



# Press Release

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## **'DISTURBING' HUMANITARIAN DETERIORATION IN OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES FOCUS.**

### **AS FOURTH COMMITTEE TAKES UP REPORT ON ISRAELI PRACTICES**

The hopelessness and anger of the witnesses before the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories had been directed not only against Israel, but also against the international community for its inability to provide relief, the Fourth Committee (Special Political and Decolonization) was told today.

As the Committee began its consideration this morning of Israeli practices, Special Committee Chairman Chithambaranathan Mahendran (Sri Lanka) said that the detailed testimonies had presented a grim picture and showed a disturbing deterioration in the humanitarian and economic situation of the Palestinians in the occupied Territories. Since the end of September 2001, more than 1,300 Palestinians including many children, had been killed and more than 20,000 injured.

Collective punishments, such as prolonged siege and closures of the territories, and destruction of homes and agricultural land had also led to increased poverty and despair, said the Chairman. The elaborate system of laws and regulations, put in place throughout the years of occupation, had affected all aspects of the lives of the Palestinian and Syrian peoples in the occupied territories. During periods of violence, that exercise of control was even more unbearable.

The human rights of the Palestinian people were being violated by all means and methods, asserted the Permanent Observer of Palestine. Indeed, Israel's 35-year old occupation had been transformed into an ugly form of colonialism. For more than two years, Israel had waged a brutal military campaign against civilians, characterized by excessive, indiscriminate and disproportionate use of force, with all means of heavy and lethal weaponry at its disposal, she said.

The occupying forces had bulldozed homes, burying its residents alive, she said. Vital infrastructure had also been destroyed, and religious sites, ministries, schools and hospitals had been damaged. Water, electricity, telephone and sewage networks had been disrupted and agricultural fields had been uprooted. For the current tragic situation to change, Israel must cease all violations of international law, international humanitarian law and United Nations resolutions.

Several other speakers deplored the disturbing view of life under the occupation, as detailed in the Special Committee's report. The Syrian representative urged the international community not to turn a blind eye to the crimes perpetrated by Israel. Rather, it must pressure that Government to refrain from its dangerous practices. He highlighted the importance of the Special Committee's work and warned that any attempt to weaken it would give Israel a pretext for continued human rights violations.

Israel's representative said that, since the Special Committee's establishment, it had done little more than produce hostile propaganda against Israel. Most shocking of all was its "non-consideration" of the impact of Palestinian terrorism, not only on the Israeli people, but also on the Palestinians themselves. More than any other factor, the Palestinian decision to engage in terrorism had had enormously adverse consequences on the conditions of the Palestinian people. Yet, often at considerable risk to its own security, Israel had sought to ensure that action to uproot the terror infrastructure had been as precise as possible so as to minimize the harm endured by the civilian population.

The United States representative expressed awareness of the suffering of the Palestinian people and said her country was at the forefront of international efforts to address underlying causes. At the same time, she strongly urged Member States to refrain from supporting the standard call for the Special Committee to continue its work year after year.

Statements were also made by the representatives of Egypt, Algeria, Yemen, Jordan, Denmark (on behalf of the European Union), Qatar, Malaysia, Cuba, Tunisia, Indonesia and Pakistan.

The Committee will meet again at 10 a.m. Tuesday, 12 November, to continue its consideration of the report of the Special Committee on Israeli practices.

#### **Background**

The Fourth Committee (Special Political and Decolonization) met this morning to begin considering 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/57/207](#)).

Comprising three Member States -- Sri Lanka, Senegal and Malaysia -- the Special Committee was established by General Assembly resolution [2443 \(XXIII\)](#) of 19 December 1968. Its report is based on oral testimony from people in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip and the occupied Syrian Golan. While the Committee has not, since its establishment, had access to the occupied territories, as in previous years it convened in Cairo (24 to 28 June), Amman (29 June to 2 July) and Damascus (4 to 6 July) to meet with and hear statements from persons with personal knowledge of the situation. The report also

contains information from the Governments of Jordan and Syria and from press reports appearing in the [Jerusalem Post](#), [Ha'aretz](#) and the [Jerusalem Times](#).

