the decisions of

the Human Rights Council, giving Israel room to continue with its actions. Violations of human rights had gone beyond any expectations. Therefore, Saudi Arabia called for an international conference to call an end to all forms of Israeli aggression and called on the Council to urgently take the decision to disperse a high-level fact finding mission to Beit Hanoun.

DAOUDA MALIGUEYE SENE ([Senegal](#)) expressed deep indignation over the tragic events in Gaza and in particular in Beit Hanoun, which had left many civilian victims. This disproportionate bombardment, followed by the killing of women and children, fuelled the infernal cycle of violence which only increased the hatred and accentuated the daily frustrations due to the occupations. It was necessary for the two parties to stop all escalation of the situation which would hold up the continuation of the Israeli-Palestinian dialogue.

JUAN CARLOS FAIDUTTI ESTRADA ([Ecuador](#)) associated Ecuador with the statements made by the Arab Group, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and Brazil.

VESA HIMANEN ([Finland](#)), speaking on behalf of the [European Union](#), expressed concern about the escalating violence in the Middle East and the unacceptable military operation in Beit Hanoun. The European Union was shocked by the high number of civilian deaths and casualties as well as the destruction of housing and property. The European Union urged Israel to exercise the utmost restraint and to cease its military operations. It was imperative that the humanitarian conditions of the Palestinian people be improved. The European Union also called on the Palestinians to bring an end to acts of violence, including the firing of Kassam rockets. It also called for the release of all prisoners and for the peace process to be put back on track as soon as possible. The European Union emphasized the importance of the agreement for the free movement and access and called on Israel to ensure that the border crossing be left open. The European Union called on Israel to immediately release Palestinian taxes and revenues.

ITZHAK LEVANON ([Israel](#)) recalled that at 6:30 this morning a 57-year old woman was killed and many others were injured by several Kassam rockets fired from the Palestinian territories. The truth was that the Palestinian Authority and its Government shouldered the blame. The blame lay with the Palestinian Authority and its Government because they did nothing to stop the brazen firing of Kassam rockets at Israeli civilian communities from within Beit Hanoun, setting the stage for an Israeli response which became inevitable. Israel did not harbour any hatred of the Palestinian people, and was committed to the political solution of two states according to the Road Map. But to those who had for years fired Kassam rockets at Israeli civilians, who had stored tons of explosives, weaponry and Katuysa rockets, and who imposed terror and fear over an entire country, they must understand that they cannot seek refuge behind women and children and that their behaviour bore the price.

Maybe Israel was naïve when it withdrew from the entire Gaza territory in August 2005, uprooting Israeli families and bringing the country to the brink of civil war. Much to Israel's dismay, instead of universality, impartiality, objectivity, and non-selectivity – which should constitute the values of the Council – Israel saw only evidence of one-sidedness, double standards and politicized decision-making. Those who pushed for the special session were conspicuously ignoring tragedies in other parts of the planet. As long as the children of Sedrot and the children of Ashkelon were unable to live in peace and security, Gaza would be unable to have peace and security. What was needed was a courageous Palestinian decision to change the course from violence and hatred toward peace and cooperation.

HSU KING BEE ([Malaysia](#)) said it was imperative to address gross violations to humanitarian and human rights law. The world continued to witness violations of the rights of Palestinians with impunity. The Security Council has been rendered inadequate once more through the use of the veto power. The Palestinian people continued to suffer. The Israeli military occupation had resulted in the deaths of more than 300 people, most of them civilians. There had been arbitrary detention. The recent killing of civilians in Beit Hanoun had shocked the world. This was not the first time that Israel's occupation had resulted in civilian casualties. Excessive, disproportionate, and indiscriminate attacks by the Israeli army were responsible for those atrocities. Malaysia supported dispatching a fact-finding mission to Beit Hanoun to investigate the human right violations that resulted from the recent Israeli assault.

MUSTAFISUR RAHMAN ([Bangladesh](#)) said the incident of Beit Hanoun had been appalling. Many of the victims were innocent women and children who were sleeping at the time of the attack. This act of killing by Israel was contrary to civilized human behaviour. Since the launching of the recent Israeli operation in Gaza, hundreds of Palestinian civilians had been killed. This brutal and disproportionate use of force was a flagrant violation of international human rights and humanitarian laws. These actions by Israel were also in clear breach of the Geneva Conventions. These violations could not be condoned. Bangladesh called for an immediate end to the atrocities committed against the Palestinian people and demanded a complete and immediate withdrawal of Israeli forces from all Occupied Palestinian Territories. It was incumbent upon the Council to commit itself to uphold human rights which would be demonstrated by the passing of the resolution.

