
HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL HOLDS GENERAL DEBATE ON HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN PALESTINE AND OTHER OCCUPIED ARAB TERRITORIES

22 March 2010

The Human Rights Council this afternoon held a general debate on the human rights situation in Palestine and other Occupied Arab Territories.

Israel, speaking as a concerned country, said for nearly 62 years, the State of Israel had called upon its neighbours to live in peace, side by side, but despite that aspiration, conflict and strife had continued in much of the region. That reality of a continuing conflict had brought suffering to many in the region, and the Israelis had felt that pain. Palestinians, too, had suffered, and had aspirations for a better future for their families and communities, as did Syrians.

Palestine, speaking as a concerned country, said Israel's insistence to remain the occupying power was very clear by its actions; Israel continued its expansion of settlements and illegal construction on Arab land confiscated by force, which could only lead to the suffering of Arab people. Palestine would not go back to negotiations without an immediate and unconditional cease of all of Israel's settlement activities.

Syria, speaking as a concerned country, said Israel had transformed the Middle East into a place of tension. Since its inception in 1948, Israel had been starting wars and attacking others. It had not ceased to attack the lands of its neighbours, all actions undertaken to force others into exile. Israel had never wanted peace and would never want peace. If Israel wanted peace all it would have to do was comply by international instruments.

In the general debate, speakers observed, among other issues, that during the last 42 years Israel had pursued a policy of wanton repression in the Occupied Palestinian Territories through the use of disproportionate force, deliberate destruction of infrastructure, killing of civilians and eliminating the religious and cultural heritage of Palestine. The human rights situation in the occupied Syrian Golan was also deteriorating as a result of the Israeli occupation and Israel was regularly violating the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention, those of international law, and had committed crimes against humanity, as highlighted by the Goldstone report. Both the Palestinian Authority and the Government of Israel should engage in preventing, investigating, and remedying violations of international law, respect previous agreements, and coordinate steps towards maintaining peace in the region. Despite all requests and calls for an end of settlement activities by Israel, those activities continued unabated. Some condemned the recent decision to build 1,600 new settlements in the Occupied Territories. Only an immediate halt to all illegal activities, including human rights violations, siege and blockades and, above all, the occupation, would lead to sustainable peace in the region, allowing for a two State solution.

Delegations recalled that in 2007, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon had voiced disappointment at the Council for singling out Israel as the only item on the agenda. Speakers regretted that the situation in the Middle East had not improved since the last Council session on the topic and that no progress on peace had been realized after the Goldstone report. The recommendations of that report had not been fully implemented, speakers said, underscoring the need for them to be applied in order to end the culture of impunity. Also, both Israel and the Palestinian Authority should conduct an independent investigation so that justice could be carried out. Several delegations reiterated the need to promptly reengage in negotiations. Only the political determination of the parties to find a solution to the conflict could solve the situation and lead to a lasting improvement of the human rights of the parties involved.

Speaking in the interactive dialogue were Spain on behalf of the European Union, Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, Nigeria on behalf of the African Group, Pakistan on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, Sudan on behalf of the Arab Group, Bahrain, Indonesia, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the Russian Federation, Cuba, the United States, Bangladesh, Turkey, Oman, Morocco, Algeria, Switzerland, Malaysia, Iceland, Yemen, Kuwait, Libya, Iran, Sri Lanka, League of Arab States, Tunisia, Sudan, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, United Arab Emirates, and Lebanon.

Also speaking were representatives of Union of Arab Jurists, United Nations Watch, the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs of the World Council of Churches, and the Coordinating Board of Jewish Organizations.

Speaking in a right of reply were Israel, Palestine, Algeria, Iran, and Lebanon.

The next meeting of the Council will be on Tuesday, 23 March at 9 a.m., when it will conclude its general debate on the human rights situation in Palestine and other Occupied Arab territories, to be followed by a general debate on the follow-up and implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action.

Statements by Concerned Country and Concerned Party

AHARON LESHNO-YAAR ([Israel](#)), speaking as a concerned country, said the same type of rocket had been used to kill Israeli children that the Palestinian representative in this chamber had referred to as a "firecracker". Justice Goldstone had written that the firing of those rockets amounted to war crimes. Hamas and their allies continued to fire them at civilians in Israel, and the Council was doing nothing about it – and expected that Israel did nothing. It was frustrating; for nearly 62 years, the State of Israel had called upon its neighbours to live in peace, side by side, but despite that aspiration, and the many steps taken to build confidence, conflict and strife continued in much of the region. That reality of a continuing conflict had brought suffering to many in the region, and the Israelis had felt that pain. Palestinians, too, had suffered, and had aspirations for a better future for their families and communities, as did Syrians, seeking development and freedom for better lives and more opportunities.

