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SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE ISRAELI PRACTICES WARNS OF STRATEGY TO SEVERELY

MARGINALIZE PALESTINIANS, MAINTAIN PERMANENT SUPPRESSION, IN FOURTH COMMITTEE

Policies Cast Doubt on Commitment to Two-State Solution, Say Speakers, Condemning Arrests of Some 500 Palestinian Children Yearly, Many Kept in Solitary Confinement

Highlighting “one deeply troubling conclusion” from the advance report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices, its Chairman told the Fourth Committee (Special Political and Decolonization) today that its several egregious findings this year might amount to a strategy to either force the Palestinian people off their land or so severely marginalize them as to establish and maintain a system of permanent suppression.

Noting once again that the Special Committee had had to conduct its investigations without cooperation from Israel, its Chairman, Palitha Kohona of Sri Lanka, drew particular attention to the mass imprisonment of Palestinians, routine demolition of homes and resultant displacements, widespread violence by Israeli settlers, and the Gaza blockade, saying that such activities cast doubt on Israel’s claim that it was committed to the objective of a two-State solution.

Especially worrying was the arrest of up to 700 Palestinian children every year, with 12 per cent of them kept in solitary confinement, he said, noting that the report of the Special Committee had called “alarming” the allegations related to children’s treatment in detention. Testimony provided to the Committee concerned often harsh treatment by Israeli security agents, in the process of detaining, transporting, interrogating and imprisoning Palestinian children. Clearly those children did not benefit from the basic legal, judicial or social safeguards to which they were entitled under international law.

Several delegates voiced concern about the plight of Palestine youth in the Occupied Territory, including Lebanon’s representative, who noted that at the end of May, 234 Palestinian boys were in Israeli detention, marking a 73 per cent increase since December 2011. Administrative detention in Israel was formerly known as internment, a colonial procedure used to remove individuals from society when no criminal charges were made, she said, adding that “it is high time for these children to regain their freedom and be able to dream of a better future.”

Condemning the “unlawful campaign of arrest, detention and forced interrogation of Palestinians under harsh, inhumane conditions”, the representative of Iran, speaking on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, called for their immediate release. He also demanded an end to all actions aimed at altering the demographic composition of the Occupied Palestinian Territory and constructively cooperate with efforts to bring about negotiations for the achievement of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

A member of the diplomatic Quartet, the European Union, said its speaker, had as one of its main priorities ending the Arab-Israeli conflict. It deplored ongoing Israeli settlement activities, which were contributing to the process of separating East Jerusalem from the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The Union supported the Palestinian State-building process, and the goal of creating a Palestinian State based on the rule of law and respect for human rights.

At the same time, said the speaker, the Union fully recognized Israel’s legitimate security concerns and was appalled by recurring instances of rocket attacks from Gaza, condemning in the strongest terms any deliberate targeting of civilians. It called on all partners in the region to prevent arms smuggling into Gaza, while aware that the situation in Gaza and southern Israel would remain unstable as long as the enclave was politically separated from the West Bank.

The representative of the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine evoked the report’s “alarming” statistic of a 237 per cent increase in Israeli settler violence, saying it had become “glaringly clear” that Israel “seeks not a just peace”, but rather to “entrench its illegal expansionist agenda” through colonization of Palestinian land and subjugation of Palestinian people.

Peace could never be realized, she added, as long as Israel remained defiant of the law and an unwilling partner in the peace process, acting in bad faith and total contradiction to the longstanding terms of reference of the peace process. It was the collective duty of the international community, including the Security Council, to hold Israel accountable for its illegal policies and practices. This was fundamental for salvaging the rapidly diminishing prospects for peace.

Additional reports before the Fourth Committee were introduced by Ivan Šimonović, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights.

Also speaking in the debate were the representatives of Malaysia, Senegal, Cuba, Jordan, Tunisia and Syria.

The Fourth Committee will meet again at 10 a.m. on Monday, 12 November, to conclude this debate.

Background

The Fourth Committee (Special Political and Decolonization) met today to begin its consideration of Israeli practices affecting the human rights of the Palestinian people and other Arabs of the occupied territories, for which it had before it several reports.