IDRISS JAZAÏRY ([Algeria](#)) said the atrocious attack in Beit Hanoun was another example of the terror that resulted from the Israeli military occupation. The occupation also severely affected the Palestinian economy in Gaza and the West Bank. Israel continued to disregard humanitarian and human rights law. It was the responsibility of the Council to strongly condemn the actions in Beit Hanoun. In addition, the Council should send a fact-finding mission to assess the situation of the victims, to help the survivors, and find ways to protect the Palestinian people from new attacks.

JUAN ANTONIO FERNANDEZ PALACIOS ([Cuba](#)) said the most important of all human rights - the right to life – of the Palestinian people was being systematically violated by Israeli forces. No excuse could justify this atrocity. Any one who wanted to set off bombs against civilian housing should know they were killing indiscriminately. It was shameful that the Security Council had been unable to take appropriate action, due to the veto of the United States. Recent

events had aroused the indignation of the international community and led to the convening of this special session of the Human Rights Council. For years the Commission of Human Rights had been considering this issue and two special sessions of the Human Rights Council had thus far been held. This was testimony of the violations committed by the occupying power. The situation in the field was becoming worse and the suffering of the Palestinians was worsening as Israel mocked the decisions of the Council. Cuba reiterated its support for the establishment of a State for the Palestinian people.

DIAN WIRENGJURIT ([Indonesia](#)) condemned and rejected any indefensible reasoning that sought to annihilate whole residential areas, destroy vital infrastructures and kill innocent civilians. If attacks on that scale were not proportionate with the threat a country actually faced, they violated the laws of war, and what was called "legitimate self-defence" became grossly distorted into wholesale destruction. Indonesia was deeply concerned by the general situation on the ground that continued to deteriorate as military attacks went on to take lives, cause casualties and destroy life-supporting facilities, thereby increasing the occupying power's stranglehold on the civilian population of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, making survival against overwhelming odds ever more difficult.

IQBAL MOHAMED LATONA ([Mauritius](#)) expressed serious concern over the shelling by the Israeli military of a residential area in the occupied Gaza strip, killing Palestinian civilians, mostly women and children, and strongly condemned the disproportionate and indiscriminate use of force by the Israeli army. Mauritius also called on the Palestinians to exercise restraint and to cease attacks against Israeli targets. Mauritius supported the call for the dispatch of a high-level fact finding mission to investigate human rights violations resulting from the recent Israeli assault in Beit Hanoun. Mauritius also welcomed the proposed visit of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to Beit Hanoun and the Gaza Strip and hoped that she would be able to provide the Human Rights Council with firsthand information of her visit in due course.

SAMIR LABIDI ([Tunisia](#)) welcomed the presence of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. It was regrettable that the Council had to call for three special sessions dealing with gross violations of human rights by Israel, including in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The actions in Beit Hanoun showed the international community the repeated Israeli aggressions and violations of international law. Tunisia supported the resumption of the peace process, and called upon the international community to put an end to this cycle of violence, and create mechanisms to protect the Palestinian people. It also asked the Council to take a firm stance to make Israel fully implement the Council's resolutions, and supported sending a fact-finding mission to Beit Hanoun.

SERGIO FLORENCIO ([Brazil](#)) noted that Brazil, along with Ecuador, had been one of the signatories to call for the meeting and both countries were following with concern the growing spiral of violence in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, reflected in the rising death toll for Israeli operations in Northern Gaza and the recent disproportionate military actions in Beit Hanoun. Military operations could not be an excuse to cause civilian casualties, including women, children and the elderly. Brazil and Ecuador considered unacceptable the use of violence by either side as an instrument to achieve justice and peace. The Arab-Israeli conflict carried a powerful symbolic and emotional burden for people throughout the world. Brazil and Ecuador deplored the increasing deterioration of the living conditions and suffering imposed upon the Palestinian population, as stated by some Special Rapporteurs, and called upon Israel to determine responsibilities in the conduct of its military actions, the Palestinians to take the critically important step of stopping rocket attacks by militants, and on both sides to return to talks.

SHA ZUKANG ([China](#)) said that Palestinians were undergoing untold difficulties. The conflict with Israel continued to escalate. The attacks in Beit Hanoun were one more example of the escalation in the conflict. China was opposed to the isolation and blockade of Palestine. It called upon Israel to cease military action immediately, and to resort instead to diplomatic channels. Without a peaceful solution to the conflict in Palestine, there would not be a lasting peace in the Middle East. The Middle East problem should be solved through political negotiation, and China was willing to contribute to a political solution of the conflict. It was high time for the international community to see some results and for the Council to ensure the full respect of its decisions.