The State of Israel was the national home of the Jewish people, who returned to their land after 2,000 years. Zionism was the national liberation movement of the Jewish people. The United Nations decided in 1947 to partition the land into two States, and Israel came into being in 1949. During the next 19 years, an Arab State was not formed on the Palestinian territories; therefore it was untrue to say that it had not come into being merely because Israel seized the territory. Israel believed that a two-State solution was the only solution, believing that that was the only way for all to live side by side in peace with their neighbours. Much that took place in this hall was not guided by friends of those aspirations – it had been transformed into yet another painful battleground. The Council had not built hope or confidence, but had nurtured bitterness and anger, mistrust and suspicion. The Council spent a disproportionate amount of time on this one issue. Any person of good faith would agree that Israel was making a genuine attempt to deal with the situation. The cynicism of the draft resolutions before the Council and the atmosphere of the forum were in danger of harming the United Nations and the path towards peace in the Middle East.

IBRAHIM KHRAISHI ([Palestine](#)), speaking as a concerned party, welcomed the second periodic report of the High Commissioner and agreed that occupation was the main cause of human rights violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Palestine confirmed the importance of the recommendations, as well as the necessity that they be implemented by all parties, particularly Israel. Israel's insistence on remaining the occupying power was very clear by its actions: Israel continued its expansion of settlements and illegal construction on Arab land confiscated by force, which could only lead to the suffering of Arab people. The listing of Arab religious sites as Jewish heritage sites further ran counter to efforts to consolidate the values Palestine wished to see achieved. Palestine would not go back to negotiations without an immediate and unconditional cessation of all of Israel's settlement activities. The excavation works and the destruction of houses around Jerusalem also had to be ended immediately. That led to the

displacement of people, which was what Israel sought.

Palestine called on the international community to put pressure on Israel to abide by international legitimacy. Maintaining military roadblocks prevented the free movement of the Palestinian people; obstructed all links between Palestinian people and the holy sites in Jerusalem; and Israel continued to detain tens of thousands of Palestinians. That was yet another proof of Israel's occupation policy, which would, however, not be beneficial in the long run. The international community should shoulder its responsibility. As for Israel, the authorities had to undertake independent investigations based on international criteria, which was an important condition in dealing with all allegations of alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity. Israel also had to immediately lift the unjust closure of the Gaza Strip; allow access of medical equipment, food and other items; and stop targeting unarmed civilians. In conclusion, Palestine called on all Member States to adopt the draft resolutions regarding the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people; on the settlements; and on decisions on human rights violations of the Palestinian people. That would reinforce the Council's credibility.

FAYSAL KHABBAS HAMOUI ([Syria](#)), speaking as a concerned country, said Syria joined statements made by Pakistan on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Conference, Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and Sudan on behalf of the Arab Group. Israel had transformed the Middle East into a place of tension. Since its inception in 1948, Israel had been starting wars and attacking others. It had not ceased to attack the lands of its neighbours and had undertaken all actions to force others into exile. Syria had seen occupation and colonization. However, its people had refused to adopt Israeli citizenship. All of that was taking place in full view of the International Red Cross and others. Israel also refused to follow the Fact-Finding Mission report recommendations, especially those from Judge Goldstone, as they pointed to the fact that Israeli policies should be condemned. Fortunately, one of Israel's recent attempts had failed. They had waited for justice to be served and justice would be served. Israel had opted for colonization over a policy of peace. In the long run it was not in Israel's interest to follow that course of action, nor would it lead to stability and peace. Israel had never wanted peace and would never want peace. They were obstinate. If Israel wanted peace all it would have to do would be to comply with international instruments. That would include releasing more than 500 prisoners, including Syrians who had been detained for roughly 25 years.

General Debate on the Human Rights Situation in Palestine and Other Occupied Arab Territories

JAVIER GARRIGUES ([Spain](#)), speaking on behalf of the [European Union](#), reaffirmed distress over the humanitarian and human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and reiterated the need to promptly re-engage in negotiations. Both the Palestinian Authority and the Government of Israel should engage in preventing, investigating, and remedying violations of international law, respect previous agreements, and coordinate steps towards maintaining peace in the region. Both parties should fully adhere to international humanitarian and human rights law, combat impunity and focus on the principle of accountability. The European Union urged the timely arrival of a political solution culminating in an independent, democratic and viable Palestinian State. It further expressed concern at the humanitarian and human rights situation in the Gaza Strip and asked Israel to promote the movement and flow of commercial goods, humanitarian and reconstruction aid and persons to and from Gaza. There should also be a cessation of the firing of Khassam missiles from the Gaza Strip. Another area of deep concern was the continuation of settlement activities, and the European Union condemned the decision to build new housing units in East Jerusalem. The European Union wished to reaffirm its support for the Arab Peace Initiative. The report by the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict included allegations of grave violations of international humanitarian law, and the parties were invited to implement the recommendations contained therein.