The report of the Special committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories (document A/67/27962), recalls that the Committee is mandated by the General Assembly to continue to investigate Israeli policies in the occupied Syrian Arab Golan and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, which comprises the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. It is requested to investigate especially violations of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, as well as treatment of prisoners and detainees, including women and children. It is also to consult as appropriate with the International Committee of the Red Cross to ensure that the welfare of the peoples of the occupied territories is safeguarded.

According to the report, Israeli policies and practices lead the Committee to one overarching conclusion: the mass imprisonment of Palestinians; the routine demolition of homes and resultant displacement of Palestinians; the widespread violence by Israeli settlers against Palestinians, and lack of effort to prevent or hold settlers accountable for such violence; and the blockade on Gaza and resultant reliance on illegal smuggling to survive amount to a strategy to either force the Palestinian people off their land or so severely marginalize them as to establish and maintain a system of permanent suppression.

The Special Committee, in its report, calls on the Government of Israel to cooperate with it in the implementation of its mandate in accordance with its obligations as a Member State. It urges the General Assembly to adopt measures to address Israel's long track record of non-cooperation with the United Nations, drawing attention to Israel's decision to suspend cooperation with the Human Rights Council and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, as well as considering the imposition of sanctions aimed at persuading Israel to fulfil its obligations as a Member State. The Committee further calls on that Government to bring its policies and practices concerning the arrest, detention and sentencing of Palestinian minors into line with international laws and standards relevant to children, noting that all allegations of mistreatment of children in detention should be investigated and perpetrators of violations prosecuted.

Additionally, the Special Committee calls on the Government of Israel to take immediate action to bring military orders 1644, 1676 and 1685 into line with international standards. It urges the General Assembly to take action aimed at compelling Israel to meet its obligations concerning Palestinian detainees and that such action may include the establishment of an independent, international mechanism comprised of experts in relevant international laws and standards to monitor, report and carry out advocacy. It calls on the Government to end its illegal use of administrative detention against Palestinians, including under the "Unlawful Combatants Law", noting that all Palestinians administratively detained must either be brought to trial with judicial guarantees or immediately released.

The Special Committee, additionally, calls on the Government of Israel to cease the demolition of Palestinian homes, to provide appropriate reparation to Palestinians who had already had their homes demolished, as well as to immediately revise its planning and zoning regime in direct consultation with Palestinians, applicable to the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Recalling the many United Nations resolutions making clear that Israel's policies to transfer its population to the territories it has occupied since 1967 are illegal, the Committee stresses the need for Israel to desist from their further colonization. It calls on that Government to end settler violence against Palestinians and to investigate such incidents, prosecuting perpetrators and ensuring their appropriate punishment.

The Special Committee reiterates its call for the Government of Israel to lift its blockage of Gaza, including immediate action to ensure a regular supply of food, medicines and other basic supplies and services and increasing the capacity of crossing points for cargo and commercial goods. The Committee also calls on the Government to desist from undermining Gaza's agricultural and fishing industries and to bring its policy into line with what it agreed as part of the Oslo Accords, namely a 20 nautical mile limit for Gaza's fisherman. It reiterates its call on that Government to allow visits for Syrians in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights with family members elsewhere in Syria and, to immediately remove all mines near neighbourhoods and schools in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights.

The Committee also had before it a report, submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 66/76, on the Work of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories (document [A/67/511](#)), which presents its findings from its annual investigative mission to the region.

According to the report, the Special Committee was unable to visit the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, owing to continuing non-cooperation from Israel. Instead, it convened meetings in Jordan from 11 to 13 July, in the Gaza Strip from 14 to 17 July, and in Egypt from 18 to 19 July. The Committee also engaged with interlocutors in the Syrian Golan via teleconference. During its mission, it collected testimony and information from 66 victims, witnesses, officials and representatives of organizations working to document and prevent violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in the occupied territories.

The Department of Public Information, the report says, continued to ensure that news and information about the activities of the Special Committee were widely disseminated, through press releases and United Nations News Centre coverage in English and French, and promoted on social media. Regular coverage was also provided via United Nations Radio in all six official languages, as well as in Kiswahili and Portuguese. United Nations Television and Video produced a video on women's economic development in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and completed filming on a story about youth empowerment there.