Information presented to the Special Committee concerns Israel's policies and practices regarding closures, curfews and other restrictions on the movement of persons and goods; destruction of property, land and housing; settlements and settlers; use of disproportionate force; arrests; administrative detention; interrogation methods; and conditions of imprisonment. The overall consequences of the occupation, the continuing difficulties of Palestinians in East Jerusalem and the situation in the occupied Syrian Golan are also examined.

The report says that the human rights situation in the occupied Palestinian territory has deteriorated enormously since Israel's most recent military incursions. Witnesses appearing before the Committee have provided detailed testimonies and information referring to dramatic circumstances under which Palestinian citizens have been living during the reporting period.

Confrontations between the occupying authority and the Palestinians and the disproportionate use of force by the occupying authority have resulted in far greater losses to the Palestinians, the report says. Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem have been most affected. Extensive controls and the severe manner in which they have been enforced by Israeli authorities are, in the Special Committee's view, totally inconsistent with human rights standards and obligations. They are also in breach of a number of provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.

The bitterness, hopelessness and despair of the people of the occupied territories – caused to a large extent by lack of progress in the peace process and the lack of tangible benefits – make the situation there most urgent. While peace process discussions were very desirable, the Special Committee concludes, the human rights of the occupied territories must be given immediate attention.

During the reporting period, the report says there had been no change in Israeli policy regarding the occupied Golan. The number of settlers had increased and existing settlements have been expanded. Economic constraints by the Israelis on the occupied Golan were reflected in the lack of equal employment opportunities, heavy taxes, arbitrary arrest and detention, inadequate health care and lack of job opportunities. The separation of families living on either side of the valley constituting the demarcation line is another negative consequence of the occupation.

Among the Special Committee's recommendations is the need to end the Israeli military occupation and the full application of the Fourth Geneva Convention and full compliance with the international human rights standards. A comprehensive investigation into alleged breaches of international human rights and humanitarian law, independent of the parties but conducted with their full cooperation, is urgently needed, the Special Committee says.

Also before the Committee was a [periodic report of the Special Committee](#) (document [A/57/421](#)) covering the period July-August 2002. It contains a summary of articles published in Israel during that period from [Ha'aretz](#), a Hebrew-language daily, and the [Jerusalem Post](#), an English-language daily.

The articles describe the restrictions on land, housing and roads imposed on Palestinians in the occupied territories, as well as restrictions affecting the movement of Palestinians within and outside the occupied territories. The extent and impact of settlement activity is also described. Regarding the manner in which restrictions are applied, the report describes interrogation procedures; conditions of detention and imprisonment; and aspects of the administration of justice.

The report also focuses on the use of force by Israeli authorities, restrictions on freedom of expression and journalists, the question of impunity and compensation and the economic situation as a result of closures, curfews and sieges.

Another report on the [work of the Special Committee](#) (document [A/57/314](#)) notes that on 10 June 2002, the Secretary-General addressed a note verbale to all Member States drawing attention to resolutions [56/59](#), [56/60](#), [56/62](#) and [56/63](#) of 10 December 2001. All necessary facilities were provided to the Special Committee, which meet on 20 and 21 June 2002 and also carried out a field mission to Egypt, Jordan and Syria from 23 June to 6 July 2002.

The report says that pursuant to resolution 56/690, the Department of Public Information continued to provide press coverage of the Special Committee's reports. Debates in the Commission on Human Rights and the General Assembly referring to the reports were covered in press releases, as well as on the United Nations Web site.

According to the report, the revised and updated version of the Department's publication entitled, "The Question of Palestine and the United Nations", contains extensive references to the Special Committee's reports, including sections dealing with questions of human rights, settlements and refugees. Recently cleared for publication, the book will soon be available for distribution. Sections of the book will also be posted on the United Nations Web site. Electronic copies of the Special Committee's reports are made available to the public by the Department's Public Inquiries and to delegations by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library.

Also before the Committee were several reports of the Secretary-General. A report dated 16 August 2002 (document [A/57/315](#)) states that no reply had been received to the Secretary-General's request to the Government of Israel for information on any steps taken or envisaged by the Government toward implementing General Assembly resolution 56/60.

By the terms of that resolution, the Assembly demands that Israel accept the de jure [applicability of the 1949 Geneva Convention](#) in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and other Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967, and that it comply scrupulously with the provisions of that Convention.

Resolution 56/60 also calls upon all States parties to the Convention to exert all efforts to ensure respect for its provisions by Israel, the occupying Power, in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and other Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967.

