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EUROPEAN UNION TELLS GENERAL ASSEMBLY NEGOTIATIONS MUST RESUME FOR PALESTINIAN STATE WITH GUARANTEED SECURITY FOR ISRAEL

PLO Says Ariel Sharon Brought Peace Process to Halt; Israeli Delegate Reports News Acts of Violence: Four Palestinian Attacks in Last Two Days

While acknowledging Israel's legitimate concern for its right to live in peace and security within internationally recognized borders, the European Union supported a viable and democratic State to be established for the Palestinians, its representative told the General Assembly that afternoon, as the Assembly met to consider the question of Palestine.

Speaking for the European Union, the representative of Belgium said member countries of the Union would collaborate closely with all parties to achieve a solution to the question of Palestine. The overwhelming majority of both Palestinians and Israelis wanted to live in peace. Numerous stages in the peace process framework had already been achieved. Its implementation required an end to violence and the "freezing" of settlement activity.

The Permanent Observer of Palestine called for the international community to put more pressure on all parties. He said Israel must put an end to the occupation and accept the creation of a real Palestinian State. It must end its settlement policy and revoke all blockades.

The peace process had been at a standstill since Ariel Sharon had been elected as Prime Minister of Israel. Negotiations had stopped, military attacks had been launched, embargoes and blockades had been imposed on Palestinian people and goods, and Palestinian institutions had been destroyed.

Israel's representative said he had noted the Palestinian speaker's call for an end to international terrorism. However, in the last few hours Palestinian terrorists had detonated an explosive charge on a public bus near the town of Pardes Hannah in Israel. Three Israelis had died and others were wounded. Today's bus bombing was the fourth lethal Palestinian terrorist attack in two days.

There must be an end to the terrorism that had taken root in Palestinian territory. The Palestinians could not call for a ceasefire and implementation of the peace process while continuing to permit deadly acts of terrorism against Israel. Israel would end its military actions if the violence were brought to an end.

Also addressing the Assembly this afternoon were the representatives of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Malaysia, Iran, Algeria, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mauritius, India and Cuba. Introductory statements were made by the Chairman and Rapporteur of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian people.

The Assembly will meet again at 10 a.m. tomorrow, 30 November, to conclude its consideration of the question of Palestine, and to take up its agenda item on the situation in the Middle East.

Background

The General Assembly met this afternoon to consider the agenda item on the Question of Palestine.

Question of Palestine: an overview

At the end of the Second World War, Palestine was a territory administered by the United Kingdom under a mandate from the League of

Nations. Faced with escalating violence resulting from increasing Jewish migration to Palestine and Arab opposition to such immigration, the United Kingdom brought the matter before the United Nations in 1947. The Assembly established a committee of 11 States to investigate all matters relating to the question of Palestine and to recommend solutions. The majority in the Committee recommended that Palestine be partitioned into an Arab State and Jewish State, with special international status for Jerusalem.

The Assembly, at its second regular session, adopted [resolution 181](#) on 29 November 1947, by whose terms it approved the partition plan of the majority. The Plan was not accepted by the Palestinian Arabs, because they would oppose any scheme which provided for the dissection, segregation or partition of their country, or which gave special and preferential rights and status to a minority.

The relinquishing of the mandate by the United Kingdom in May 1948 and the declaration of the Jewish State sparked a war between Arab and Jewish communities in the area. Fighting continued despite the efforts of a United Nations mediator. By the time a truce called for by the Security Council came into force in July 1948, Israel controlled much of the territory originally allotted to the Arab State. Jordan and Egypt respectively administered the remaining portions of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

The events of 1947-1948 created a serious refugee problem, with thousands of Palestinians being uprooted and ending up in Jordan, Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon, Syria or Kuwait. The United Nations quickly set up the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to support the refugees. In December 1948, the Assembly declared that refugees must be permitted to return to their homes and live in peace with their neighbours, and that those choosing not to return should be compensated. Under resolution 194, the Assembly called for the demilitarization and internationalization of Jerusalem. The resolution was never implemented, but its provisions on the special status of the city and the right of Palestinian refugees to return have been reasserted by the Assembly virtually every year since 1948.

Israel was admitted into the United Nations in May 1949. Between February and July of that year, under the auspices of the United Nations, armistice agreements were signed between Israel and Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria.

The Arab-Israeli dispute simmered for the next two decades, erupting into open hostilities in 1956 and again in 1967. A turning point in Middle Eastern affairs was reached with the Six Day War of 1967 between Israel, Egypt, Jordan and Syria. By the time a ceasefire took effect, Israel had occupied Egyptian Sinai, the Gaza Strip, the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and part of the Syrian Golan Heights. The Security Council, in [resolution 237 \(1967\)](#), called upon Israel to ensure the safety and welfare of the inhabitants where military operations had taken place, and to facilitate the return of displaced persons.