Also before the Committee was a report of the Secretary-General on the Applicability of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the other occupied Arab territories (document [A/67/332](#)), submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 65/103, by which the General Assembly reaffirms that the Geneva Convention is applicable to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and other Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967, and demands that Israel accept the de jure applicability of the Convention in those territories, and that it comply scrupulously with the provisions of the Convention.

The Committee will also consider a report by the Secretary-General on Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan (document [A/67/375](#)). It addresses the construction of Israeli settlements in occupied Arab territories and its impact on the human rights of the residents, prepared by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 66/78, and

covers the period between 1 July 2011 and 30 June 2012.

The report notes that during the coverage period, Israeli settlements continued to expand and new settlements were approved by the Government of Israel in clear violation of its obligations under international humanitarian law and despite repeated international condemnation. Estimates of the Israeli settler population in the Occupied Palestinian Territory vary between 500,000 and 650,000, living in some 150 settlements and 100 "outposts" in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Further, plans for construction in settlements in East Jerusalem were submitted and approved throughout the reporting period.

The Secretary-General, in the report, says that the settlements present an existential threat to the viability of a future Palestinian State, and it recommends that Israel, as the occupying Power, must take all measures to ensure the protection of the Palestinians and their property in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, from all such acts of violence.

The report goes on to say that while there has been a decrease in the number of injuries, ongoing violence and attacks is alarming. The Secretary-General condemns all acts of violence destined to cause fear and terror among civilian populations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and calls upon the Israel Defense Forces to ensure public order and accountability for all violent acts in a non-discriminatory manner.

In terms of the settlements, the report recommends that the Government of Israel must respect its obligations under international law by freezing all settlement activity in line with the Road Map and ceasing measures that amount to the transfer of its own population into the Occupied Territory. The Secretary-General has called on the Government of Israel to begin the process of reintegrating the settler population into its own territory, with a view to respecting its obligations under article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention and putting an end to the violations of human rights that are linked to the presence of settlements, especially the right to self-determination.

Also before the Committee was a report of the Secretary-General on Israeli practices affecting the human rights of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem (document [A/67/372](#)), which examines the themes identified in General Assembly resolution 66/79, including the firing of rockets and mortars against Israeli civilian areas, home demolitions and forced evictions; the situation of the Bedouin communities; the continued construction of the "wall"; and the arrest and detention of Palestinians by the Israeli authorities, with a particular focus on administrative detention.

The report recommends that the Government of Israel should fully lift the blockade of Gaza, using means to address security concerns that do not violate the human rights of Gazans. This should permit the exportation of goods, ensure that all necessary reconstruction materials can be delivered and should facilitate the movement of people to and from Gaza.

At the same time, the report states, Palestinian armed groups must comply with international humanitarian law and immediately cease the indiscriminate firing of rockets and mortars. As a matter of priority, they should ensure that no such activities are carried out in densely populated areas.

The report adds that the Government of Israel should take all necessary measures to prevent incidents of excessive use of force. This should include a review of regulations on the use of weapons and crowd-control means in operations carried out by all Israel security forces, to ensure that these regulations are in line with Israel's international legal obligations.

The report recommends that the Government of Israel must immediately terminate Israeli policies resulting in the forcible transfer of civilians within and from the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including the revocation of residency rights of Palestinians from East Jerusalem, evictions, home demolitions and the planned transfer of Bedouin communities. Israeli planning and zoning policies and practices should be immediately modified to ensure adequate housing for all Palestinian residents of Area C and East Jerusalem.

Additionally, the report recommends that the Government of Israel should fully comply with the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the Legal Consequences of the Construction of a wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, in particular by immediately halting construction and dismantling or rerouting the constructed section to the Green Line.