According to a report dated 16 August (document [A/57/316](#)), the Secretary-General had received no reply to his note verbale requesting information on Israel's steps to implement General Assembly resolution [56/61](#) of 10 December 2002.

That resolution reaffirms that [Israeli settlements](#) in the Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan are illegal and an obstacle to peace and economic and social development. It also demands complete cessation of the construction of the settlement in Jabal Abu-Ghneim and of all Israeli settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan.

Further, the resolution stresses the need for full implementation of Security Council resolution [904 \(1994\)](#). That resolution called upon Israel, the occupying Power, to continue to implement measures, including confiscation of arms, with the aim of preventing illegal acts of violence by Israeli settlers and called for measures to guarantee the safety and protection of the Palestinian civilians in the occupied territory.

Also by the terms of resolution 56/61, the Assembly reiterates its call for the prevention of illegal acts of violence by Israeli settlers, particularly in light of recent developments.

Another report (document [A/57/317](#)) says that the Secretary-General had received no reply to his request for information on steps by Israel to implement General Assembly resolution 56/62 of 10 December. In that text, the Assembly demands that measures and actions taken in violation of the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention cease immediately, including the practice of extra-judicial killings. The Assembly also condemns acts of violence, especially the excessive use of force by Israeli forces against Palestinian civilians, resulting in excessive loss of life, vast numbers of injuries and massive destruction.

Also by that text, the Assembly demands that Israel, the occupying Power, cease all practices and actions which violate the human rights of the Palestinian people. It also stresses the need to preserve the territorial integrity of all the occupied Palestinian territory and to guarantee the freedom of movement of persons and goods within the Palestinian territory, including the removal of restrictions on movement into and from East Jerusalem, and the freedom of movement to and from the outside world.

A report dated 16 August (document [A/57/318](#)) states that no reply had been received to the Secretary-General's request to the Israeli Government for information on any steps taken or envisaged towards implementing Assembly resolution 56/63 of 10 December 2001 on the occupied Syrian Golan.

By that resolution, the Assembly calls upon Israel, the occupying Power, to comply with the relevant resolutions on the occupied Syrian Golan, in particular Security Council resolution [497 \(1981\)](#), in which the Council, decided that the Israeli decision to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration on the occupied Syrian Golan was null and void and without international legal effect and demanded that Israel rescind its decision.

Resolution 56/63 also calls upon Israel to desist from changing the physical character, demographic composition, institutional structure and legal status of the occupied Syrian Golan and in particular to desist from the establishment of settlements. It also calls upon Israel to desist from imposing Israeli citizenship and Israeli identity cards on the Syrian citizens in the occupied Syrian Golan and from taking repressive measures against the population of the occupied Syrian Golan.

Further, the Assembly determines that all legislative and administrative measures and actions taken or to be taken by Israel that purport to alter the character and legal status of the occupied Syrian Golan are null and void, and constitute a flagrant violation of international law.

#### Introduction of report

C. MAHENDRAN ( Sri Lanka ), Chairman of the Special Committee, introduced that body's report, saying that the human rights situation in the occupied Palestinian territory had deteriorated enormously since Israel's military incursions. The report showed a disturbing deterioration in the humanitarian and economic situation, coupled with severe violations of the human rights of the Palestinian civilian population. It focused on the right to life; arrest and detention; use of military force against the civilian population; freedom of movement; freedom of media; humanitarian assistance; medical assistance; and the economic impact, including destruction of infrastructure, property and human rights defenders.

He said that since the end of September 2001, over 1,300 Palestinians, including children, had been killed and over 20,000 injured. Most of the killed and injured were civilians. Collective punishments such as prolonged siege and closures of the territories and destruction of homes and agricultural land had also increased poverty and a sense of despair. The consequences of collective punishment were manifold and had grave effects on economic, social and cultural life in the Palestinian territories, in general. There had been a dramatic loss of income for a large section of the population; medical and humanitarian aid had been impeded. The considerable and extensive controls themselves, and the severe manner in which they had been enforced by the Israeli authorities, were totally inconsistent with human rights standards and obligations.