HISHAM BADR ([Egypt](#)), speaking on behalf of the [Non-Aligned Movement](#), expressed grave concern about the unilateral measures by Israel aimed at altering the status and demographic composition of the Occupied Palestinian Territories, its continuation of unlawful settlement activities and its illegal blockade on the Palestinian civilian population in Gaza. That blockade was the cause of the current severe humanitarian crisis, impeding reconstruction and depriving the Gaza population from the full range of their human rights. The Non-Aligned Movement urged Israel to immediately cease all illegal practices in and around East Jerusalem as they gravely undermined the contiguity, integrity, viability and unity of the Occupied Palestinian Territories and jeopardized the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. The Movement fully supported the three draft resolutions presented to the Council and called on all members to support them. The Movement expressed its grave concern for the delay in issuance of the report of the Secretary-General regarding the human rights situation in occupied Syrian Golan. It further demanded that Israel comply with Security Council resolution 497 (1981) and withdraw fully from the occupied Syrian Golan to the lines of 4 June 1967 and reiterated its demand for Israel to comply immediately and unconditionally with the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention and to apply them to the Syrian detainees in the occupied Syrian Golan.

OSITADINMA ANAEDU ([Nigeria](#)), speaking on behalf of the [African Group](#), expressed concern over the lack of implementation of numerous relevant United Nations human rights instruments. The African position had been principled, firm and unambiguous. The African Union at the highest political level had called for the settlement of the situation in accordance with international law. At this juncture, the African Group welcomed the draft resolution, which, along with the Goldstone report, had documented human rights violations in Gaza. It identified that there had been a lack of respect for the right to life and other rights. The African Group also endorsed a recommendation that would call on Israel to lift the blockade on Gaza, among other things. In conclusion, the African Group strongly supported a peaceful settlement and called on Israel to implement all United Nations instruments on this matter, urgently.

ZAMIR AKRAM ([Pakistan](#)), speaking on behalf of the [Organization of the Islamic Conference](#), said over the last 42 years Israel had pursued a policy of wanton repression in the Occupied Palestinian Territories through the use of disproportionate force, deliberate destruction of infrastructure, killing of civilians and eliminating the religious and cultural heritage of Palestine. Thousands of innocent Palestinians had suffered torture and other degrading punishments. While the world was still asking for independent investigations for the damage to Palestinian life and property by Israel's deadly attacks in Gaza – that had led to the killing of thousands of innocent Palestinians under the guise of fighting terrorism – Israel had redoubled its efforts to eliminate the religious and cultural heritage of Palestinians. The Organization of the Islamic Conference squarely rejected Israeli pronouncements and considered them as extremely counterproductive to international peace efforts. Under such conditions there could be no hope for a peace process in the Middle East or for the protection of human rights. Only an immediate halt to all illegal activities including settlements, human rights violations, siege and blockades and, above all, to the occupation, would lead to sustainable peace in the region, allowing for a two-State solution. The human rights situation in the occupied Syrian Golan was also deteriorating as a result of the Israeli occupation, which continued to violate the civil and political rights and economic, social and cultural rights of the Syrian population. The Organization of the Islamic Conference had presented its traditional resolutions, and hoped that the Council would be able to support them.

HAMZA AHMED ([Sudan](#)), speaking on behalf of the [Arab Group](#), reiterated that all parties should move forward to implement the recommendations according to their mandate and in an urgent manner. The Arab Group requested that both parties, Israel and the Palestinian authorities, conduct an independent investigation so that justice could be carried out. It further recommended that the Swiss Government work to reconvene a conference on measures to enforce the Fourth Geneva Convention in the Occupied Palestinian Territory before the end of the year and that the High Commissioner for Human Rights consider establishing a compensation fund for Palestinian victims. The Arab Group also emphasized the need that the High Commissioner to set up an independent expert committee to evaluate the follow-up of the requests of the two parties and that she provide that committee all the support that was necessary for it to conduct its mission. The Group observed that the International Committee of the Red Cross played an important role throughout the region, and therefore called on that organization to organize an urgent debate on the use of weapons that were prohibited at the international level. Also, the Arab Group expressed concern at the fact that the High Commissioner's Office had not yet published the report of the Secretary-General on the human rights situation in the occupied Syrian Golan although the mission had visited that region more than one year ago.

MUNA ABBAS RADHI ([Bahrain](#)) said Bahrain was very concerned about the deteriorating situation in different parts of the Occupied Territories. It condemned the fact that Israel had decided to build a Synagogue very near an Islamic holy site. The human rights situation in the Occupied Territories had led to international concern. Bahrain regretted that the Secretary-General's report on human rights in the Syrian Golan Heights had been put out so late. It called on the international community to guarantee the protection of the Palestinian people and their right to self-determination and statehood with East Jerusalem as their capital.