Later, the Council adopted [resolution 242 \(1967\)](#) which laid down the principles for a peaceful settlement in the Middle East — the withdrawal of Israel's armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict, and recognition of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every State in the area, along with the right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries.

When another Arab-Israeli war broke out in October 1973, the Council adopted [resolution 338 \(1973\)](#) calling for an immediate truce and asking the parties to begin the implementation of resolution 242 immediately after the ceasefire. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), joined by Arab States, criticized the resolutions for reducing the Palestinian problem to a question of international charity and for reducing the Palestinians to the status of refugees without national political rights.

Following the 1967 war, the question of Palestine began to be understood in a broader political context, rather than as a matter related only to refugees. In November 1974, the Assembly reaffirmed the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to self-determination without external interference, the right to national independence and sovereignty, and the right to return to their homes and property. Those rights, as set out in [resolution 3236 \(XXIX\)](#), have been reaffirmed by the Assembly every year since. That same year, the Assembly invited the PLO to participate in its proceedings as an observer. The item entitled "The question of Palestine" has been on the Assembly's annual agenda since 1974.

Gravely concerned that no progress had been achieved towards the exercise by the Palestinian people of their inalienable rights, the Assembly on 10 November 1975, through [resolution 3376 \(XXX\)](#), decided to establish the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Right of the Palestinian People, with the primary mandate to make recommendations to fulfil those rights. Since 1976, the Assembly has endorsed recommendations from that Committee as a basis for solution to the question of Palestine.

Reports

The Assembly had before it this afternoon two reports.

The Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (document [A/56/35](#)) covers the one-year period ending 10 October this year. It reviews events since the Committee was established in 1975 and notes that the last year has been marked by the eruption of the Palestinian intifada in protest of the provocative visit of Israeli leader Ariel Sharon to the Al-Haram al-Sharif compound in old Jerusalem.

The peace process in the Middle East has remained stalemated since early this year, the report continues, despite high hopes early on that efforts in Paris, Taba and Sharm el-Sheikh would succeed in ending the violence and bringing about the resumption of peace negotiations. The establishment

in November 2000 of the [Sharm el-Sheikh Fact-Finding Committee](#), led by former United States Senator George Mitchell, was a promising step that was affirmed when both sides accepted the recommendations of the Mitchell report in April. However, the two sides remained deadlocked over Israel's insistence that all violence cease before the cooling-off period begins and negotiations resume. A September meeting at Gaza International Airport between the Palestinian President Yasser Arafat and Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres was seen as promising, in that it brought about an agreement to resume security cooperation, and on measures to sustain a ceasefire and bring the violence under control. A statement on October 2 by United States President George Bush concerning the Palestinian State was also seen as encouraging.

The report reviews the Committee's mandate and organization of work, then details the situation relating to the question of Palestine. It notes that more than 660 Palestinians have been killed since the intifada began and that more than 20,000 have been wounded, many disabled for life. In May, the Committee joined the international community in condemning as excessive the new nature and scale of the conflict, when Israel authorized the use of fighter aircraft against unprotected Palestinian targets and then began selective assassinations of Palestinian activists and political leaders. Other matters of concern were Israeli incursions into Palestinian lands and schemes to restrict the movement of Palestinians, the plight of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails, the disintegration of the Palestinian economy due to Israeli military occupation and the shortage of water in the Territory.

In pursuit of its mandate, and in response to difficulties in the peace process, the Committee continued to mobilize the international community in support of the Palestinian people in numerous ways as outlined in the report. In October 2000, the Committee Chairman participated in the fifth resumption of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, to discuss illegal Israeli actions in the occupied Territory. He also participated in Security Council meetings regarding the situation in the Middle East, corresponded with the Council President and the Secretary-General, and took part in international conferences and meetings.

In conjunction with the Division for Palestinian Rights, the Committee held seminars, meetings and workshops on issues related to the question, requesting the Division to continue its programme of work in training and information-related forums. Finally, it noted the special information programme on the question of Palestine being carried out by the Department of Public Information, which included the training of Palestinian journalists and organization of media encounters.

The Committee concludes that deplorable events have underscored the urgency of pressing forward to bring calm to the region, and to stabilize it and enable the parties to resume their dialogue. It calls for a stepped-up, concrete engagement of key international parties, both regional and extra-regional. Among other actions, it recommends that the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention should convene to address the issue of protecting the Palestinian people. It also reaffirms that the United Nations should maintain its permanent responsibility with respect to all aspects of the question.

A report of the Secretary-General on the Question of Palestine: the situation in the Middle East (document [A/56/642-S/2001/1100](#)) was submitted in pursuance of [Assembly resolution 55/55](#) of 1 December 2000 and contains, among other things, the views of the Security Council, the Government of Israel and the PLO, and observations by the Secretary-General.