Also to be considered is a report of the Secretary-General on the occupied Syrian Golan (document [A/67/338](#)), which was prepared by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights pursuant to General Assembly resolution 66/80 on the text's implementation. To a note verbale sent to Israel, on behalf of the Secretary-General, requesting information on any steps that Government had taken or envisaged taking to implement the relevant provisions of that resolution, no reply has been received. To similar notes verbales sent to all Permanent Missions of the United Nations in Geneva, replies have been received from Syria, as well as from the delegations of Qatar, Argentina, Sudan and Algeria.

Introduction of Reports

PALITHAKOCHONA (Sri Lanka) introduced the report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories (document [A/67/372](#)). As in past years, it notes, the Government of Israel had failed to respond to repeated requests to meet and allow access to the occupied territories. Thus, the Committee had sought information from a wide range of other relevant sources.

The Committee's investigations over the past year had led to "one deeply troubling conclusion", he said. The mass imprisonment of Palestinians, the routine demolition of homes and resultant displacement of Palestinians, the widespread violence by Israeli settlers against Palestinians, the lack of effort by Israel to prevent or hold settlers accountable for such violence, and the blockade of Gaza and resultant reliance on illegal smuggling to survive might amount to a strategy to either force the Palestinians off their land or to so severely marginalize them as to establish and maintain a system of permanent occupation. That strategy functioned in a systematic manner and consequently cast doubts on Israel's claim that it was committed to the objective of the two-State solution.

In addition, he said, the report detailed "alarming" allegations related to Israel's treatment of Palestinian children in detention. Testimony provided to the Committee concerned often harsh treatment by Israeli security agents, in the process of detaining, transporting, interrogating and imprisoning Palestinian children. It was clear that those children did not benefit from the basic legal, judicial or social safeguards to which they were entitled under international law. That was especially worrying considering that Israel arrested between 500 and 700 Palestinian children every year and 12 per cent of them were kept in solitary confinement.

Relevant to that matter, among the report's recommendations, was a call on Israel to bring its policies and practices concerning the arrest, detention and sentencing of Palestinian children into line with international laws and standards relevant to minors.

The report further called on Israel to take immediate effective measures to end violence against Palestinians by Israeli settlers. Such measures may include investigating any such incidents, criminally prosecuting perpetrators, and ensuring that those convicted were given appropriate punishment. The report also urged the General Assembly to adopt measures to address Israel's long track record of non-cooperation with the United Nations. Among its other recommendations was a call on Israel to lift its illegal blockade of Gaza and to ensure a regular and adequate supply of food, medicines and other basic supplies and services to the enclave, in line with Security Council resolution 1860 (2009).

IVAN ŠIMONOVIĆ, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, introduced five reports submitted under agenda item 53: report of the Secretary-General on the Work of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories (document A/67/511); applicability of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (document A/67/332); report of the Secretary-General on Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan (document A/67/332); Israeli practices affecting the human rights of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem (document A/67/6727962); and the report of the Secretary-General on the occupied Syrian Golan (document A/67/338).

Statements

NADYARASHEED, representative of the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine, said that the Special Committee's examination of the situation had clearly been undertaken on the basis of the relevant human rights covenants and humanitarian law, which made it "all the more condemnable" that Israel, the occupying Power, once again refused to cooperate, violating its obligations as a Member State to respect relevant resolutions and to cooperate with United Nations mechanisms, including, inter alia, the Human Rights Council. Israel's blatant disrespect for and grave breaches of international law, which it continued to perpetrate with impunity against the peoples suffering under its illegitimate, oppressive, 45-year military occupation, warranted the same indignation expressed when other Member States breached such obligations, and perhaps even more so as it had been done repeatedly, deliberately, and over such a prolonged period of time.

She said the Special Committee's reports, along with recent reports by the Human Rights Council's Special Rapporteur, conveyed a grim picture of the reality prevailing in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, as a result of a wide range of illegal, destructive Israeli policies and practices that were severely harming the Palestinian people, their land, and their prospects for the future. Regrettably, across the Territory, people continued to suffer the denial and violation of their human rights, a situation that had declined steeply over the past year. The 237 per cent increase in Israeli settler violence during the reporting period as compared to 2009 was one of only many alarming statistics reported by the Special Committee. It had become glaringly clear that Israel "seeks not a just peace", but rather to "entrench its illegal expansionist agenda", through colonization of Palestinian land and subjugation of Palestinian people by the most brutal, illegitimate practices.

