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HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL CALLS FOR CESSATION OF ISRAELI MILITARY ATTACKS IN OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES AND OF FIRING OF CRUDE ROCKETS

The Human Rights Council this afternoon adopted a [resolution](#) in which it called for the immediate cessation of all Israeli military attacks throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territories and of firing of crude rockets.

In the resolution, which was adopted by a roll-call vote of 33 in favour, 1 against and 13 abstentions, the Council condemned the persistent Israeli military attacks and incursions in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, particularly the recent one in the Gaza strip. The Council expressed its shock at the Israeli bombardments of civilian homes. The Council called for the immediate cessation of all Israeli military attacks throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territories, the firing of crude rockets and for urgent international action to put an end to the grave violations committed by Israel. It reiterated its call for the immediate protection of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and urged all concerned parties to respect international human rights and humanitarian law and to refrain from violence against civilian populations.

Introducing the resolution, Pakistan said that this resolution was being presented in the backdrop of a very serious situation caused by the incessant Israeli military attacks in Gaza. These required instant response by the Human Rights Council.

Israel, speaking as a concerned country, said since January, Hamas had fired 671 missiles at civilians, women and children. Hamas was committing war crimes and collectively punishing a population of a quarter of a million citizens living in Ashkelon, Sderot, Negev and Netivot. Critical words or one-sided resolutions would not intimidate Israel. Israel had the fundamental right to live and the essential right to self-defence. It was up to Israel to protect its citizens. The passage of yet another resolution would not solve the issue, and would not bring stability in the region.

Palestine, speaking as a concerned country, said the absence of a common and firm position towards Israel's grave international law breaches combined with the policy of lending it unconditional support encouraged it to continue and intensify its violations. The number of Palestinians killed had rendered the Israeli claims of combating militants null and void. Urgent international intervention was required to end murder and provide protection to the Palestinian civil population.

In the context of the debate, some delegations expressed their concerns over the wording used by the Israeli Deputy Defence Minister, threatening Palestine with a Holocaust. The international community had to react and condemn the current military actions. The few rocket attacks on Israel could not be used as an excuse for the gross violations of humanitarian law and human rights as well as for the flagrant disproportionate use of force by the Israeli military against the civil population. Israel had ignored the many calls from the international community and had not made a single step towards the implementation of the decisions taken by the Human Rights Council after its special sessions; Israel was not above the law and had to comply with the United Nations' resolutions.

Speaking in the debate on the situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories were Libya, the United States, Iran, Tunisia, Yemen, the League of Arab States, Belarus, Lebanon, the Arab Union, Morocco, Turkey, Sudan, Algeria, Norway, Argentina, Venezuela, Iceland, the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait.

Also speaking were the following non-governmental organizations : Al-Haq, Law in the Service of Man in a joint statement with, ADALAH - Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel; Palestinian Center for Human Rights; Union of Arab Jurists, speaking on behalf of several NGOs¹, Movement against Racism and for Friendship among Peoples; International League for the Rights and Liberation of Peoples; B'nai B'rith International, speaking on behalf of Coordination Board of Jewish Organizations; Defence for Children International; International Commission of Jurists; United Nations Watch; International Association of Democratic Lawyers; Badil Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights; Nord Sud XXI; International Committee for the Respect and Application of the African Charter on Human and People's Rights and Tupaj Amaru.

Speaking in general statements or explanations of the vote before the vote were Jordan, Brazil, Slovenia on behalf of the European Union, Switzerland, Canada and the Netherlands.

The next meeting of the Council will be on Friday, 7 March at 9 a.m. when it will hear explanations of the vote after the vote before starting to consider the High Commissioner's annual report and conduct an interactive dialogue with the High Commissioner.