In a note verbale to the Secretary-General, dated 26 September, the representative of Israel wrote that his country voted against resolution 55/55, not only because it was unbalanced, but it was also seen by Israel as undue interference in matters which the parties had agreed to resolve within the context of direct bilateral negotiations. The current violence in the region, the Israeli representative wrote, was a result of a Palestinian decision to abandon peace negotiations and pursue their goals through violence and terrorism. The one-sided approach reflected in the Assembly resolution, which sought to dictate the outcome of the negotiating process, effectively rewarded violence at a time when the Palestinian side should be compelled to renounce all acts of violence and terrorism, and return to the path of peaceful dialogue.

In a note verbale of 17 October, the Permanent Observer of Palestine wrote that the Assembly's resolution should serve as an acceptable basis for all parties to address and resolve important issues. The situation on the ground since 28 September 2000 had continued to deteriorate, because of the refusal of the Israeli side to implement the Sharm el-Sheikh understandings and its failure to adhere to prior agreements reached between the two sides. The dramatic decline of the situation on the ground has been characterized by an excessive and indiscriminate use of force by the Israeli occupying forces against Palestinian civilians, including children. The Permanent Observer further wrote that the Israeli Government never wholeheartedly endorsed or accepted the recommendations contained in the Mitchell Report, especially that which called for a cessation of all Israeli settlement activity.

In his observations, the Secretary-General states that it is a matter of grave concern that the present Israeli-Palestinian crisis has entered its second year with an escalation of violence, while the peace process remains stalled despite many international efforts to revive it. He has maintained close and regular contacts with the parties and other leaders in the region and the international community to find a way forward.

The Secretary-General observes that since the outbreak of the current Palestinian intifada at the end of September 2000, more than 900 people have been killed and many thousands injured, the vast majority of them Palestinians. He has repeatedly expressed concern that Israel's response to the violence has included a disproportionate use of military force, condemned the practice of so-called "targeted assassinations" and also strongly condemned acts of violence or terror from whatever quarter, especially indiscriminate suicide bombing attacks against Israelis by Palestinian groups. The tragic developments have greatly increased mutual distrust, hardened the positions of the two sides and strengthened extremist elements.

The report of the Sharm el-Sheikh Fact-Finding Committee, known as the Mitchell report, the recommendations of which the Secretary-General fully endorsed, provided a viable basis for a return to the negotiating table. The report was accepted by both parties and widely acknowledged as a good basis to break the impasse. As a follow-up to the report, the parties reached agreement upon a ceasefire on 31 June. It was encouraging that Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and President Yasser Arafat met on 26 September. There were also significant statements by Member States, including the United States, envisioning the creation of a Palestinian State provided that Israel's right to exist was respected. Unfortunately, progress was disrupted when Israeli cabinet minister Rehavam Zeevi was assassinated on 17 October by gunmen of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a terrorist act which the Secretary-General strongly condemned.

The Secretary-General states that he continues to believe that only a “package solution” based on the Mitchell report, including security and economic aspects but also a political component, can halt the cycle of violence and create the right atmosphere for the resumption of sustainable peace talks. There is no alternative to a return to the negotiating table and to a peaceful settlement. However, the mutual distrust between the parties has reached such a level that without constant third-party involvement they may not be able to break out of the current impasse.

According to the Secretary-General’s observations, the confrontation has had a devastating impact on the humanitarian and economic situation in the occupied Palestinian territory. He calls upon the international donor community to provide adequate funding to the UNRWA.

The Secretary-General states that achieving a final and peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine, the core issue of the Arab-Israeli conflict, is imperative for the attainment of a comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East. He hopes there will also be movement on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks so that peace, security and stability may be achieved for all peoples in the region on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). The United Nations will continue to support the resumption of the peace process and to respond in a coherent and integrated way to the economic, social, humanitarian and other needs of the population in the West Bank and Gaza.

Draft resolutions

The Assembly also had before it four draft resolutions.

By the terms of a draft resolution (document [A/56/L.19](#)) on the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the Assembly would request the Committee to continue to keep under review the situation relating to the question of Palestine and to report and make suggestions to the General Assembly or the Security Council as appropriate. It would authorize the Committee to continue to exert all efforts to promote the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

The Assembly would further request the United Nations Conciliation Committee for Palestine and other United Nations bodies associated with the question of Palestine to cooperate fully with the Committee and to make available to the Committee, at its request, relevant information which they have at their disposal. The Secretary-General would be asked to circulate the report of the Committee to all competent bodies of the United Nations, and continue to provide the Committee with all the necessary facilities for the performance of its tasks.

The resolution is co-sponsored by Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Comoros, Cuba, Djibouti, Egypt, Guinea, Guyana, Indonesia, Jordan, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen, and Palestine.