Highlighting several grave issues of concern during the reporting period, she drew attention to the deaths of 99 Palestinian civilians as a result of Israeli military attacks; the continued imprisonment of nearly 5,000 Palestinians, including children, who were subjected to horrific mistreatment; continued land confiscations and construction of the wall; and demolition of Palestinian homes and properties, among others.

Despite the deplorable human rights situation, remarkably, she said, the Palestinian people and their leadership remained committed to the peace process, reaffirming repeatedly in word and deed their commitment to negotiations and to solving all core final status issues — refugees, Jerusalem, settlements, borders, water, security and prisoners — and to bringing an end to the occupation and achieving a two-State solution of Palestine and Israel living side by side in peace and security on the basis of the pre-1967 borders. However, such peace could never be realized as long as Israel remained defiant of the law and an unwilling partner in the peace process, acting in bad faith and total contradiction to the longstanding terms of reference of the peace process. In closing, she said it was the collective duty of the international community, including the Security Council, to hold Israel accountable for its illegal policies and practices. That was fundamental to salvaging the rapidly diminishing prospects for peace.

IOANNIS VRILAS, representative of the European Union Delegation, said that ending the Arab-Israeli conflict remained one of the Union's main priorities. His delegation deplored the ongoing Israeli settlement activities, as illustrated most recently by the decision to build 797 new housing units in the Gilo settlement, following a previous decision regarding the nearby Har Homa settlement. Together, those developments contributed to separating East Jerusalem from the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The Union supported the Palestinian State-building process, aiming at the creation of a Palestinian state based on the rule of law and respect for human rights, and would continue to provide support for that goal.

Fully recognizing Israel's legitimate security concerns, he said the European Union was appalled by recurring instances of rocket attacks from Gaza and condemned in the strongest terms any violence deliberately targeting civilians. The Union called on all partners in the region to prevent arms smuggling into Gaza, while, at the same time, aware that the situation in Gaza and southern Israel would remain unstable as long as the enclave was politically separated from the West Bank. Regarding the specific issue of the protection of human rights, the Union and Israel regularly engaged in bilateral dialogue on the matter, and it had called on Israel to resume full cooperation with the United Nations Human Rights Council, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the Universal Periodic Review. Neither Israel, nor the work of those institutions, benefitted from Israel's withdrawal from those mechanisms. The Union would continue to work with its partners in the Quartet to contribute to a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

ESHAGH AL HABIB (Iran), speaking on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, said that the Movement was seriously concerned about the findings of the Special Committee, especially those that addressed mass imprisonment of Palestinians, administrative detention, routine demolition of homes, intensification of settlement activities, the blockade of Gaza, widespread violence by settlers and the lack of an effort to hold them accountable. He called for the implementation of the recommendations contained in the report, in order to ensure compliance with international human rights and humanitarian law by Israel and to end its impunity in all the Arab territories it continued to occupy since 1967. He added that the impact of illegal Israeli measures on the civilian population, including the most vulnerable such as women, children and refugees, must be seriously considered and measures taken in accordance with international law to remedy the situation.

Condemning what he called an unlawful campaign of arrest, detention and forced interrogation of Palestinians under harsh, inhumane conditions, he called for their immediate release, with their plight addressed by the Security Council and the Human Rights Council. He also demanded an end to settlement activities, the blockade of the Gaza Strip, occupation of the Syrian Golan and all actions aimed at altering the demographic composition of the occupied territory, calling on Israel to constructively cooperate with efforts to bring about negotiations for the achievement of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East based on the realization of the rights of the Palestinian people and the two-State solution, based on pre-1967 borders. In that context, he stressed the need for the international community to remain united in its demand that Israel respect its legal obligations as an occupying Power and cease forthwith all its violations.