Resolution

In a resolution (A/HRC/7/L.1) on human rights violations emanating from Israeli military attacks and incursions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, particularly the recent ones in the occupied Gaza Strip, adopted by a roll-call vote of 33 in favour, one against and 13 abstentions, the Council, recognizing that the Israeli military attacks and incursions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory constitute violations of international humanitarian law and of the human rights of the Palestinian people therein and undermine international efforts aimed at invigorating the peace process, condemns the persistent Israeli military attacks and incursions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, particularly the recent ones in the occupied Gaza Strip, which resulted in the loss of more than 125 lives and hundreds of injuries among Palestinian civilians, including women, children and infants; expresses its shock at the Israeli bombardment of Palestinian homes and the killing of civilians therein and at the Israeli policy of inflicting collective punishment against the civilian population, which is contrary to international humanitarian law, and calls for bringing the perpetrators to justice; calls for the immediate cessation of all Israeli military attacks throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the firing of crude rockets, which resulted in the loss of two civilian lives and some injuries in southern Israel; also calls for urgent international action to put an immediate end to the grave violations committed by the occupying Power, Israel, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including the series of incessant and repeated Israeli military attacks and incursions therein and the siege of the occupied Gaza Strip; reiterates its calls for immediate protection of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory in compliance with international human rights law and international humanitarian law; urges all parties concerned to respect the rules of international human rights law and international humanitarian law and to refrain from violence against civilian populations; and requests the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to report to the Council, at its next session, on the progress made in the implementation of the present resolution.

The result of the vote was as follows:

In favour (33): Angola, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Brazil, China, Cuba, Djibouti, Egypt, Gabon, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mali, Mauritius, Mexico, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Qatar, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Uruguay and Zambia.

Against (1): Canada.

Abstentions (13): Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cameroon, France, Germany, Guatemala, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Republic of Korea, Romania, Slovenia, Ukraine and United Kingdom.

Introduction of Resolution

MASOOD KHAN (Pakistan), speaking on behalf of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference and the Arab Group, introducing the draft resolution, said that this resolution was being presented in the backdrop of a very serious situation caused by the incessant Israeli military attacks in Gaza. The draft resolution focused on the tragic humanitarian consequences. It required instant response by the Human Rights Council. It underlined the right to self determination and the applicability of international human rights law in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The incursions into Gaza constituted grave violations of international law and were undermining the efforts to reinvigorate the peace process. The draft condemned the Israeli attacks, expressed shock at the bombardments of Palestinian homes and called for the immediate cessation of Israeli military attacks. It was hoped that the Council would adopt this resolution by consensus.

Statements by Concerned Countries

ITZHAK LEVANON (Israel), speaking as a concerned country, said the truth was that the Hamas terrorists had taken over the Gaza Strip by force, and established an irredentist entity. Hamas had smuggled lethal weapons into that territory with the sole purpose of killing Israelis. Since January, Hamas had fired 671 missiles at civilians, women and children. Hamas was committing war crimes and collectively punishing a population of a quarter of a million citizens living in Ashkelon, Sderot, Negev and Netivot. Critical words or one-sided resolutions would not intimidate Israel. Israel had the fundamental right to live and the essential right to self-defence. It was up to Israel to protect its citizens.

The passage of yet another resolution would not solve the issue, and would not bring stability in the region, Israel said. The solution was that Hamas aggression had to stop immediately, and the firing of missiles had to completely terminate. Another routine resolution did not show temerity. A country making patronizing statements at the high-level segment did not demonstrate strong moral fiber. A true show of courage would be displayed if Member States of the Council would look with objective eyes, would think in a non-selective way, and would decide impartially. Yet, because the self-serving members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and the Arab Group who held a majority could block any courageous steps, that was unlikely to happen here. For those who constantly asked why Israel did not engage with the Human rights Council more often, it was precisely because of circumstances such as this.

MOHAMMED ABU-KOASH (Palestine), speaking as a concerned country, said Gaza's carnage was a painful reminder of the massacres perpetrated by the Zionist terrorist gangs against the Palestinian people six decades ago. Since its inception, the Jewish State had unleashed a chain of economic intimidation, mass destruction, massacres, and forcible removal of Palestinians from their homes and lands perpetrated according to pre-meditated plans by the Zionist leadership in fulfillment of their strategic objective of the creation of a pure national Jewish State. United Nations resolutions, peace plans and agreements to achieve a two-State solution had not succeeded as consecutive Israeli leaderships had been working against them. It was a long-standing Israeli policy that prompted wars with neighboring Arab countries, the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip and the Syrian Golan and turmoil that continued to plague Palestine and the whole region.