A second draft resolution (document [A/56/L.20](#)) on the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat, would have the Assembly request the Secretary-General to continue to provide the Division with the necessary resources and to ensure that it continues to carry out its programme of work, in consultation with the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and under its guidance. It would also request the Secretary-General to ensure the continued cooperation of the Department of Public Information (DPI) and other units of the Secretariat in enabling the Division to perform its tasks in covering adequately the various aspects of the question of Palestine.

The resolution is co-sponsored by Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Comoros, Cuba, Djibouti, Egypt, Guinea, Guyana, Indonesia, Jordan, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen, and Palestine.

The General Assembly was also to consider a draft resolution on Special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat (document [A/56/L.21](#)). By its terms, the Assembly would request the Department, in full cooperation with the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, to continue its special information programme for the biennium 2002-2003. This should focus on, among other things; disseminating information on all activities of the United Nations system relating to the question of Palestine; continuing to issue and update publications on the various aspects of Palestine in all fields; organizing and promoting fact-finding news missions for journalists to the area; organizing international, regional and national seminars or encounters for journalists; aiming in particular at sensitizing public opinion to the question of Palestine, and continuing to provide assistance to the Palestinian people in the field of media development.

The resolution is co-sponsored by Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Comoros, Cuba, Djibouti, Egypt, Guinea, Guyana, Indonesia, Jordan, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen, and Palestine.

The Assembly also had before it a draft resolution on the Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine (document [A/56/L.22](#)). By its terms, the Assembly would stress the necessity for commitment to the principle of land for peace, and the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). It would call upon the concerned parties, the co-sponsors of the peace process and other interested parties, as well as the entire international community, to exert all the necessary efforts and initiatives to immediately reverse all measures taken on the ground since 28 September 2000, in implementation of the recommendations of the Mitchell Committee.

By the draft, the General Assembly would further stress the need for the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, the withdrawal of Israel from Palestinian territory occupied since 1967 and the need for resolving the problem of the Palestinian refugees in conformity with its [resolution 194 \(III\)](#) of 11 December 1948.

The Assembly would urge Member States to expedite the provision of economic and technical assistance to the Palestinian people during this critical period and request the Secretary-General to continue his efforts with the parties concerned, and in consultation with the Security Council, for the promotion of peace in the region and to submit progress reports on developments in this matter.

The resolution is co-sponsored by Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Comoros, Cuba, Djibouti, Egypt, Guinea, Guyana, Indonesia, Jordan, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen, and Palestine.

Statements

PAPA LOUIS FALL ([Senegal](#)), Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, introduced draft resolutions A/56/L.19 (Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People), L.20 (Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat), L.21 (Special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat) and [L.22](#) (Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine). He said that before introducing the resolutions, he wanted to address the most salient facts of the recent history of the item. Since 1975 the Committee had endorsed the cause of the Palestinian people -- to exercise their rights without foreign intervention. Its mandate was triply rooted in the past of the Middle East, the present and the hope for better tomorrows.

The provocative visit of Ariel Sharon to Al-Haram al-Sharif had been followed by Palestinian protests, followed by brutal Israeli repression. The tragedies of 14 months, the manifestations of indignation and revolt, murderous incursions in the West Bank and Jerusalem, mass destruction of property, new settlements and blockades by the occupying Power had resulted in thousands of dead and wounded. The Palestinian population had been subjected to economic hardships as well. In view of the disastrous risks of the conflict and its consequences, the international community had tried to control the situation by establishing the Mitchell Commission, which had put forward recommendations for relaunching the peace process. Israel had adopted a selective approach to those recommendations.

Several times, he said, the Committee had expressed serious concerns about the situation. It had directed the attention of the international community to the dangers of the conflict for the region, and had emphasized the need for outside intervention. It had demanded respect for international humanitarian law and adherence to relevant Security Council resolutions.

He then introduced the four draft resolutions, with an oral amendment to draft L.21, preambular paragraph 16, adding the words: "and also concerned about the confrontation between the Israeli army and the Palestinian police as well as the losses attained on both sides".

WALTER BALZAN ([Malta](#)), Rapporteur of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, introducing the report of the Committee, stressed that the Palestinian people had yet to achieve their own State more than five decades after the General Assembly had adopted resolution 181 (II). The Committee would persist in international efforts to stop the violence and bring the parties back on the peace track. He expressed grave concern over the policies and actions of Israel in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem. The problem should be resolved by the relevant United Nations resolutions and the exercise by the Palestinian people of their inalienable rights, including their right to self-determination and their own independent State.

The Mitchell recommendations should be immediately implemented, he said, and all co-sponsors of the peace process should seek innovative approaches allowing the parties to achieve that end. A stepped up and concrete engagement on the part of key international parties, regional and extra-regional, was now needed more than ever. The United Nations should maintain its permanent responsibility towards the question of Palestine, with both the General Assembly and Security Council doing everything in their power to help resolve the five-decade conflict. He urged the international donor community to contribute generously to the UNRWA, so that it could continue delivering vital humanitarian services to some 3.8 million Palestinian refugees.