Throughout the years of occupation, Israeli authorities had put in place a comprehensive and elaborate system of laws, regulations and administrative measures that affected all aspects of the lives of the Palestinian and Syrian peoples in the occupied territories. The laws and regulations were framed in such a way that officials were vested with a considerable degree of authority over the lives of the people of the occupied territories. Settlements, which had become a catalyst for violence, were protected by the Israeli Defense Forces and were exempt from the jurisdiction of the courts of the Palestinian Authority.

He said the failure to resolve the fundamental problem of occupation, combined with the failure by successive Israeli Governments to comply with the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention and international human rights standards, had left the population of the occupied Palestinian territories in a vulnerable situation, lacking protection and exposed to a wide range of violations. While the point would be made that the Special Committee's reports were of a limited nature and failed to reflect the concerns of the Israelis who had themselves been the subject of violence, death and injury, the Special Committee had not had access to the occupied territories. If the Special Committee were granted access, its reports would be of a fuller nature. That notwithstanding, the Special Committee had sought to convey the impression it had formed of conditions in those territories.

#### Statements

FEDA ABDELHADY-NASSER, Permanent Observer of Palestine, said that the human rights of the Palestinian people were being violated by all means and methods. Israel, the occupying Power, continued to commit serious violations, as well as grave breaches of international humanitarian law. Israel had committed countless acts constituting war crimes and State terrorism against the Palestinian people. The 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention, as well as all fundamental norms of human rights law, were being contravened daily, with the gravest impact on the basic freedoms and well-being, and often survival, of the occupied population.

She said that the declining situation was a crucial issue, with political, humanitarian and socio-economic implications and consequences, not only for the Palestinian people, but also for the region. Thus, the issue must be of concern to the international community. For more than 35 years, the policies and practices pursued by Israel, the occupying Power, had violated the human rights of the Palestinian people and other Arabs living under its occupation. The occupation had been transformed into an ugly form of colonialism. For more than two years, Israel had waged a brutal military campaign, characterized by excessive, indiscriminate and disproportionate use of force, with all means of heavy and lethal weaponry at their disposal, including tanks, helicopter gunships and war plans, against civilians.

Most of the 2,000 killings of Palestinians since 28 September 2000 by the occupying forces had been willful and extrajudicial executions, she continued. Many of those had been carried out in densely populated neighborhoods, gravely endangering civilians. Many Palestinians had also been killed and injured by Israeli settlers, who were armed and acted violently and with impunity towards the Palestinian people throughout the occupied Territory, including East Jerusalem. In numerous instances, particularly in Al-Khalil and Nablus, Israeli settlers had gone on rampages, harassing and terrorizing civilians. The above-mentioned figure did not reflect the number of other Palestinians who had died as a result of the other practices of the occupying Power, such as blocking access to proper medical care.

At the same time, the occupying forces had caused extensive destruction throughout the occupied Palestinian territory, she said. The destruction had been vast from Ramallah to Nablus to Bethlehem to Jenin to Tulkarem to Qalqilya to Al-Khalil to Gaza City to Khan Yunis to Rafah and beyond. Palestinian homes, properties, lands and vital infrastructure had been destroyed. Thousands of homes had been damaged or completely demolished, leaving thousands of Palestinians homeless. The occupying forces had bulldozed homes, burying its residents alive. Several historic, cultural and religious sites, particularly in the Old City of Nablus, had been damaged, as well as a number of Palestinian ministries, schools and hospitals.

She said that Israel had also continued to pursue its illegal settlement activities throughout the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, as well as the occupied Syrian Golan. The restrictions being imposed by a combination of military closures, curfews and countless roadblocks and checkpoints had immobilized and isolated the Palestinian people, even within their own land. The constant siege had caused the total disruption and virtual collapse of the economic, social, health, educational and cultural life of the Palestinian people.

Turning to the attack by the Israeli occupying forces on the Jenin refugee camp, she said that wanton destruction began by the occupying forces immediately upon entering the camp, where they unleashed excessive and disproportionate force against the camp's inhabitants. More than 50 Palestinians were killed, including women, children and the elderly. Some of those hit by Israeli fire died of their wounds as they lay bleeding in the street, while emergency assistance was blocked from reaching them. For more than 11 days following the end of that assault, the occupying forces continued to prevent humanitarian organizations from entering the camp to treat the wounded and deliver emergency food and medicine.