The absence of a common and firm position towards Israel's grave international law breaches combined with the policy of lending it unconditional support encouraged it to continue and intensify its violations, Palestine said. The number of Palestinians killed had rendered the Israeli claims of combating militants null and void. Urgent international intervention was required to end murder and provide protection to the Palestinian civil population. It was an irony that Israel, which had been banking on the Holocaust was immersing occupied Gaza in an inferno. It was the Israeli criminals who should be launched into Dante's inferno. The image of Palestinian children shocked by the sight of their killed friends and relatives planted the seeds of hatred and revenge. That was not the way to win the hearts and minds of current and future generations. It was not the way to win the hearts and minds of the members of the Council. It was unwise and foolish in the extreme and criminal. Palestine hoped that the results of the voting would send a clear message to the Palestinian people as well as to Israel to let them know that Palestinians also had rights.

General Statements and Explanations of Vote Before the Voting

MOUSA BURAYZAT (Jordan), in a general statement, said that the credibility of the Council was at stake in its examination of this political crisis, which had generated extremist, uncalculated positions, especially with regard to the firing of rockets against Israeli victims. Jordan

could not accept the death of anyone. There was a need to study the occupation and the violence from which it stemmed and there was also a need to look at the Israeli raids from that point of view within the Arab and Palestinian Occupied Territories. If one acted in any other way, there would be a loss of credibility in the Council. Palestinian civilians were paying the price, and most of them were bystanders. It was important to look at innocence on both sides.

SERGIO ABREU E LIMA FLORENCIO ([Brazil](#)), speaking also on behalf of [Argentina](#), [Chile](#) and [Uruguay](#), said Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Uruguay had actively participated in the three previous special sessions of the Council on the human rights situation of the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and acknowledged the spirit of consensus which guided the institution-building processes of the Council and inclusion of this item on the agenda of the Council. While recognizing the disproportionate use of force by Israel and the disproportionate number of Palestinian victims, Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Uruguay wished to remind everyone that, unless all parties involved had a genuine commitment to dialogue and cessation of the use of force, it would not be possible to achieve significant change in the human rights situation on the ground. The four countries reaffirmed their conviction that the right to live in peace was universal and extended to all peoples. Addressing the issue in a particular way, without the recognition of and the call for moderation by all parties involved in hostilities, would jeopardize the legitimacy and the effectiveness of the Human Rights Council. Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Uruguay also reaffirmed the importance of guaranteeing the full implementation of the Council's resolutions to achieve a peaceful and sustainable solution on the ground.

ANDREJ LOGAR([Slovenia](#)), speaking on behalf of the [European Union](#), in an explanation of vote before the vote, said that it had already made its position clear in today's debate. The European Union had constructively engaged with the authors of the draft resolution. The European Union could support certain elements in the draft, but could not support the text as a whole as it contained certain unacceptable stances. The draft was seen as not sufficiently balanced in the way it was dealing with the situation on the ground.

BLAISE GODET ([Switzerland](#)), speaking in an explanation of the vote before the vote, said that Switzerland would vote in favor of the resolution. That "yes", should be interpreted as a signal of Switzerland's concern with respect to the gravity of the situation in Southern Israel and Gaza, and reflected Switzerland's recognition of efforts to improve the text of the draft resolution. While the text still remained below Switzerland's expectations, and while Switzerland would have liked more time to reach a consensus, a movement of rapprochement had been carried out and Switzerland did not despair that in the future, even on such delicate topics as Gaza, a consensus could be reached. Among Switzerland's disappointments in the text were that it included a reference to "Israeli attacks" rather than "Israeli military operations" and a lack of explicit condemnation of rocket launches by Palestinians, because, in international humanitarian law, all military operations must be condemned, wherever they come from and whomever their authors were.

MARIUS GRINIUS ([Canada](#)), speaking in explanation of the vote before the vote, said Canada was deeply concerned by the deterioration of the situation and by the recent intensification of violence in Gaza and Israel. Unfortunately, through their rocket attacks, Hamas and other militant groups were causing more instability. Canada called on those groups to stop their acts for the sake of those suffering. Israel had the right to defend itself. Canada called on all parties to ensure safe and unhindered humanitarian access to those in need and welcomed the resumption of the peace process through the Annapolis Conference and also welcomed the contribution of over \$300 million for that cause at the Paris Donor's Conference. Canada called on both parties to reach an agreement by the end of the year. Canada believed the United Nations had a responsibility to commit to those efforts. It was regretted that the draft resolution did not fully take into consideration the respective role of all parties and focused on Israeli action without referring to Israel's right to defend itself. It did not present an accurate representation of the situation. For this reason Canada would vote against the resolution.