He expressed appreciation to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working untiringly to mobilize solidarity with the Palestinian people; provide emergency relief under difficult circumstances to the population in the occupied Palestinian territory; and raise international awareness of their inalienable rights. He also stressed the essential contribution the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat had made in support of the Committee's objectives. Also, the special information programme of the Department of Public Information on the question of Palestine had made an important contribution to informing the media and public on the relevant issues.

FAROUK KADOUMI, Permanent Observer for Palestine, said the world was going through a difficult time, because of the resurgence of terrorism posing a threat to international peace and security. It was a challenge for the international community to put an end to this scourge which threatened all of humankind. All forces had been mobilized to deal with international terrorism. The international community was at this point striving to find the causes and factors that had led to an environment where international terrorism existed. He said Israel was involved in a most flagrant type of State terrorism. It had created an adverse atmosphere in the Middle East. The United Nations must face up to its responsibility and tackle this evil.

He said the peace process between Palestine and Israel had been at a standstill since the election of Ariel Sharon as Prime Minister of Israel. Negotiations had stopped, military attacks on Palestinian towns and villages had been launched, embargos and blockades had been imposed on both Palestinian people and goods, and Palestinian institutions had been destroyed. At the same time, Israel was calling for an end to the violence -- an end to violence at the same time as Israel's army practised both violence and terrorism.

He said that tanks had invaded Palestinian towns and villages, which had also been shelled with artillery. Public order and security in Palestinian areas were being usurped, as Israeli forces were constantly invading villages to implement their policies of repression of Palestinian civilians.

He told the Assembly that the Palestinian Authority was now in control of only 18 per cent of its areas. After more than 8 years of political

negotiations, Israel continued to procrastinate, and had tightened the blockade on the Palestinian people yet again.

He referred to the stress suffered by children because of Israel's occupation. Children under 14 were leaving schools at an alarming rate due to the stress and trauma of constant conflict, he said. The agricultural sector had also suffered, and 85 per cent of Palestinians required some level of nutritional assistance. The World Bank had also noted that the poverty rate had risen by 50 per cent in a period of two years, and that Palestinian society had become turbulent and disruptive. The terror inflicted had destroyed any trust between the Palestinians and Israelis. It had led to confrontation and a feeling that the two peoples could never live together. Even the Arab Israeli citizens were suffering from increased terror and prejudice.

He said the international community must put more pressure on all parties involved, and not align themselves with one side. Israel must put an end to the occupation and accept the creation of a real Palestinian State, in which Palestinians could decide on their own future. It must put an end to the settlement policy and revoke all blockades on the movement of Palestinian citizens and goods. The imbalance of forces in the Middle East region must not continue. Finally, he said it was time that sanctions against Iraq were lifted, and that Iraq returned to its rightful place among the family of nations.

FAWZI BIN ABDUL MAJEED SHOBOKSHI ([Saudi Arabia](#)) said that since the creation of Israel, the Middle East had not known a moment of peace because of the continued occupation of Arab territories by Israel and Israel's pursuit of a policy of expansion. The international community had responded to the appeal to combat terrorism, and terrorism in all its forms must be condemned and fought. Occupation was undoubtedly a form of terrorism. Israel, which occupied territories by force, was conducting State terrorism by pursuing a policy of assassination, closing roads and preventing Palestinians from working, which were violations of international law and humanitarian law.

The violence in the territories was borne of years of occupation, he said. The occurrence of acts of violence and the lack of peace in the region once more underlined the responsibility of the United Nations. It was a political obligation to deploy all means to have Security Council resolutions implemented. He supported the statement by President Bush before the Assembly, in which he said that responsibility for violence was borne by all parties, and that he supported a Palestinian State.

His country hoped for the support of the international community to ensure implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 and 338, so that the Palestinians might return to their homeland and so that those who did not wish to do so would be compensated. He also called for implementation of other relevant Security Council resolutions.

AHMED ABOUL GHEIT ([Egypt](#)) said the question of Palestine was passing through a very critical juncture. The Palestinian people had been subjected, for the last 14 months, to a flagrant and continuous Israeli aggression. The colonization of the Palestinian people had gone on long enough. Palestinians had grown intolerant of the Israeli military occupation of their land in Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza. Their hope of attaining a just peace that would lead them out of the cycle of sieges, closures and checkpoints was now dissipated. That was why the Palestinian people were resisting the Israeli occupation and at the same time calling for peace.

He said a key point for the settlement of the Palestinian question was the fact that East Jerusalem was an occupied land and part of the occupied Palestinian territory in all of the West Bank and Gaza -- from which Israel must withdraw in full. Other obstacles included the colonialist Israeli settlements, which had continued to have devastating effects on the situation of the Palestinians; and the question of the Palestinian refugees, which should find its way to a settlement based on justice, in accordance with the provisions of Assembly resolution 194 and subsequent resolutions stipulating the right of the Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and their right to compensation should they choose not to return.