She expressed the hope that the current tragic situation would soon change. For that to occur, Israel must cease all violations of international humanitarian law and the resolutions of the United Nations. That must begin with the immediate cessation of the Israeli military campaign, in order to allow for conditions conducive for negotiations between the parties. In that regard, the role and support of the international community could not be underestimated. One component of that important role were the efforts of the United Nations. Hopefully, all relevant resolutions would receive the necessary and deserved support.

FAYSSAL MEKDAL ( Syria ) emphasized the importance of the Special Committee's work, which represented the effort of the international community to monitor Israeli crimes in the occupied territories. Any attempt to weaken its role meant giving Israel a cover-up to persist in violations of the legitimate rights of the peoples of the occupied territories. Since the Special Committee's establishment in 1968, Israel had refused to cooperate with it. That did not surprise him. How could Israel cooperate with the Special Committee, as it exposed its violations in the occupied territories, including the seizure of land and natural resources? Along with occupation of the Golan, Israel had adopted measures to expropriate land, Judaize the population and bring settlers from around the world.

Since 1967, Israel had persisted in violating all international instruments in its attempt to Judaize the Golan, by seizing water resources and destroying agricultural resources belonging to the Golan Arabs, he said. The occupation forces had evicted Syrian citizens from some 244 homes, towns and farms. Israel continued to plan new settlements and to expand existing settlements. The half a million Syrian refugees evicted by Israel in 1967 were still awaiting return to their homes and land. Moreover, the number of Israeli settlers in the Golan was on the rise. Such activities were taking place despite the fact that a peace drive based on Israel's withdrawal was supposed to be underway.

Israel had seized some 96 per cent of Golan land, he continued. Israel also planted mines near towns. Israel's policy of torture took different forms. Dozens of Syrians languishing in Israeli prisons suffered from atrocious methods of treatment and oppression. Further, the Israeli occupation authorities had started building more than 1,000 residential units, constituting the largest settlement campaign in the Golan. Israel's leaders knew that the occupied Golan was part and parcel of Syria and would return to Syria, despite the immensity of destruction.

The world had been witnessing further brutal actions against the vulnerable people, he said. Israel's occupation authorities were continuing their bloody campaigns. Amnesty International's report emphasized that Israel's activities since its reoccupation of the West Bank constituted war crimes. The international community must not turn a blind eye to crimes perpetrated by Israel in the territories. Rather, it must apply pressure on the Israeli Government to refrain from its dangerous practices. The United Nations had exerted efforts to find a just solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, adopting hundreds of resolutions that had been blatantly defied and rejected by Israel. Israel continued to defy the efforts of the international community to achieve a comprehensive and just peace in the Middle East. International legitimacy was the way to such a peace.

AHMED ABU ZEID ( Egypt ) said that the past year had been one of daily suffering for the Palestinian people, who had been subjected to numerous violations of human rights and international law. The familiar daily practices had led to grim reports before the Committee on the humanitarian, political and economic situation. All of them had contained information about the worst practices of the Israeli authorities, which were being carried out under the pretext of maintaining security and fighting terrorism. The report before the Committee underscored the worsening humanitarian situation and clearly showed that the Israelis had violated the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, particularly the right to life.

He said that the international community could not remain indifferent to the information in the report concerning arrests and detentions and the use of military force against civilians, as well as the obstructed freedom of movement and destruction of infrastructure and property. Referring to the human rights report presented last week to the Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian, Cultural), he said that the violations in the occupied Territories were a direct result of Israeli military occupation. Only when that occupation ended would human rights be restored. The situation in the occupied Palestinian Territories was similar to the one confronting the Syrian citizens living in the occupied Golan.

Daily, the Syrian identity and culture were shattered, owing to the adoption of legal and administrative measures by the occupying authority, in flagrant violation of international humanitarian law and the Fourth Geneva Convention, he said. Further, the Israeli Government continued to violate Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. The current worsening situation needed a global solution. There was consensus for the vision to establish two independent States, living side-by-side.

Also, he continued, Israeli forces must withdraw immediately from Palestinian cities and towns, and international observers should be sent to protect the population and prevent a resurgence of violence, in accord with the Secretary-General's proposal. The rapidly evolving situation in the Middle East was leading to a deepening despair. Hopefully, certain developments within Israeli society would prompt the authorities to review their practices with regard to the Palestinian people. It was high time to recognize that the option of peace was the best guarantee for a better future for the region and the world.