DIAN TRIANSYAH DJANI ([Indonesia](#)) said Indonesia remained deeply concerned about the human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, particularly in the Gaza Strip, where living conditions had deteriorated sharply since the excessive and disproportionate aggression of Operation Cast Lead. No progress on peace had been realized after the Goldstone report, and the recommendations of the latter had not been fully implemented. There were blatant infringements of international law, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention, which prohibited the tampering with or modification of religious heritage sites in occupied areas, and Israel should halt that provocative and illegal policy, as such activities did nothing but increase tensions and hostilities in the region and ultimately hindered efforts towards a long-awaited peace process. The report of the High Commissioner outlined many troubling incidents and painted a picture of unacceptable suffering and despair for the Palestinian people. It was undoubted that the Occupation had resulted in widespread violations of the civil and political rights and economic, social and cultural rights of the Palestinian people, and there were breaches of the fundamental human rights to water, sanitation and decent housing, as well as to freedom of religion. All of those violations, alongside documented incidences of torture and arbitrary detention, were a testament to the occupying power's clear disregard for basic human rights. Indonesia

deeply regretted that the protracted conflict remained unresolved, and expressed steadfast support to the diplomatic efforts by the international community to find a just and comprehensive two-State solution leading to the establishment of an independent and democratic State of Palestine.

FAISAL ABDULLA AL-HENZAB ([Qatar](#)) said the rights of the people of the Occupied Palestinian Territories and of the Occupied Arab Territories had significantly deteriorated, with unilateral aggressive actions by the occupying power taking place on a daily basis. Further, the blockade of Gaza threatened to make the situation explode to an extent that would threaten peace and stability of the whole region. As the High Commissioner had mentioned, Israeli forces continued to violate the basic rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to life. In addition, instances of arbitrary detention, restriction to the exercise of freedom of religion and freedom of movement, as well as violence against children and women, had taken place. All of that reflected the need for the recommendations of the Goldstone report to be applied to bring an end to the culture of impunity. Moreover, the economic, social and cultural rights of Syrian detainees in Golan Heights should be respected. However, that could not be achieved unless Israel retreated to the lines of 1947.

ABDULWAHAB ABDULSALAM ATTAR ([Saudi Arabia](#)) said the residents of the Palestinian territories continued to suffer grave human rights violations. The occupier continued to displace people and to demolish houses, defying international norms. Saudi Arabia condemned decisions to increase the number of settlements and the recent decision to build 1,600 new settlements in the Occupied Territories. Israel was continuing to intensify its settlement policy. Saudi Arabia called for the adoption of that draft resolution in that regard. International bodies headed by the Council had to bring an end to the practice of illegal settlements in the Territories.

HISHAM BADR ([Egypt](#)) observed that the number of sessions devoted to this topic was not a goal in itself. The issue was results, and the resolutions taken during this session were meant to send a strong message from the international community to Israel so that it put an end to occupation and to practices that were a systematic and daily violation of the rights of the Palestinian people and those in the Occupied Syrian Golan and other territories. Israel had ignored all human rights guaranteed by international documents and had ignored the realities – not just the geographical ones, but also the cultural rights of those people – as seen by the annexation of the Bilal Mosque. Israel also continued to defy the international community by undermining the area around the Al-Aqsa Mosque and, through the Gaza blockade, had created a humanitarian disaster affecting 1.5 million people. Egypt rejected all attempts by Israel to dismember Palestinian lands and change the geography and landscape of the Occupied Territories, including East Jerusalem. Egypt continued to deplore the lack of efforts for dialogue between the two parties leading towards a comprehensive and just peace, with two States, and East Jerusalem as the capital of the Palestinian State. Egypt believed the occupation was illegal and a violation of international laws including the United Nations Charter and Security Council resolution 497 of 1981. Israel should respect all United Nations resolutions on the issue, and pressure should be brought to bear on Israel in that regard, as well as to free all prisoners. What was at stake was the credibility of the Council. It was imperative to apply the same norms to all without exception.

VALERY LOSHCININ ([Russian Federation](#)) said the Russian Federation was concerned by ongoing human rights violations in the Occupied Arab Territories, including in the Golan Heights. It supported negotiations to achieve an equitable solution to the Middle East conflict. A meeting of the Quartet of international facilitators had taken place in Moscow recently in order to seek ways to solve the Middle East problem. The Quartet had criticized Israel's decision to build new settlements and had called on the Israeli Government to halt all of its settlement activities. Consultations were under way and it was hoped that it would be possible to agree to a wording acceptable to all, in particular the need to transform efforts into a ceasefire. The Russian Federation was also concerned about the grave humanitarian situation caused by the blockade of Gaza. However, Israel's legitimate security concerns had also to be taken into account. In that context, the rocket fire from Gaza was condemned and the Russian Federation also called for the freeing of Israeli soldier, Gilad Shalit.