He supported the elements announced by the United States Secretary of State on 19 November as fundamental elements for the resolution of the conflict. It was the Israeli occupation which was at the core of the problem, and its termination would mean the removal of the essence of the problem. It was incumbent on both the Israeli and the Palestinian parties to realize the responsibilities entailed in the ending of the occupation. A political settlement must take into account the establishment of a viable Palestinian State on all the West Bank and Gaza, with its capital in East Jerusalem; the establishment of neighbourly relations and cooperation between the Israelis and Palestinians in a context of mutual respect; and the provision of security for both thorough balanced arrangements that met their interests. The Palestinian State would soon come into being. Egypt would remain supportive of Palestine and its people until they attained their legitimate national rights in full.

HASMY AGAM ([Malaysia](#)) said the subject of Palestine had been debated in the General Assembly over many years, and it was clear that there was a strong expression of solidarity for the people of Palestine and clear and unambiguous support for efforts towards a political solution of the Palestinian question. Sadly, none of these debates, nor consideration of the issue in the Security Council, had had any impact on the situation. In spite of more than 800 Palestinian dead and about 20,000 Palestinians wounded since September last year, the United Nations had failed to take any significant action to put an end to the violence.

It gave Malaysia no pleasure to criticize any Member States of the Organization, he continued, but in the face of ongoing violence, he must condemn the continued disproportionate and excessive use of force by Israeli security forces against Palestinian civilians, and Israel's collective punishment of the Palestinian people through the prohibition of the movement of persons, goods, and resources, the demolition of houses, the bulldozing of olive trees and other forms of political and economic restrictions imposed on the Palestinian people. Members of the United Nations had a clear responsibility to ensure that the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention and other norms and principles of international law were respected.

He said Palestinian leaders had asked for an international mechanism to monitor the situation on the ground, thereby ensuring the safety of unarmed civilians. This proposal deserved the unqualified support of the international community. It would have the immediate effect of defusing the explosive situation on the ground and instilling confidence between the two sides..

HADI NEJAD HOSSEINIAN ([Iran](#)) said that for the past 50 years, Palestinians had woken up to the ruthless atrocities, occupation, suppression, repression and carnage by Israel. However, the recent 14-month period, which followed the provocative event at Al-Haram al-Sharif in September 2000, was one of the most violent periods in the history of the Palestinian struggle. During that period, the Israeli regime, in pursuit of its bloody campaign and aggressive policy against defenceless Palestinian people, had employed even more vicious measures. It had used different

kinds of heavy and sophisticated weapons in an excessively harsh and indiscriminate manner. By using aircraft, it had even exceeded its previous brutality against unprotected Palestinian targets. Its security apparatus resorted to targeted extrajudicial assassination of Palestinians, claiming the lives of innocent people, including children.

Recent events had further demonstrated the need for international intervention to protect defenceless Palestinian civilians from those ever-escalating Israeli atrocities, and the international community had a responsibility to put an end to that situation. Today, it seemed that the international community had finally recognized that the situation in Palestine was the source of political and security problems that could at any moment endanger global peace and security. It was now clearer than ever that the continued occupation of the Palestinian territories, the Syrian Golan and the Lebanese Shaba'a was the principal cause of the tension and instability in the region.

The Middle East crisis and the issue of Palestine, he said, could only be settled through the recognition of historical as well as current realities in the region, the restoration of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian nation -- in particular the right of return -- the establishment of an independent Palestinian State, and participation by all the original inhabitants of Palestine, including Muslims, Jews and Christians, in determining their own political system in a democratic referendum.

MOURAD BENMEHIDI (Algeria) said the Palestinian-Israeli problem had come to a climax over the past few weeks, with assassinations, the occupation of Palestinian property, the use of heavy weapons, and the Israeli expansion policy sowing fear among the population. Recent successive incidents were a breach of Israeli commitments, causing daily repression and crisis for the Palestinian people. In short, Israel's damaging policy had overcome the peace process, and the Middle East was moving ever closer to a general confrontation.

The United Nations must bring all of its moral and political will to bear in compelling Israel to comply with the Geneva Conventions, and conform to resolutions of the Security Council, he said. It must serve as a catalyst and facilitator, so that parties could come together under the appropriate conditions for negotiation. Any just and lasting solution must be based on international law and Israel's respect for the rights of the Palestinian people.

He said it was necessary to start from a common basis acceptable to all. The Mitchell Report, based on a balanced approach, was a set of measures to ensure the re-launching of the peace process. Those measures related to putting an end to violence, as well as restoration of trust and resumption of negotiations. It was essential for a monitoring mechanism to be put in place on the ground in Palestine as soon as possible; it should employ international observers to ensure the rights of the Palestinian people.