MARION S. KAPPEYNE VAN DE COPPELLO ([Netherlands](#)), speaking in an explanation of the vote before the vote, expressed deep concern over the current situation and the continuous firing of rockets into Israel. Palestine was urged to end those acts. The Israeli right to self-defence was recognized, but they should use it with restraint. The current resolution did not take into account the fact that recent rocket attacks had taken place from densely populated areas inside Gaza, which was also threatening their own civilians. The peace talks had to restart. All these elements had not been sufficiently reflected in the current resolution, even if the rocket launches were acknowledged in the current text. The Netherlands would therefore abstain.

Debate on Palestine

FAWZI M.S. ABUSAA ([Libya](#)) said that Libya followed with great preoccupation the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and the grave violations of human rights perpetrated by Israel against the Palestinians. The barbaric attacks and destruction of homes as well as the threats voiced by the Deputy Defence Minister of Israel to conduct a Holocaust on the Palestinians raised concerns about the real intentions of Israel. Israel had failed as a partner for peace. The Palestinians were asking where the United Nations was. It was a real challenge. Libya called on the Council to carry out its duty of protecting the Palestinian people.

WARREN W. TICHENOR ([United States](#)) said the United States recognized Israel's need to defend itself. At the same time, it also regretted all loss of innocent life in Israel and Gaza as a result of the recent escalation of violence. The United States urgently called on all parties to fully respect their obligations under international law and to consider the very serious humanitarian situation in Gaza and southern Israel. The rocket attacks against Israeli cities should cease as the terrorist attacks that intentionally targeted civilians could never be justified. The way forward was neither through violence, nor was it through the unbalanced treatment that Israel received in United Nations fora, including this Human rights Council.

It was important that both sides and the international community refrained from exacerbating tensions through unhelpful rhetoric and unbalanced actions. In an effort to realize the vision of two States living side by side peacefully and in security, the United States was working to support progress on Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, on Palestinian economic development and institutional capacity building, and on implementation of the Roadmap to build confidence and improve conditions on the ground.

ALIREZA MOYERI ([Iran](#)) said Iran strongly condemned the recent military attacks, massacres and incursions in Gaza by the Israeli regime and wished to express its heart-felt sympathy to the families who lost their beloved ones in the recent indiscriminate bombardment of residential areas in the Gaza Strip. There was much to be regretted that despite all the decisions and resolutions of the Human Rights Council, particularly the recent resolutions of the sixth special session, the human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories remained grave and worsening, within a general climate of impunity. Israel had continued to perpetuate massive and systematic violations of human rights against the innocent people of Palestine in defiance of the Council's decisions and resolutions. The inhuman policy of the Israeli regime to besiege the Gaza Strip less than two months ago and block basic needs such as food, fuel, electricity and medicine had resulted in a complete tragedy for the humanitarian situation in the area. According to reports, Gaza's humanitarian situation was at its worst since the Zionists occupied the territory in 1967.

SAMIR LABIDI ([Tunisia](#)) said that the grave developments in the Palestinian territories, due to the Israeli military operations, had led to many victims. Women, children and unarmed civilians were suffering from these grave breakings of humanitarian law and human rights. Violence was rejected. The international community should move promptly and act rapidly to put to an end to this situation. Tunisia believed that efforts should be made to reach a comprehensive peace. The Human Rights Council should take action. The draft resolution should be adopted by consensus.

IBRAHIM SAIED MOHAMED AL-ADOOFI ([Yemen](#)) said that this item of the agenda was inevitable given the repeated violations of human rights committed by Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. In this year of commemoration of the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the barbaric Israeli massacres and crimes should be punished by international law. Israel's flagrant violations of international law and relevant resolutions were condemned.

Yemen condemned the systematic violations of human rights by Israel, the establishment of settlements, construction of the wall, the systematic practice of torture, and closures, stressing that these practices occurred during the era of democracy and human rights. Israel must respect international law and relevant United Nations resolutions. Yemen also deplored the silence of the international community about these barbaric atrocities. Israel must shoulder its responsibilities in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and in the occupied Syrian Golan. In addition, it was important to avoid politicization and double standards in the Council's activities and Yemen hoped that the resolution would be adopted in response to these atrocious massacres.