LOVE MTESA ([Zambia](#)) said it was unfortunate that the Human Rights Council had to meet again within a very short space of time in a special session and on the same Israeli-Palestinian issue. The killing of civilians in Beit Hanoun while asleep was most unfortunate, unreasonable, unwarranted and uncalled for. The explanation given by the Israeli Government on what caused the tragic event in Beit Hanoun was not convincing and was unacceptable. The targeting of innocent civilians, mostly women and children, could only lead to people who had no intention of becoming militants to becoming just that. Collective punishment must be avoided at all times. Zambia had always stated that Israel and Palestine should live side by side in peace. All that was needed was the political will by the parties involved and respect of past agreements including relevant United Nations resolutions in this regard.

DRISS ISBAYENE ([Morocco](#)) said that the Palestinian people were going through tragic circumstances. In less than six months, the Council had to convene three times to review the situation of human rights in the Middle East, and in this particular case, including the situation in Northern Gaza and the attacks in Beit Hanoun. This last attack resulted in the death of civilians and was in violation of all human right conventions. Targeting civilians, Palestinian authorities, and vital facilities, impeding their free movement, and affecting vulnerable groups were all acts of gross violations of human rights. The international community, including the Council, should call upon Israel to fully respect the rights of Palestinian people. Morocco also called Council members to support the draft resolution to be tabled shortly.

BLAISE GODET ([Switzerland](#)) said recent developments in the Middle East had led to a special session, which showed that the Council was able to intervene promptly in situations of human rights. Violence in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories was of great concern, especially the suffering of the civilians in the region. The spiral of violence

made it increasingly difficult to establish peace between the two parties. It was essential that this violence be stopped and that the international community commit itself to that task. It was Israel's right to respond to attacks against it, although those attacks must respect the principles of proportion and distinction. The attacks in Beit Hanoun killed 18 civilians, mostly women and children. Switzerland had taken special note of the calls for an inquiry to shed more light on these recent events. The protection of the civilian population remained the central focus of the concerns of the Council. The situation in the Palestinian territories had become increasingly difficult for the Palestinians. Switzerland called on all parties to exercise self-restraint so as to achieve the basic objective of the two states to live side by side in peace.

PAUL MEYER ([Canada](#)) said that the Council had been asked to look into the issue of Israeli military incursions into Northern Gaza and the operation in Beit Hanoun. The escalation of violence in the Gaza Strip and the civilian casualties resulting from the Israeli military operation were of great concern to Canada. While Canada recognized Israel's right to protect its citizens from rocket attacks, it continued to urge Israel to act with restraint and take all measures possible to protect civilians. Israel had expressed its regrets for the incident. At the same time, Canada recognized that rocket attacks against Israel must stop and the Palestinian Authority must take concrete measures to address Israel's security concerns and eliminate attacks against Israel. Unfortunately, neither this session of the Council nor the draft resolution presented took into consideration the respective roles and responsibilities of all parties, and thus was not constructive in promoting the human rights and fundamental freedoms of everyone in the region, the rule of law and ultimately encouraging the widely agreed goal of securing long-term peace and stability in the Middle East. Canada was committed to these goals and it would vote against the draft resolution.

SWASHPAWAN SINGH ([India](#)) expressed its grave concern at the continuing violence and loss of innocent lives in West Asia resulting in the exacerbation of the conflict. These developments impacted adversely on the peace process, the pursuit of which was the only viable option for a long standing solution. India was deeply concerned that the situation should not spiral out of control leading to large scale violence and military conflict thereby adversely affecting the peace and stability in the region. India supported the resumption of the peace process through negotiations resulting in the establishment of a viable, independent, sovereign united State of Palestine living in harmony side by side with the State of Israel in accordance with United Nations Security Council resolutions. India joined the international community in calling on all parties to exercise restraint and reject violence in order to create an enabling environment for them to be able to seriously engage in a political dialogue.

RICARDO GONZALEZ ARENAS ([Uruguay](#)) said that this was the second special session dealing with the Occupied Palestinian Territory. It had been difficult for the international community to play a constructive role in the area. Nevertheless, the international community should not despair and should continue in its efforts to reach a peaceful solution of the conflict. It was clear that attitudes on both sides had made the peaceful solution of the conflict difficult. Uruguay condemned the attacks in Beit Hanoun, and also called for an end of rocket attacks by Palestinians into Israeli urban areas. It urged the parties to fully respect international standards and humanitarian law.