HUSSEIN HANIFF (Malaysia), associating with the Non-Aligned Movement, said that, despite the many obstacles by Israel, the Special Committee — of which he was a member — saw the situation on the ground and obtained testimonies of many Palestinians who had fallen victim to human rights violations. Malaysia was disappointed at Israel's continued policy of non-cooperation with the Special Committee. The situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory was not improving, and, in fact, had worsened. Israel's continued practice of administrative and arbitrary detention of both children and adults was "appalling", as were the harsh and cruel treatment of those being detained and the application of military law against children, among other practices. Without a doubt, the occupying Power was in flagrant violation of international and human rights laws. More crucially, it appeared to have abandoned "common and minimum human decency" by denying Palestinians, not only their basic human rights, but also their human dignity.

He said his country condemned the Judaization policy in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, as reflected in the report, including the demolition of Palestinian homes and the active encouragement of illegal settlement activity. "It is clear that Israel intends to change the demographics and reality on the ground," he said. The Member States must send the strongest political message to Israel that the rule of law was for all, and Israel was no exception. Indeed, if Israel was committed to a solution to the question of Palestine, those settlements had to be dismantled and no new illegal settlements should ever again be built on Palestinian land. "We cannot sit idly by while Palestinians continue to suffer," he added, calling upon the General Assembly to adopt new measures to address Israel's long track record of non-cooperation with the United Nations. Israel must be compelled to respect international law, including humanitarian and human rights law, and it must accept that a lasting and just solution, not only benefitted the Palestinians, but would contribute to Israel's own safety and security.

FODE SECK (Senegal), associating with the statement of the Special Committee as well as that of Non-Aligned Movement, stated that the systematic and large-scale violations by Israel were alarming. They ranged from the abuse of restrictions on mobility and assembly to evictions and the confiscation of lands. Those acts were in complete violation of international law and especially, humanitarian international law. He lamented excessive use of force by the Israeli security forces, especially the police and border forces.

In contrast, he said, most of the victims were peaceful and unarmed, and risked their lives daily, simply for expressing their opinions in public. The situation of Palestine youth should also not be ignored. Israel was obliged to honour its obligations under the Conventions on the Rights of the Child. The great hardship observed stemming from the Gaza blockade had severe consequences, and Senegal called for its complete lifting. Senegal also denounced the impunity taking root in the occupied territory. The Israeli authorities must uphold legality and fulfil their responsibilities through independent and effective investigations. Senegal supported the creation of a sovereign and independent Palestinian State based on 1967 borders, whose establishment would contribute decisively to preservation the human rights of the Palestinian people.

YESSIKA COMESANA PERDOMO (Cuba), associating with the Non-Aligned Movement, expressed appreciation for the work of the Special Committee, especially since it was conducted under difficult circumstances. She expressed her concern over increasing violence by Israel against Palestinians in the occupied territory, particularly in Gaza, where poverty rate and number of displacements were alarming. She also raised the issue of the blockade, which was limiting education prospects for young people, as it was impossible to import the necessary materials to build new schools. Further, armed force was being used against a defenceless population that included women, children and the elderly.

She said that efforts by the international community to resolve the conflict had been fruitless, and Israeli authorities had "brazenly scorned" international law. The Security Council could still not deal seriously with the subject, as there was a double standard and one of its members used or threatened to use its veto power. Israeli policies of closures, settlements, and confiscations of large amounts of land made one ask whether Israeli truly wanted peace. All of its actions as an occupying Power were attempts to change the legal and demographic situation on the ground. Cuba condemned those actions, including in the Syrian Golan, since 1967, as those were violations of international law, the United Nations Charter and various resolutions. In closing, she expressed her country's support for the Palestinian people's inalienable right to an independent sovereign State with East Jerusalem as its capital, and demanded the unconditional return of all their land, which was the only way to achieve a just and lasting peace.

BILAL ABZAKH (Jordan) said his Government had taken note with deep concern of the report, which painted a bleak picture of the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Jordan fully endorsed its recommendations. The human rights situation and dire humanitarian conditions of people in that area were deteriorating, owing to Israeli actions, which violated international law. He called on Israel to stop all violations and unilateral measures, especially in Jerusalem against Muslim and Christian holy sites.