SAAD ALFARARGI, of the [League of Arab States](#), said Israel had committed massacres for over sixty years and the victims were always Arabs and Palestinians. This collective punishment in the Gaza Strip was only one ring on the chain of Israeli extermination campaigns. Israel committed crimes of war and crimes against humanity with impunity. Israel had destroyed homes, killed civilians and its actions had led to many other casualties. The Geneva Conventions should be applied to the Gaza strip and other occupied Arab territories. The international community was keeping silent. There was an urgent need for international action. Palestinians should be protected from this Israeli war of aggression. It was clear that Israel was keen to achieve peace based on killing Palestinians of all ages in defiance of international and humanitarian pacts.

ANDREI MOLCHAN ([Belarus](#)) said that Belarus was gravely concerned about the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The situation was regrettably not improving and was becoming harsher in nature. The continuing violations of human rights against the civilian population were condemned. The resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council at its sixth Special Session had not yet been implemented. To show solidarity for the Palestinians, Belarus had co-authored the present draft resolution.

NAJLA RIACHI ASSAKER ([Lebanon](#)) expressed anger with regard to the barbaric massacres against innocent people perpetrated by Israel in the Gaza Strip. It deprived people of their right to live on their own land. That was absurd as it was contrary to all rights. How long would this continue. What could Lebanon do, it had only words to condemn what was happening. Lebanon had castigated the collective punishment that was contrary to international law and relevant resolutions. The killings in the occupied territories did not show that Israel was convinced of peace. The international community had to save the Gaza Strip now and it had to react to keep the hope of achieving peace.

KHADIJA RACHIDA MASRI, of the [African Union](#), said the factual reports called for urgent action by the international community in order to put an end to this long tragic situation perpetrated by Israel since 1967. A comprehensive and just peace could only be achieved through the complete withdrawal of Israel in the Palestinian territories and the creation of an independent Palestinian State. At the tenth ordinary session of the African Union in Addis Ababa, the African Union reaffirmed its complete solidarity with the right of Palestinian people to their legitimate right to self determination. The African Union deplored the Israeli actions. Moreover, the African Union applauded the statement of the Secretary-General of the United Nations in this regard. The Human Rights Council and the High Commissioner should take up this issue and implement the outcome of related resolutions.

MOHAMMED LOULICHKI ([Morocco](#)) said that the situation faced by the Palestinians under the yoke of the Israeli military in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and especially in the Gaza strip, was appalling. The Israelis were destroying important Palestinian infrastructure. Everyone saw it on television. Israel had threatened that these operations would increase in strength. The occupying authorities were ignoring human rights and Morocco condemned this. The international community was called on to intervene and put an end to this murderous campaign. The peace process should be pursued. Palestine should become an independent state. The language of force should be set aside.

AHMET UZUMCU ([Turkey](#)) said the Israeli-Palestinian conflict continued to be a profound concern to the international community. Despite the recent efforts with a view to resuming the dialogue after seven years of interruption and some progress in this direction, the international community was regrettably faced with a serious deterioration of the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, mainly in Gaza. Turkey was deeply concerned about the rising violence resulting from the rocket attacks from Gaza and the disproportionate and discriminate use force by Israel, causing the loss of lives of many civilians, including children. The Human Rights Council, which remained seized of the human rights situation in Palestine, should contribute to efforts aiming to rapidly de-escalate the violence by taking a consensual position at this seventh session and by sending a strong message to all parties concerned.

OMER DAHAB FADOL MOHAMED ([Sudan](#)) said Sudan was not able to consider that the Holocaust being carried out in Gaza and other Arab occupied territories was a situation between two equal sides. Israel had the most sophisticated weaponry and military. One could not compare Israel's daily targeting against women and children with those who were fighting with primitive weapons. These crimes were categorically prohibited by international laws. Sudan did not approve of this targeting of civilians in any place and under any pretext. There were scores of victims who had lost their right to life every day, just as they previously had lost their right to live in dignity in an independent State.

IDRISS JAZAIRY ([Algeria](#)) said that the aggression launched by Israeli had ended in hundreds of killed and wounded civilians; this was a war crime and it had also killed the hope for peace. The Council was unable to implement its decisions and resolutions. The High Commissioner should stand by the victims, as it was mentioned in her mandate. Western European States and others had been seen equating the aggressor with the victim. Thankfully, today a few countries had been recognising the grave situation, particularly Switzerland. Would the Human Rights Council remain silent before a new Holocaust? This Council was called to rise over politicization and had to adopt the tabled resolution. An end should be put to aggressions. All necessary measures had to be taken.