VALERY LOSHCHININ ([Russian Federation](#)) said the Russian Federation was seriously concerned about the deteriorating situation in the Middle East and the tragedy in Beit Hanoun. The actions by the Israeli army could not be justified. Such a disproportionate and indiscriminate use of force was unacceptable and should be condemned. The current escalation of force was occurring when the political forces of Palestine were endeavoring to set up a coalition government which could ensure constructive interaction with Israel. Both sides must put an end to violence and take urgent measures to stabilize the situation and restore a political dialogue. The Russian Federation called upon the parties to take these steps as a necessary step to a lasting peace.

BASHAR ABU-TALEB ([Jordan](#)) said the large-scale Israeli military operation in Gaza and the indiscriminate targeting and killing of civilians in Beit Hanoun were by no means justifiable. Indeed, military strikes that destroyed vital infrastructure and intimidated the civilian population constituted a form of collective punishment. They were, thus, in contravention of the Fourth Geneva Convention, the provisions of which were continually being violated by Israel. Jordan strongly condemned the hideous massacre of Palestinian civilians while peacefully asleep inside their homes in Beit Hanoun. Jordan, therefore, called upon the international community to exert more efforts to provide immediate protection to Palestinian civilians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

JUAN MARTABIT ([Chile](#)) said what happened in Beit Hanoun should not leave the sights of the international community and the Human Rights Council. As the Council was establishing its own standards for promoting and protecting human rights it was witnessing such atrocities. Israel was entitled to defend itself, but it must also exercise maximum self-restraint. Chile considered it essential to improve the humanitarian situation currently faced by the Palestinian population in Gaza. Chile called on Palestinian militia members to cease their attacks against Israel and for prisoners being held by Hamas to be released. The solution to the situation in Palestine was to fulfill the principles of the Road Map. Chile believed that the Council must pay attention to other human rights situations as well, including that occurring in Darfur.

NASSER RASHID AL NUAIMI ([Qatar](#)) said this was the third special session of the Council in which the victims were the same, Palestinian and Lebanese, and the perpetrator was the same: Israel. Other massacres had been happening for decades. Qatar asked if the international community had forgotten the extent of these massacres, and wondered if there would be a just and peaceful solution to the situation of the Palestinian people and the Middle East. Qatar called upon the international community to act immediately to bring about a comprehensive and just solution to the conflict in the Middle East. Qatar also called upon members of the Council to support the draft resolution under consideration and to send a high-level fact finding mission to Beit Hanoun.

AHMED MOHAMED MASOUD AL RIYAMI (Oman) said the aggression against the Palestinians at the hands of the Israeli forces constituted a flagrant violation to international conventions. There was no doubt that the Council had the mandate to deal with such cases in accordance with the resolution establishing it. Oman called on the Human Rights Council to assume responsibility to call on Israel to take immediate measures to put an end to its violent acts.

ADEL ESSA HUR AL MAHRI (United Arab Emirates) said the deterioration of the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory called for the international community to act promptly and firmly to stop the Israeli aggression. The world had been stunned by the massacre which the Israeli occupation force carried out in Beit Hanoun that had resulted in the deaths of innocent civilians. The United Arab Emirates called upon the Council to condemn the actions of Israel, protect the rights of the Palestinian people, and send a fact-finding mission to Beit Hanoun to investigate the gross violations of human rights committed there.

LUIS ALBERTO VARELA QUIRÓS (Costa Rica) said for the second time in less than three years the Israel military had attacked the city of Beit Hanoun taking the lives of women and children. Due to the lack of action by the Security Council, the current special session of the Human Rights Council was called for. The excuse of the Israeli Government that the attack was an error was interpreted that these events would not be repeated. It was time to put an end to these acts and to recommence peace talks in the region with the participation of all parties involved.

SAMEH SHOUKRY (Egypt) said Egypt condemned strongly the Israeli incursion in Gaza and the massacre in Beit Hanoun. These violations constituted part of a deliberate policy of the Israeli Government to utilize its vast military capabilities, in an exaggerated manner that was disproportionate to any alleged security needs, in order to politically oppress the Palestinian people and subjugate them to Israeli will. The Council had failed to fulfil its obligations towards the protection of the human rights of the Palestinian people and to implement decisions reached in that context. The current situation necessitated that the Human Rights Council rise to its obligations and deliver a strong message to Israel to protect the rights of the Palestinian people through adopting the proposed draft resolution presented before the session by consensus and to insure the creation of a high-level fact finding mission to conclude its work at the earlier possible time.