ALOUNKEO KITTIKHOUN (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said acts of violent rage were inflicting destruction, causing great loss of life and generating deep sorrow and desire for revenge -- amongst both the Palestinian and the Israeli people. His country expressed its concern at the current situation and strongly condemned the acts of violence and the excessive use of force against the Palestinians. His country also repeated its call for the complete and unconditional implementation of the Ceasefire Agreement of 17 October 2000, the Mitchell recommendations and relevant resolutions of the United Nations.

The best way to end violence before it spread even further, he continued, was to help the interested parties to move as fast as possible toward a final agreement. As known to all, the Palestinian people had suffered far too long, and as the question of Palestine was at the heart of the Middle East problem, no solution in the Middle East could be envisaged which did not take into account the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people. Only when the Palestinian issue was resolved in a just and reasonable manner would Palestine and Israel enjoy real and lasting peace.

Dialogue would always remain the surest path to peace and security, rather than confrontation. The question of Palestine could only be resolved by peaceful means in accordance with the principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

JAGDISH KOONJUL (Mauritius) said the fact that the Palestinian people had still not been provided with a homeland was a gross injustice, not only to them but to mankind in general. Over the past year, the situation on the ground had deteriorated beyond anyone's imagination. Hundreds of civilians, mostly Palestinians, had been killed. Tens of thousands of people, including hundreds of children, had been wounded and permanently disabled.

The economic blockade imposed by Israel had further exacerbated the sufferings of the Palestinian people, he said. Israel's targeted extrajudicial killing of Palestinian activists and political leaders, as well as their indiscriminate and excessive use of force, occupation of Palestinian offices, and frequent incursion into areas under full Palestinian control had seriously undermined decades of hard-won gains.

Time had been lost, he said, and asked how much more time and how many more lives should be wasted before the two sides decided to end the current stalemate. It was therefore imperative that the political leaders return, without further delay or preconditions, to the negotiating table and devise means for the unconditional implementation of the Mitchell Report recommendations. That had been accepted by both parties, and remained the only viable option to revive the peace process.

CHOKILA IYER (India) said the tragic cycle of violence engulfing the Middle East since September last year had damaged peace and stability, and caused the regrettable loss of hundreds of lives and injury to thousands. It had derailed the Middle East peace process and severely dented any trust between the parties. Without that trust, there could be no forward movement on negotiated agreements about interim and final status issues. The longer the violence continued, the greater the danger that extremist and radical tendencies would be strengthened.

She said it was essential to exercise the utmost restraint, eschew violence and shun acts that could destabilize the peace process. The rapid growth and expansion of Israeli settlements in Palestinian territory undermined mutual confidence as well as the credibility of the peace process. Israel must respect the overwhelming sentiment of the international community for a freeze on all settlement activity. The Mitchell Report and the Tenet Plan could enable the current situation of intifada-related strife to progress to the negotiating table, where the means for ending the Israeli occupation and final status issues must be resolved.

The plight of Palestinians living in camps scattered in the West Asian region was distressing, and both sides needed to address that issue as part of the

final status negotiations, with the active encouragement and support of the international community. There was also general recognition of a need to focus on the multi-faceted tasks of nation-building. The fledgling Palestinian Authority needed generous assistance, particularly in the fields of health, education and employment.

She said an unfortunate accompaniment of the current violence was the severe impoverishment of the Palestinian people in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Such poverty had negated years of sustained assistance to help build the human resource potential of the Palestinian people, and the economic infrastructure in the Palestinian Authority.

JEAN DE RUYT (Belgium), for the European Union and associated countries, said a diagnosis had been made of the situation six months ago, and a remedy had been suggested. Recommendations of the Sharm el-Sheikh Fact-Finding Committee, contained in its report delivered in May, had been accepted and supported by all parties. Those recommendations formed the most viable basis for finding a way out of the crisis. The political will and the courage to implement them were needed on the part of both parties.

Both Israelis and Palestinians must ensure implementation of the Mitchell Report and Tenet Plan, he said, especially with respect to the cessation of violence and an immediate freeze on settlement activity. The European Union would also contribute to setting up a third party monitoring mechanism, in agreement with the parties, to help overcome obstacles.

He said the parties must seize the opportunity offered by the Mitchell recommendations to resume negotiations. Recent commitments of the United States to peace in the Middle East and to the peaceful coexistence of two States, Israel and Palestine, would enable greater cooperation towards achieving a ceasefire and resuming political negotiations to end the historical conflict. After more than a year of violence, it was clear that only negotiations that took in the expectations of both parties were capable of bringing about a resolution of the Palestine question.

He said the European Union had always recognized Israel's legitimate concern for its right to live in peace and security, within internationally recognized borders. The Union now stressed its commitment vis-à-vis Israel's security. Still, a viable and democratic State must be established for the Palestinians and the occupation of their territories must be ended. The European Union would collaborate closely with all parties to assist in finding a definitive solution, including with regional partners, the Secretary-General, the United States and the Russian Federation.