VEBJORN HEINES ([Norway](#)) regretted the recent events that had caused the death of large numbers of civilians, including many children. He also drew attention to the severe damage to infrastructure, including residential. Norway had on several occasions condemned the rocket attacks that terrorized the citizens of Israel. Israel had the right to defend its territory, but it should not respond with disproportionate use of its armed forces. Norway called on Israel to exercise restraint. This situation was born out of the total blockade imposed on the Gaza Strip and Norway called on Israel to take measures to avoid a humanitarian crisis there. Norway called on all parties to immediately cease acts of violence. The message was clear, violence must stop, political negotiations must resume, he said.

SEBASTIAN ROSALES ([Argentina](#)) expressed concern about the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip incurred by Israeli attacks which targeted civilians, including women and children. Argentina reiterated its position on the need for the comprehensive respect by all parties to international humanitarian law and international human rights law as a condition for lasting peace in the region. The Argentine Government continued to take all actions to create peace in the Middle East and to urge all parties to reach a lasting peace. It was also important for the Palestinian people to have a stable and viable Palestinian State. The Council was created to strengthen the human rights mechanism of the United Nations to ensure the effective enjoyment by all people of their human rights. Argentina believed a consensus should also be sought.

GABRIEL SALAZAR ([Venezuela](#)) said that they shared and stood in solidarity with the Palestinians that were standing against the foreign occupation. The Israeli blockade was inhumane and was condemned. Venezuela roundly rejected the recent attacks by the Israelis forces, and the disproportionate use of force. Venezuela was convinced that a peaceful dialogue in a spirit of collaboration should be the working basis in order to achieve peace and to build mutual trust and confidence. The civilian populations should not be converted into military targets. The United Nations and the Human Rights Council could not remain silent.

INGIBJORG DAVIDSDOTTIR ([Iceland](#)) said the Government of Iceland was gravely concerned about the on-going and escalating violence in

the Gaza strip and southern Israel. Iceland strongly condemned the indiscriminate rocket attacks by Palestinian militants against Israeli civilian targets. The attacks were in clear violation of international humanitarian law. Efforts should be made on the Palestinian side to put an end to these attacks and those responsible should be held accountable. Iceland underlined the crucial importance of full cooperation from every country, including Israel, with the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council. Iceland also wished to draw attention to the vulnerable situation of women and children in conflict and called on both sides to make efforts for their protection. Iceland reiterated its support for the establishment of an independent, democratic and viable Palestinian State in the West Bank and Gaza that lived in peace with Israel and the neighboring countries.

NAJLA MOHAMED BIN SALEM AL QASSIMI ([United Arab Emirates](#)), said the question of Palestine was an issue that the United Nations organs had been incapable of resolving despite the long history of work and that by the recent Human Rights Council. The Palestinian people have continued to suffer for more than 50 years. The Council was unable to implement its resolutions. On 27 February the Israeli forces launched an aggressive campaign in the Gaza Strip resulting in more than 120 dead. The continuation of these violations was the result of the international silence. The encouragement Israel was receiving was not proportionate. These violations were against all international laws and conventions and the oppression continued against the Palestinian people. The occupation was a main reason for depriving the population of their basic right to life, health care, food and all other rights enshrined in international instruments. These practices were continuing and would continue unless the international community put an end to them. The international community must put an end to the State terrorism perpetrated by Israel against all the population in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, be they women, children or the elderly.

NAJEEB AL BADER ([Kuwait](#)) said that Kuwait condemned the aggression by the Israeli military. What was happening? One Israeli official had described the operation as a Holocaust. The Israeli action had resulted in the disproportionate killing of innocent civilians. Israeli representatives said that the Arabs were politicizing the work of the Council. But what was happening in Gaza was not politics, it was a massacre. Israeli was an occupation power and it had a responsibility to protect the civilians. Such actions were alienating every Arab and Muslim State. If this path continued, there would be no other alternatives than a continuous cycle of violence. Only when there was a real Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital and the withdrawal of Israel from the Golan Heights, only then would there be peace in the land of peace.