PABLO BERTI OLIVA ([Cuba](#)) said Cuba adhered to the statement delivered by Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. They had witnessed the impunity committed by the occupying forces. At this meeting, they had seen that Israel was continuing with its expansive policies. Cuba reiterated its condemnation of those actions. The construction and illegal settlement of lands throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territories had to stop immediately. Israel also continued to violate the human rights of Syrian citizens. Cuba thus supported the Non-Aligned Movement's concern on the situation of human rights in the Occupied Golan Heights. Cuba reaffirmed its unequivocal support for the Arab people against occupation as well as the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and statehood with East Jerusalem as their capital.

EILEEN CHAMBERLAIN DONAHOE ([United States](#)) said the Council had too often been exploited as a platform from which to single out Israel, while ignoring other significant human rights situations. That unbalanced approach had undermined the credibility of the Council, and the United States strongly encouraged it to eliminate the institutional bias embodied by that agenda item and cease convening highly politicized and unconstructive special sessions focusing solely on alleged violations of international law by Israel. The unbalanced attention devoted to Israel was unconstructive for the larger peace process, and also came at the cost of diminishing the ability of Council members to focus on other urgent and pressing problems around the world. The human rights record of States should be scrutinized under a common rubric, rather than having a separate standing agenda item for a specific country. All Governments were responsible for abiding by their international human rights law obligations. Israel, like every other country, should examine its own human rights record and the Palestinians should examine their human rights record. The Council should develop a more constructive approach to these issues and the United States would work to ensure that it was tackling the critical human rights issues of this era.

MUSTAFIZUR RAHMAN ([Bangladesh](#)) said the situation in the Occupied Arab Territories remained a permanent concern for Bangladesh. The Goldstone report had provided a comprehensive account of the plight of the people of the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Despite all requests and calls for an end of settlement activities by Israel, those activities continued unabated, as well as the construction of separation walls despite contrary recommendations. The Palestinian people had been obstructed from accessing natural resources and poverty and unemployment had risen to alarming levels due to deliberate actions by the occupying power. Israel regularly violated the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention and those of international law and committed crimes against humanity, as highlighted by the Goldstone report. The Council had to take a clear stand on the violation of fundamental human rights and stand by the side of the oppressed; the Palestinians were entitled to a live in dignity.

AHMET UZUMCU ([Turkey](#)) said Turkey regretted that the situation in the Middle East had not improved since the last Council session on the topic. Turkey had examined the High Commissioner's report, which provided an objective description of the human rights situation in the region. If implemented, the recommendations could contribute to the improvement of the human rights situation. All efforts made by the Council should serve the ultimate objective of reaching a comprehensive and durable solution. Unilateral actions undermining such efforts could fuel a new cycle of violence and had to stop. The decision to launch proximity talks between Israel and Palestine was a positive step. Turkey hoped that those talks would restore confidence between parties and pave the way for substantive, comprehensive negotiations. The peace process had to be reactivated on all its tracks without further delay and brought to a conclusion as early as possible.

MOHAMED SAUD AL-RAWAHI ([Oman](#)) said the thirteenth session of the Human Rights Council was being held as the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and other Occupied Arab Territories was seeing a notable escalation in the systematic aggression by the Occupying Authorities. The last war against Gaza had been a clear violation of international human rights and humanitarian law, and of the Fourth Geneva Convention. The policies of closure, destruction, roadblocks, wall building, settlement activities and excavations around Al-Aqsa were only a consolidation of the efforts to deny an independent Palestinian State. The Arab States had extended their hand to Israel through the Arab Peace Initiative. The language of war would lead nowhere – violence would only lead to more violence. The road to peace was the only solution for the Palestinian question. There should be a resumption of peace activities and peace should be given a chance.

OMAR HILAIE ([Morocco](#)) said this meeting was being held in a unique international context. Efforts had been made by various parties to bring parties to the negotiating table and there had been calls for the resumption of negotiations, which was very important. Morocco condemned Israel's creation of 1,600 new housing units in the Occupied Territories, which was against international laws and constituted a flagrant violation of United Nations resolutions. Morocco endorsed the statements issued by the United Nations Secretary-General and the American Vice-President. To achieve peace, Israel had to stop its abuses; otherwise it was not possible that Palestinians could enjoy their fundamental human rights. In view of the deplorable situation, priority had to be given to achieving peace and stopping Israel's de facto occupation. The United Nations had to play the role incumbent on it so as to achieve peaceful coexistence between the two sides, and the creation of a Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital.

IDRISS JAZAIRY ([Algeria](#)) expressed concern that there had been an escalation in aggression in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, particularly with the annexation of historic sites. It was urgent to bring to an end the impunity in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The Council had to send a clear message to the occupying power. Just and lasting peace could only be attained once the rights of the Palestinian people were respected. That would also include the cessation of violence in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights. Algeria called on the Council to adopt the draft resolution before it.