LARBI DJACTA ( Algeria ) emphasized the need to pay further attention to the work of the Special Committee. It was the only tool available to the international community to expose the crimes perpetrated by the occupation forces in the occupied Arab territories. He was not surprised that Israel had refused to receive that Committee since its establishment, as its task was to uncover Israeli practices and policies against Arab citizens. Israel continued to ride roughshod over relevant international obligations and instruments. Israel's defiance of the United Nations system was not new. It had rejected the fact-finding team to investigate massacres in the Jenin camp and had ignored the Security Council's resolutions adopted to force Israel to abide by international legitimacy.

The Special Committee's report placed before the General Assembly the details of the practices committed by the occupation forces in the territories occupied since 1967, he said. Israel's policies were designed to impose a fait accompli that could not be changed in the territory. They were also designed to isolate the territory and Judaize the population, construct settlements, bring in settlers from around the world and evict Arabs from villages, farms and houses, all with a view to changing the Arab demographic scene. Israel continued to impose collective sanctions, including closures, restriction of the movement of commodities and the destruction of the Palestinian economic infrastructure.

He said the massacres carried out in Jenin refugee camp constituted war crimes. Israel's rejectionist attitude had prevented the media, non-governmental

organizations and international institutions from receiving first-hand knowledge of crimes committed there. Israel had prevented the receipt of medical assistance and had destroyed the civilian and security infrastructure of the Palestinian Authority. Israel pretended to desire negotiations, while debilitating the ability of the Palestinian Authority to hold such negotiations. The Israeli Army continued in its coercive policy by arming settlers. Israeli practices in the occupied Syrian Golan were no less dangerous.

Israel continued its recalcitrant, inhuman practices, which had even targeted staff of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), he said. Such dangerous developments constituted a clear-cut violation of international resolutions, in particular the Fourth Geneva Convention. Such developments endangered the security of the entire region. Israel's Government was a Government of terrorism and war, not of peace. He strongly condemned Israel's approach, which was destroying the peace process. The international community must hold Israel fully responsible for its hostile activities.

MOHAMED ALI SALEH ALNAJAR ( [Yemen](#) ) said that the resolutions of the United Nations remained dead letters, in light of Israel's refusal to implement them and adhere only to those provisions convenient to it. If Israel's actions were reviewed in the framework of Security Council resolutions, it would be quite clear that it had defied the 29 resolutions on Israeli practices in the occupied Palestinian territories adopted over the past three decades, as well as dozens more concerning the occupied Golan Heights and southern Lebanon. Israel had rejected them all and circumvented their implementation. Those texts on violations of the 1949 Geneva Convention, illegal measures adopted in Jerusalem, settlements, and on the dispatch of fact-finding teams had all been rejected.

He noted that Israel was the only State considered by the Security Council to be an occupying force. It was the only State since the Second World War that had indulged in settlement and occupation activities, and the only State in repeated violation of international law. Israel had not realized that the imposition of electoral and political systems was no substitute for dealing with the crux of the matter, namely to end Israeli occupation. Yemen strongly supported the peace track, based on respect for international law. The Arab initiative launched at the Beirut Summit was the correct path to peace, with its call for reason and logic. Once again, he wished to emphasize the rights of the Syrian and Palestinian people in their just struggle to reclaim their land and live in peace there.

HARON HASSAN ( [Jordan](#) ) voiced support for the recommendations contained in the report of the Special Committee. Expressing gratitude to the Committee for issuing the report despite Israel's intentional lack of cooperation, he called on the Israeli Government to change its stance and cooperate. The illegal and deplorable Israeli practices in the occupied Palestinian territories inflicted pain on the Palestinian people and were clear violations of basic human rights. Such practices also went against Israel's obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention.

Calling upon Israel to refrain from killing Palestinians and ruining their economy, he said that it should instead focus on rebuilding the Palestinian Authority, so that it could adequately provide for its people. In that regard, he suggested that Israel pay the \$700 million it owed the Authority in tax revenues. He found it unfortunate that extremist organizations were gaining popularity at the expense of the Authority and attributed that trend to the Israeli policy of undermining the Authority and restricting its ability to serve its own people. He reiterated his Government's condemnation of the killing of civilians, be they Israelis or Palestinians.