JENNIFER DE PIAZZA, of [Al-Haq, Law in the Service of Man](#) in a joint statement with, ADALAH - Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel; Palestinian Center for Human Rights, expressed regret that despite the Council's sixth Special Session, the situation in the Gaza Strip had deteriorated further since January. The near closure of the Gaza Strip's borders by Israel since 2006, restricting the entry of vital human humanitarian supplies and preventing access to necessary medical care, was well documented. Israel's military attacks displayed an excessive and often disproportionate use of force in crowded residential areas, killing and wounding civilians in violation of fundamental principles of international humanitarian law, and often amounting to war crimes and grave breaches of the 4th Geneva Convention. The siege on Gaza was causing an unprecedented humanitarian crisis. The urgency of the situation was undeniable. Violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in response to rocket fire by Palestinian armed groups could not continue with impunity. The Council should recommend to the General Assembly to hold an emergency session under GA resolution 377 "Uniting for peace", so to allow the adoption of collective measures against Israel.

ELIAS KHOURI, of [Union of Arab Jurists](#), speaking on behalf of several NGOs ¹, said the Israeli war machinery was continuing to kill Palestinian children and Palestinian civilians and to destroy the basic infrastructure. These acts amounted to war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. Some Israeli officials had said they would commit a Holocaust against the Palestinian people. Threatening this act was in complete disregard to all international laws and values. The crimes perpetrated by the Israeli war machinery, including the building of the apartheid wall, among other things, led to an igniting feeling of resistance, which was only normal. This policy was a threat to peace and security in the region and prevented the achievement of any human rights. Peace could only be achieved by putting an end to the occupation. The Union of Arab Jurists and its associates called on the Council to send a clear message to Israel to have them stop perpetrating these crimes and abide by international legitimacy.

GIANFRANCO FATTORINI, of [Movement against Racism and for Friendship among Peoples](#), said that the response by the Israelis to the rocket attacks was disproportionate. Israel had obligations under international law. The destruction of infrastructure was clearly a collective punishment. Since the Annapolis Conference, the situation on the ground had worsened. The disdain of Israel was condemned. There was a need to clearly condemn the current actions of the Israelis.

ROMUALD PIAL MEZALA, of [International League for the Rights and Liberation of peoples](#), condemned the firing of rockets against Israeli civilians. The recent military operations in the Gaza Strip were characterized by excessive use of force and were carried out indiscriminately, causing many civilian casualties. The Israeli operation also resulted in the destruction of vital infrastructure, emphasizing in this regard that the United Nations Relief and Works of the United Nations for Palestine Refugees in the Near East reported that 30 ambulances could no longer be used, difficulties in the supply of drinking water and the destruction of its schools in Gaza and Rafah. As the Security Council, the General Assembly, the International Court of Justice and Israel itself had recognized the Palestinian people's right to self-determination, it was therefore incumbent upon the international community and especially the Council on Human Rights to act for the realization of this right.

KLAUS NETTER, of [B'nai B'rith International](#), speaking on behalf of Coordination Board of Jewish Organizations, said the bias inherent in the item had for years been compounded by one-sided reports on the part of Special Rapporteur John Dugard. Mr. Dugard's report insisted on qualifying Israel as an "apartheid state". Such comparisons contained in United Nations documents could not but stoke hatred and encourage the extremists who spared no effort in sabotaging the on-going peace efforts being undertaken by Israel and the moderate Palestinian elements. B'nai Brith renewed its objection that the resolutions and Special Procedures concerning Israel routinely ignored Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, which clearly confirmed the sovereign right of every Member State to defend itself and its citizens from attacks. It was hoped for the good of the Council itself that this imbalance would cease.

JULIA D'ALOISIO, of [Defence for Children International](#), drew attention to the recent killing of children during the latest incursions by the Israeli forces. Many children had been injured, killed or traumatized. Israel continued to maintain its blockade on Gaza; this also impacted the health and well-being of children. These were gross violations of international humanitarian law. Israel, as a member of the Convention on the Right of the Child, had the duty to ensure the protection of children. The Human Rights Council should issue a strong condemnation of these actions.

LUKAS MACHON, of [International Commission of Jurists](#), said neither Israel's duty to ensure the security of its civilian population nor any other legal principle justified Israel's indiscriminate and disproportionate use of force in violation of international humanitarian law. The direct and willful targeting of the civilian population, its means of subsistence, and its infrastructure violated international humanitarian law and could amount to war crimes according to customary international humanitarian law. Palestinian armed groups' continuous indiscriminate attacks at military and civilians by firing rockets in southern Israel were also indiscriminate attacks which could constitute war crimes. Given the extent of the crisis, the International Commission of Jurists recommended that the mandate of the Special Rapporteur be renewed.