DANTE MARTINELLI ([Switzerland](#)) said only the political determination of the parties to find a solution to the conflict could solve the situation and lead to a lasting improvement of the human rights of the parties involved. The severity of the restriction on the movement of those in the Gaza Strip ran counter to international human rights and humanitarian law, as well as the will of the international community, which had made considerable funds available for reconstruction that had not yet begun, causing more suffering. It was key that a solution was found that took into account the imperatives of security in order to find a lasting improvement of the conditions of life in Gaza. Continuing colonization made it more difficult to find a lasting solution, and cast doubts as to Israel's will to support the construction of a viable Palestinian State. The situation in East Jerusalem was particularly alarming, where the destruction of housing and the revocation of residency permits were also a violation of international law. Switzerland was very concerned by increasing restrictions on freedom of organization and movement for organizations working in the field. Violations of human rights had to stop, and the violators brought to justice. For its part, the Palestinian Authority should implement the High Commissioner's recommendations with regard to crimes of honour.

HASHIM OTHMAN ([Malaysia](#)) said Malaysia reaffirmed the significance of this agenda item on the human rights situation in Palestine and other Occupied Arab Territories that allowed the international community to take action on areas of concern. When Israel had participated in the Universal Periodic Review exercise, no reference had been made to the Occupied Palestinian Territories and other Occupied Arab Territories, Malaysia observed. Operation Cast Lead and the building of the separation wall, among other actions, now underscored the need for urgent international consensus and international action to tackle the growing culture of impunity in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and other Occupied Arab Territories.

VERTURLIDI THOR STEFANSSON ([Iceland](#)) said the situation remained of grave concern and continued to threaten stability beyond the Middle East region. The situation remained unacceptable by international standards. It would take decades to restore the underground water supplies. Iceland condemned Israel's decision to set up new housing in East Jerusalem. Every effort had to be made to improve the human rights and the humanitarian situation of the Palestinian people. Those included their freedom of movement, and of expression, including their freedom to worship. The current situation, as illustrated in this debate, was unacceptable.

IBRAHIM SAIED MOHAMED AL-ADOOFI ([Yemen](#)) said the continuing occupation of the Occupied Palestinian Territories and the Syrian Golan was a clear violation of all international instruments including the United Nations Charter and other international instruments. Israel was continuing illegal settlement activities, and other violations such as the building of the Separation Wall, the construction around the Al-Aqsa Mosque, and was causing the suffering of Palestinian civilians. The threat to peace and security in the region was undeniable. The Human Rights Council and the international community as a whole were called upon today to shoulder their responsibilities. A Conference of the High Contracting Parties of the Fourth Geneva Convention should be called to ensure that Israel applied the Convention. A continuation of silence by the international community encouraged Israel to act as a State above the law and to ignore international human rights and humanitarian law. Israel must abide by the Fourth Geneva Convention in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and provide immediate protection to Palestinian civilians, and abide by article 146 of the Convention on the prosecution of those responsible for grave violations of the Convention.

DHARAR ABDUL-RAZZAK RAZZOQI ([Kuwait](#)) said there was a need to ask ourselves what progress had been made since the Council had last held a debate on the Occupied Arab Territories. The situation in those territories had worsened to unprecedented levels; Israel had passed at least 21 bills discriminating against Palestinians; the closure of Gaza had continued with not a single bag of cement being allowed into Gaza; there was a new tone with the threat of using force against Lebanon and against Syria; and settlement activities were taking place at unprecedented levels. The situation in the Occupied Arab Territories and in Golan Heights was dire and the people were helpless. There was no peace in the land of peace.

ADEL SHALTUT ([Libya](#)) said Israel had committed the most abject crimes against humanity. The Goldstone report had lifted the veil on atrocities committed by Israel. Unfortunately, the recommendations in the report had not been fulfilled to date, since some large powers had not seriously tried to translate them. The Security Council had not done what it needed to do. Unfortunately, force was only used against the Third World. Israel clearly planned to build over 1,000 new settlements. They erected a wall to separate people. There was a blockade, which was smashing people. Women were giving birth at checkpoints and dying and seeing their children die. What was being done about these rights that were being violated? International silence was making it possible for Israel to continue with its contempt for the law. Libya called upon the international community to exert efforts to force Israel to withdraw from the Occupied Palestinian Territories and the Syrian Golan Heights.

MESBAH ANSARI ([Iran](#)) said the international community had been continuously witnessing a non-stop spate of violations of international human rights and humanitarian law against the people of Palestine and other Occupied Palestinian Territories which had occurred in a systematic and consistent manner for more than half a century. The situation was exacerbated by the blockade that the population of Gaza had endured in the months prior to the recent military aggression and as a result, a large number of innocent people had been killed and many others had been injured. In addition to that, imposed restrictions on the movement of people and goods had a negative impact on the Gaza Strip population's enjoyment of their human rights, particularly their economic, social and cultural rights and their right to life, human dignity, and freedom of movement. Further, the blockade caused a humanitarian crisis with a destructive impact on life in Gaza. Iran strongly condemned all forms of crime committed against the innocent people in the occupied territories including Palestinian territories, the Gaza Strip as well as the Syrian Golan Heights where the human rights situation was deteriorating. Iran called upon the international community to take more concrete measures to prevent further deterioration of the human rights and humanitarian situation in these territories. As long as the occupation continued the world would not witness peace, security and realization of human rights in the region.