The "peace process" framework was the only reasonable hope of achieving those aims, he said. There was no doubt that the overwhelming majority of both Palestinians and Israelis wanted to live in peace. Numerous stages in the peace process framework had already been achieved, despite obstacles of all kinds. A just and lasting settlement of the question must now be achieved based on the principles of the Madrid Conference, in particular the principle of land for peace, as well as in conformity with Security Council resolutions. All elements of concern must be settled, including the prospect of a just and viable solution to the issues of Jerusalem and refugees, and the provision of economic support for the Palestinian population.

YEHUDA LANCERY (Israel) said that for the first time in years, the question of Palestine was being debated amidst a seemingly hopeless cycle of violence that had turned back the clock to a more desperate period. In this connection, he said he welcomed the renewed American efforts to help in the most urgent task ahead -- bringing about a complete and unconditional end of violence. He said Israel was committed to doing all that it could to work with Palestinian partners to restore calm and quiet to the region. The violence of the past year had exacted a heavy price and had provided nothing in return. The hundreds of Palestinians and Israelis killed, the thousands more maimed and wounded, had caused unspeakable pain and heartbreak, but had not brought the Palestinians any closer to their goals.

In the last few days, he said, Israelis had been given more reasons to grieve. It was with a heavy heart that he informed the Assembly that, just a few hours ago, Palestinian terrorists had detonated an explosive charge on a public bus near the town of Pardes Hannah. This abhorrent terrorist bombing resulted in the death of three Israelis and seriously wounded several others. Today's bus bombing was the fourth lethal Palestinian terrorist attack in two days, he said. Just this morning Palestinian terrorists killed another Israeli commuter in a drive-by shooting. On Tuesday, Palestinian terrorists unleashed a deadly fusillade in the Israeli city of Afula, and another later in the day in Gush Katif. These attacks claimed the lives of two women and one young man, and wounded several others, including a two-year-old girl.

He said the Palestinian speaker in today's debate, Mr. Kadoumi, had called for an end to international terrorism. He must begin by bringing an end to Palestinian terrorism that had taken root in Palestinian territory, and imperiled the lives of Israelis on a daily basis. The Palestinians often spoke of their strategic choice for peace, but their tactical choice was one of terrorism. The Palestinians could not call for a ceasefire and the implementation of the Mitchell Report and the Tenet agreement while continuing to permit the perpetration of deadly acts of terrorism against Israel.

He said the only way to prevent the murderous ways of terrorists was to bring justice to the suicide bombers and those who sent them. Those were not actions that Israel enjoyed undertaking, but they were indispensable if Israel was to ensure the safety and security of its citizens. Moreover, such actions would be entirely unnecessary, and would cease completely if the violence was brought to an end.

The whole notion of a peace process was fundamentally at odds with violence and incitement. True peace could not be achieved if leaders negotiated a settlement at the same time as they primed their people for war, he said. Peace required a language of peace, expressed in the way leaders addressed their nations, in the way teachers taught their students, and in the way religious leaders inspired their followers. The Mitchell Report, the Tenet ceasefire agreement and the Powell initiative provided a road map out of the present quagmire towards a process that would open the Middle East to the opportunities of our time. Israel was committed to those frameworks and would work concertedly with all parties towards their realization. He said it was his hope that Israel's Palestinian partners would join in seizing the opportunity ahead, since the future of the region and the well-being of the children depended on it. The coming year must be a year free from the heartbreak and tragedy of the past, one that would finally bring that long-sought after peace to the peoples of the Middle East.

ORLANDO REQUEIJO GUAL (Cuba) said that exactly one year ago, on the Day of International Solidarity with the Palestinian People, his delegation had expressed its great concern with the new violations of the most fundamental rights of the Palestinian people. A year later, the worsening of the situation could be witnessed. Since September last year, Israel had imposed its law implacably through illegal incursions into Gaza, the West Bank and Jerusalem; the destruction of property, establishment of new settlements; military occupation and a blockade that paralyzed the

economic activities, all of which had destroyed whatever fragile confidence remained between the parties.

Those actions had made the possibilities for a just and sustainable peace in the whole Middle East region more remote. Israel continued to disregard with numerous resolutions from the Assembly, the Security Council and the Human Rights Commission, and to violate the Fourth Geneva Convention and international humanitarian law. Now, more than ever, the United Nations had the key responsibility to actively participate in efforts towards a solution of the Palestinian question.

There had been enough speeches and empty promises, he said, and enough insinuations that did not translate into tangible facts. Israel must comply with all resolutions of the Assembly and the Security Council on the question of Palestine and the Middle East. There was no need to draw a new “road map to peace”. It had existed for a long time and must be put into force. He condemned “acts of State terrorism” and reaffirmed Cuba’s solidarity with the Palestinian people in their fight for an independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital, and for the return of all occupied Arab territories.

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