NAJEEB AL-BADER (Kuwait) said the Council meeting was proof that severe violations of human rights to alestinian civilians were taking place. The occupying forces were violating the Geneva Convention, as well as other human rights instruments. Israel was fully responsible for these serious violations, last of which took place in Beit Hanoun, which led to scores of killed and injured civilians. Those responsible should be brought before a court and tried. The international community should assume its responsibility and move away from the politicization of such problems and move to address the humanitarian and human rights situation.

MURAD HAMAIMA (Libya) condemned strongly the massacre in Beit Hanoun. Libya welcomed the presence by the High Commissioner, but it would have liked to have heard the statement by the High Commissioner reflect what happened in Beit Hanoun, and portray the tragic situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. It was up to the Council to review its mandate to ensure the whole protection of the Palestinian people, lest it would lose its credibility.

OMAR DAHAB MOHAMED (Sudan) said the last monstrous attack by Israeli forces in Beit Hanoun was not the first in the long history of attacks, and would probably not be the last. Occupation had only political excuses and that occupation was the product of racist and political policies. The United Nations was not only surprised by the attack in Beit Hanoun, but also by the statement by a Republican party official in the United State who said the acts of Israel was a "godly decision". The United Nations and the Human Rights Council had a duty to undertake all necessary measures to stop collective punishment and to end the occupation of the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

EVGENY LAZAREV (Belarus) expressed shock and concern over the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, in particular with reference to the attacks in Beit Hanoun. The Council should not remain silent and should ensure the full implementation of all its resolutions on the human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Belarus supported the draft resolution calling for the dispatch of a fact-finding mission to Beit Hanoun.

ALIREZA MOAIYERI (Iran) said at a time when the Palestinian people were already suffering from a grave deterioration of their humanitarian situation as a result of the blockade imposed on them for having democratically elected their government, the Israeli regime had escalated yet again another round of aggressions in Palestinian territory, especially in the Gaza Strip and Beit Hanoun. All these designs and the ones committed previously against the Palestinian people had been going on while there had been meaningful failure in cooperation for the implementation of the resolution adopted by the first special session of the Human Rights Council. Indeed, the impunity which Israel had been allowed gave it the opportunity to carry out its crimes so far and even to increase its aggressive policies and terrorist acts against innocent civilians under false pretext. The Human Rights Council had an enormous responsibility to take necessary and prompt steps with a view to putting an end to this aggression and the protection of civilians from murder, devastation and human rights violations.

WARREN W. TICHENOR (United States) said the injuries and loss of life in Beit Hanoun, and especially the deaths of a number of young children, were tragic. That day, President Bush conveyed deepest condolences on behalf of the United States and called on all parties to act with care so as to avoid any harm to innocent civilians. The Human Rights Council should not address particular military actions taken during a period of armed conflict that were clearly governed by the law of war. It was indeed unfortunate that the Human Rights Council was using its limited resources to discuss subjects not squarely within its mandate when there were pressing concerns that fell explicitly within its purview. With respect to the text of the resolution under consideration, rather than attempting to honestly shed light on all the facts contributing to the violence in Gaza, the resolution was a blatant effort to exploit the tragic incident in

Beit Hanoun to advance an unbalanced view of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The United States remained committed to the Road Map and sought to realize the vision of two States – Israeli and Palestine, living side by side, in peace and security.

TURKEKUL KURTTEKIN ([Turkey](#)) recalled that Turkey had, on 3 November, expressed deep concern about the wide-scale Israeli military operation in Northern Gaza which caused a death toll of innocent civilians, including children. The Government also cautioned against the negative consequences for the whole region of such operation which undermined the grounds for peace. In spite of the shared concerns shared and appeals made by a vast majority of the international community, the Israeli military operation carried out on 8 November in Beit Hanoun, causing the death of at least 18 Palestinians, including eight children and seven women, had led to worldwide shock. The disproportionate and indiscriminate use of force by Israel in response to the rockets fired on Israeli territory did not serve the efforts to achieve a lasting peace, security and stability in the Middle East. At this critical juncture when efforts for reconciliation between Palestinians for the formation of a national unity government were expected to bear fruit and some encouraging signals for the release of the abducted Israeli soldier and the release of Palestinian ministers and legislators detained in Israel had emerged, it was imperative for the concerned parties to act in a responsible manner.

OSCAR CARVALLO ([Venezuela](#)) condemned the gross human rights violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Venezuela expressed its full support for the realization of the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. It condemned strongly the recent Israeli military operation in Northern Gaza and in the town of Beit Hanoun, and called for the immediate cease of hostilities and the withdrawal of the Israeli troops from the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

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