KSHENUKA SENEVIRATHNE ([Sri Lanka](#)) said Sri Lanka shared the deep concern expressed on the current deteriorating humanitarian situation in Palestine and other Occupied Palestinian Territories. Sri Lanka called on the parties concerned to maintain restraint in order to ameliorate the situation on the ground and help advance the peace process to which both parties were committed. It was Sri Lanka's firm belief that it was only through meaningful negotiations that a two State settlement, as envisaged by all, could be achieved. Thereby an end could be put to the Israeli occupation of the Occupied Palestinian Territories and a sovereign, independent and viable Palestinian State could be established and the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people realized. Sri Lanka agreed that the occupation continued to be the main cause of widespread human rights violations. Therefore, there was an urgent need to put an end to all unlawful settlement activities which had led to the displacement of thousands of Palestinians from their homes. There was also a need to put an end to the continuing blockade on the Palestinian civilian population in Gaza.

SAAD ALFARARGI, of [League of Arab States](#), said this session was taking place in the backdrop of a serious situation with Israeli aggression coupled with the confiscation of land. The blockade imposed on Gaza had made it the biggest open prison in the world. That went hand in hand with the Israeli settlement policy, a new link in the endless chain of the violation of the human rights of Palestinians by Israel. Settlements were on the increase. There was a theft of water sources. Peace was not possible unless there was a sovereign Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital. That would mean that Israel would have to withdraw from all Occupied Territories.

ALI CHERIF ([Tunisia](#)) said Tunisia applauded the High Commissioner's report and welcomed her clarifications as to the serious human rights violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Syrian Golan. There should be a stop of Israeli colonization and settlements, in order to build a Palestinian State. Israel had decided to build 1,600 settlement homes in the West Bank area, which was a serious violation of international law and rights. This was happening at a crucial time. Tunisia was attached to a lasting and fair solution in the Middle East, based on the two States solution. All parties concerned should bring pressure to bear on Israel to come to the table, put a stop to these practices, and cease all efforts to change the demographic and geographic nature of Palestinian lands.

HAMZA AHMED ([Sudan](#)) welcomed the report of the United Nations Secretary-General. The Sudanese delegation underscored that the Council had adopted the Goldstone report and called on the Council to guarantee the implementation of all its recommendations through United Nations mechanisms, according to their mandates. Sudan further called on Switzerland, as depositary of the Fourth Geneva Convention, to convene a conference for the high contracting parties before the end of the year and called on the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to provide the necessary support to facilitate remedies to victims that had long waited for support. Sudan was concerned about the delay of the Secretary-General's report on the situation in the Golan Heights, saying one year had gone by since the mission's visit to that region. In concluding, Sudan called on all Member States to support the draft resolution before the Council.

LI TONG IL ([Democratic People's Republic of Korea](#)) noted the nature of human rights violations committed by Israel in the Occupied Territories. Israel had continued to occupy Occupied Palestinian Territories and it was continuing with the policy of expanding settlements. That covered a wide range of areas such as the right to movement, religion, education etc. From a legal point of view, that was illegal. It was a violation of international law and international humanitarian law. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea strongly maintained that the root cause of the region's problems lay in the occupation. In conclusion, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea reiterated its very strong support for the Palestinian people and for the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the Palestinian and Arab Occupied Territories.

SAEED AL-HABSI ([United Arab Emirates](#)) said the report by the High Commissioner strengthened the conviction that the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories was deteriorating, showing that the occupying power was refusing to respect international law and the principles of international humanitarian law. The blockade on Gaza was a violation of the economic, social and cultural rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to education and a decent life, and of civil and political rights. The blockade should be lifted - the figures were alarming, particularly with regard to the destruction of housing in East Jerusalem, and everything it involved, such as mass displacement. The international community should put pressure on Israel to respect the basic rights of the Palestinians, and stop the settlements policy. Global, equitable peace in the Middle East was indivisible, and it was essential to settle equitably the other Arab issues in the region, and Israel should withdraw from all Arab territories. The Council should adopt the relevant resolutions unanimously.

RANA MOKKADEM ([Lebanon](#)) said one item that was always on the Council's agenda was that of Israeli practices of human rights violations against the peoples of the Occupied Arab Territories. Despite appeals that Israel stop its occupation, Israel continued its systematic efforts to change the demographic reality of Palestine. Arbitrary detention, summary executions and other gross human rights violations in the occupied territories could not continue, the Lebanese delegation said, underscoring that words must be translated into actions if the international community wished to contribute to peace in the Middle East. The establishment of a Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital must happen, the Lebanese delegation said.