HILLEL NEUER, of [United Nations Watch](#), said United Nations Watch supported the Middle East peace process and the path of dialogue and reconciliation. In doing so it was guided by its commitment to the goals of the United Nations Charter. Regrettably, there were powerful forces in that region that did share these universal values. They regarded peace as a threat to their regimes and to their ideology. Hamas and Hezbollah, sponsored by Iran and Syria, were seeking to destabilize the region and to undermine the efforts of the international community to bring peace. Hamas deliberately targeted civilians and deliberately attacked civilian areas. They and their sponsors bore full responsibility for the tragic casualties that ensued. Hamas was now seeking to replicate the tactics of Hezbollah. In

their view, if Israel did not respond they won, if they did respond they also won. If the resolution was adopted the terrorists would gain a victory against the cause of peace.

RAPHAEL BENARROSH, of International Association of Democratic Lawyers, condemned the actions conducted by Israel in Gaza. The firing of rockets against two Israeli towns was not a convincing explanation for the enormous disproportionate use of force as seen today and no one could fail to see this. The Special Rapporteur's report denounced Israel's continuous disgraceful actions. The Palestinians had been fighting since decades for the recognition of their state. Israel was consciously ignoring international law, United Nations resolutions and calls from the international community. It could no longer be tolerated that this State was above the law. The Human Rights Council's fundamental mission was to safeguard the human rights and it had to condemn Israel.

RANIA MAHDI, of Badil Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights, regretted that 60 years after the massive transfer of the Palestinian population, there was still no solution to the Palestinian question. An impartial investigation was urgent and the perpetrators of these war crimes and crimes against humanity must be held accountable. On the other hand, calling for a ceasefire did not really address the root causes of the problem and the human rights of Palestinians. It was important that the international community changed its strategy and adopted an approach that condemned violence but also addressed the root causes and the human rights of Palestinians. It was also important to respect the rights of all peoples, refugees and internally displaced persons. There was no realistic solution in the matter. Seven million Palestinian refugees today had no access to the return and the restitution of their property. At a time when the United Nations celebrated the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, dignity was still denied to Palestinians.

CURTIS DOEBBLER, of Nord Sud XXI, said there was a difference of opinion between Israel and the United States, and Palestine and most of the rest of the international community, but such a dispute could not be allowed to sink to such inhumane depths. International law must govern this dispute. The Palestinian people were among the few peoples in the world that the United Nations had recognized as being entitled to use all means necessary to achieve their self-determination. The States in the Council had pledged themselves to uphold the legal obligations that international human rights and humanitarian law imposed upon States that were party to an armed conflict. These legal obligations applied without doubt to Israel and should be respected by all combatants. Nord Sud XXI called on the international community to bring to justice the perpetrators of war crimes being committed against the Palestinian people.

PAPE DIOUF, of International Committee for the Respect and the Application of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, expressed profound indignation over the continuous Israeli attacks in Gaza. How many international meetings were needed to bring this situation to an end. The disproportionate use of force and massive bombings in zones inhabited by civilians was inadmissible. An immediate end was demanded and the Gaza siege should be lifted. The protection of civilians was important, they had been victims of human rights violations for too long. A viable democratic and independent Palestinian state was needed.

LAZARO PARY, of Indian Movement "Tupaj Amaru", pointed out that in light of the indifference of Western powers, the Israeli occupying power continued its practices and sought to subjugate the Palestinian resistance. The occupying power was laughing at resolutions adopted by the Council and violating the spirit of the United Nations Charter and the Geneva Convention of 1949 related to the protection of civilian persons in time of war. The Israeli Government had strengthened the means to block access to the occupied territories and violated the right of movement. The international community should not accept that an occupying power killed an unarmed people for the sole reason that they were demanding their right to their land and their right to live in dignity and peace. Israel, armed to the teeth by the Administration in Washington, had succeeded in becoming an extremely dangerous terrorist state within the Middle East.

¹ Joint statement: Union of Arab Jurists; Arab Lawyers Union; International Organization for the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination; and General Arab Women Federation.

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