Equally imperative, he said, was to stop the excavations below the Temporary Wooden Bridge leading to the Mughrabi Gate Pathway, as well as efforts to remove the Arab presence in Jerusalem. Further, settlements had no legal validity under international law, a point reaffirmed in various Security Council resolutions. Jordan condemned Israel's declaration to build new ones, as well as plans for a military academy in East Jerusalem. The right to self-determination was an international legal principle obliging all States to promote its realization in respect of Palestinians, as affirmed by the International Court of Justice's 2004 advisory opinion. The Palestinian question was the core regional problem, which warranted collective attention to achieve a peaceful solution.

ALEXANDRA TOHME (Lebanon) said that administrative detention in Israel was formerly known as internment, a colonial procedure used to remove individuals from society when no criminal charges were made. "The reports before us today confirms that the practice of administrative detention in Israel has caused the prolonged confinement of persons not engaged in violent activities and who do not pose a security threat to suffer exceedingly harsh treatment of cruel and unusual punishment, in particular Palestinian women and children," she said, noting the finding in the report of the Secretary-General that, at the end of May, 234 Palestinian boys were in Israeli detention, marking a 73 per cent increase since December 2011. "It is high time for these children to regain their freedom and be able to dream of a better future," she said.

"How many more homes, infrastructure projects, roads and agricultural land and facilities have to be destroyed in Israel's escalating demolitions for the international community to act?" she asked. "How many more Palestinian families must be forcibly displaced from their homes for the international community to put an end to these abuses of human rights?" The separation wall and its permit regime were enforcing an "apartheid policy" in violation of the International Court of Justice's advisory opinion, yet Israel continued to construct the barrier, imposing severe restrictions on movement and access in all aspects of life. The people of Palestine's rights were violated daily, and their land was being degraded over time. It was high time to support their right to live in dignity and justice, and their quest for peace, she said.

RIADH BEN SLIMAN (Tunisia) stated that the Special Committee must continue its work till the end of the Israeli occupation, to remind the international community of the daily suffering of the Palestinian people and other Arabs in the occupied territories. Despite promises, there had been a severe drop in international assistance to Palestinians at a time when there was total paralysis of hope for resumption of peace efforts. Six decades after Israel had occupied Palestinian lands and the Syrian Golan, the international community had yet to act decisively to put an end to the occupation and enable Palestinians to establish an independent State.

He said that the deadlock increased tension and instability in the region, and the daily violation of human rights was practised, not only by the Israeli army and Government, but also by extremist settlers under the eye of the Israeli Government, amid international silence. The uprooting of people and ethnic cleansing performed with total impunity, in addition to confiscation of the historical lands of the Palestinians, made the two-State solution difficult if not impossible. It was Tunisia's hope that the international community would uphold the justice of Palestine's quest for status as a Member State of the United Nation, which would send the message that there was a real basis for peace.

IHAB HAMED (Syria) noted with satisfaction the role of the Special Committee, whose reports were "very professional, neutral and true". For 60 years, the international community had witnessed the massive and systematic violation of human rights, as well as of legal instruments, moral, ethical and humanitarian norms. In the seventh decade of the conflict, he asked how much more time must pass and how many more people must suffer, before serious efforts were taken to end the occupation. Did the inhabitants of Gaza need to die of hunger for the blockade to be lifted? The reports of dozens of investigative committees had been submitted over the years - were those not sufficient to attest to the gravity of the situation? An enormous number of resolutions had asked Israel to end the occupation in the Arab territories and had condemned the systematic and gross violation of human rights — were they not sufficient to oblige Israel to put an end to the occupation and to oblige countries to stop supporting Israel?

He said that there was an ongoing tragedy in the occupied Golan, in which Syrians were suffering under an Israeli occupation that involved terrorist and oppressive policies, racial discrimination and arbitrary detentions. Syrians were prevented from travelling outside the occupied territory, while Israelis continued building settlements, in an effort to redraw the geographic map. He also cited the Israeli military's use of explosive mines, which had claimed more than 726 victims, including children. He reiterated his delegation's call on the international community to ensure that the border line was moved back to where it was on 4 June 1967. In closing, he said the credibility of the United Nations was being "put to the test", and the Organization must uphold its responsibilities. Further, a just and global peace in the Middle East would not be possible without resumption of the Madrid negotiations.