ELIAS KHOURI, of [Union of Arab Jurists](#), said since the establishment of Israel on Palestinian land, the situation there had been deteriorating. For its part, Israel had continued with more colonization and aggression against holy sites. Israel continued to refuse the implementation of any resolutions. Many families were still under the yolk of occupation. This Council must take a firm resolution to stop Israel from continuing to violate human rights and to establish a system of compensation.

BETHANY SINGER-BAEFSKY, of [United Nations Watch](#), recalled that in 2007, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon had voiced disappointment at the Council for singling out Israel as the only item on the agenda. That agenda item had been opposed by a number of democracies. Each of the resolutions was one sided, politicised and unfair. Each turned a blind eye to Hezbollah and Hamas. Each ignored terrorism. Each gave a free pass to their State sponsors Iran and Syria. United Nations Watch opposed that resolution because it would not lead to peace in the region. Such resolutions attacked the spirit of peace, moderation and reason. They disregarded morality and truth. By perpetuating the Goldstone report, these resolutions lay the ground for further injustice. All those who supported human rights and opposed terrorism must vote no.

ANNA-MARIE VUIGNIER-JAMES, of [Commission of the Churches on International Affairs of the World Council of Churches](#), said the problem was not just a political one; it was a policy that was leading to the destruction of the humanity of human beings. The ongoing settlement policy of Israel was an obstacle to a viable Palestinian State, and because of the settlements, access was being denied to Palestinians to carry on any semblance of normal life. Palestinians were denied access to options of viable economic activity, basic resources such as land, water, housing and healthcare. The situation was particularly worrying in Jerusalem. The Human Rights Council should intervene and insist that the Israeli Government meet its international obligations as a member of the international community of nations and under provisions of international human rights law and international humanitarian law.

KLAUS NETTER, of [Coordination Board of Jewish Organizations, in a joint statement with B'nai B'rith International](#), said the Human Rights Council was engaged in its thrice-annual ritual on the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, leading to a multitude of resolutions lambasting Israel, all of which would be adopted without difficulty by the well-organised majority dominating the Council. The 2011 Review of the Council's work should be used to eliminate this egregious item from the permanent agenda - this would strengthen the credibility of the Council, whose most obvious symptom of selectivity, politicisation and one-sidedness was the maintenance of this item on its permanent agenda. The Coordinating Board of Jewish Organizations looked forward to the report of the inquiry commission established by the Palestinian Authority to react to the accusations levelled at Hamas by the Goldstone report and hoped it would be as thorough and self-critical as the one submitted by Israel.

Right of Reply

WALID ABU-HAYA ([Israel](#)), speaking in a right of reply, said Iran – which was known as a source of evil – had today used this Council to deflect the attention of the international community away from the human rights violations from which its own people suffered. Iran had acted as a third-State proxy that trained terrorists and smuggled weapons to Hezbollah and Hamas who targeted civilians; investigations must be conducted immediately and Iran must be held accountable as a third State proxy. It was also ironic to hear the Algerian representative lecturing to Israel, the Israeli delegation said. In fact, there were reports of poor detention conditions, restrictions of press and freedom of assembly, discrimination and violence against children, among others, in Algeria.

IMAD ZUHAIRI ([Palestine](#)), speaking in a right of reply, said the speaker for Israel should get lessons in good conduct. If there were other concerned parties, then they too could exercise the right of reply. Palestine applauded the President for working ceaselessly to sustain this Council.

BOUALEM CHEBIHI ([Algeria](#)), speaking in a right of reply, said in connection with what the representative of Israel just said, Algeria defended what the Goldstone report recommended and the Council had been debating for years in connection with the situation in Palestine. As a representative of a country that violated all human rights, the Israeli representative had no right to speak about other countries.

MESBAH ANSARI ([Iran](#)), speaking in a right of reply, said he wished to express extreme regret that this august body was being abused, and this opportunity, which had been envisaged as a right of reply had also been abused by a representative, to express opinions on agenda items that were irrelevant to this agenda item, and use it as a shield against world criticism. Iran strongly rejected the baseless allegations and distortions made in the statement. It was ironically ridiculous that this system, which was born of occupation, and had a history of repression and terrorism, with a long-standing record of massive violations of human rights, had taken the floor in the Human Rights Council. Iran did not intend to take up more of the valuable time of the Human Rights Council to respond to such statements, but they were despicable tactics aiming at trying to distract the international community's attention from the atrocities perpetuated in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the other occupied territories, especially in the Gaza Strip, which led to a brutal massacre of more than 1,500 innocent people, including many women and children, which was recognized as a war crime and a crime against humanity. These unworthy tactics had not worked in the past, and would not work in the future.

RANA MOKKADEM ([Lebanon](#)), speaking in a right of reply, said the representative of the occupying power of the Arab territories was resorting to diverting attention from its acts by throwing around unsubstantiated allegations.

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