Stressing the importance of the Arab peace initiative, which, among other things, offered Israel normal and peaceful relations, he said that peace and stability in the region also depended on the "Quartet". In that context, he hoped that the Quartet would put forth a clear plan of action that would specify a time frame for ending the conflict and call for the establishment of a Palestinian State. With respect to the Palestinian State, he maintained that it should stand on the territories occupied in 1967 and have East Jerusalem as its capital. He said that the city would remain open to all religions and guarantee freedom of worship, and he called attempts by Israel to impose its laws over the city illegal.

HASMY AGAM ( [Malaysia](#) ) said he regretted the refusal of the Israeli Government to cooperate with the Special Committee, but noted that the Committee was fortunate to have obtained the views of a number of Israeli citizens who worked in the field of human rights and had volunteered to appear before it. He noted that such Israeli citizens conveyed a deep sense of pessimism about the prospects for improved Arab-Israeli relations and of peace in the region under the current circumstances.

Reviewing the report before the Committee, he noted that in the name of Israeli national security, Israeli officials were given wide latitude in their actions vis-à-vis the Palestinians, very often characterized by heavy-handedness and brutality. As a result of the treatment meted out on the Palestinians, their social and economic dislocations over the past three years had reached unprecedented level. He was particularly distressed to note from the report of the Special Rapporteur of the Human Rights Commission that children had suffered greatly as a result of military incursions into Palestinian territory. Many had been killed or injured, arrested and detained or rendered homeless. The situation was particularly critical for the Palestinian inhabitants of East Jerusalem, which Israel was rapidly absorbing into the rest of Jerusalem, so as to clear the city of its Arab inhabitants. With a frenetic pace in the construction of new settlements, the Jewish population of East Jerusalem had soared to more than 180,000.

He also said, in a clear effort by Israel to politically weaken the Palestinians, there had been a systematic campaign of demonizing and isolating the Palestinian leadership, specifically President Yasser Arafat, causing a severe erosion of the political rights of the Palestinians gained through the Madrid and Oslo accords. International concern about human rights violations must not be selective. He could not accept the argument that, because of the "special" nature of the Palestinian-Israeli and Arab-Israeli issues, the international community should, therefore, ignore the blatant, systematic and perennial violation of human rights in the occupied territories. In spite of the tendentious and unjustified criticisms that had been, and will continue to be levelled at, the Special Committee, the majority of the members and the General Assembly would deem it fit to extend the mandate of the Special Committee, as had been done for 34 years.

ARYE MEKEL ( [Israel](#) ) said that since the Special Committee was established, it had done little more than produce hostile propaganda against Israel. The root of the Special Committee's bias lay in its very name, which presupposed that Israel's actions violated the human rights of Palestinians, even before it had undertaken any investigations to determine if that was the case. Most shocking of all was the Committee's "non-consideration" of the impact of Palestinian terrorism, not only on the Israeli people, but also on the Palestinians themselves, and the incredible dilemma facing Israel in confronting terrorists that hid themselves among civilians. Nor did the report consider the effects of the Palestinian terrorist campaign on the human rights of the people of Israel, more than 650 of whom had been deliberately murdered by Palestinian terrorists.

He drew attention to the recent killings of three Israeli adults and two children, including a mother and her two sons, in Kibbutz Metzzer founded in 1953, which had maintained relations of coexistence with its Arab neighbours in nearby villages. Responsibility for the attack was claimed by Fatah Al-Aqsa Brigade, which reported directly to Yasser Arafat, the Chairman of the Palestinian Authority. No speakers this morning had thought it necessary to express condolences to the State of Israel. Hopefully, the remaining speakers would do so.

More than any other single factor, he said, the Palestinian decision to engage in terrorism rather than negotiation had had enormously adverse consequences on the conditions of the Palestinian people. Israel had taken great care to ensure that its action aimed at uprooting the infrastructure of terror from the Palestinian territories had been as precise as possible, so as to minimize the harm endured by the civilian population. It had taken several steps, often at considerable risk to its own security, to improve the situation of the Palestinian people.

For example, Israel allowed thousands of workers to enter Israel each day, he went on. It had enabled medical and rescue workers, municipal services, and other commercial and public service activities to operate freely, and it had worked to ensure that the free flow of goods to and from Gaza and the West Bank continued almost without interruption. Nevertheless, the difficulties faced by the Palestinian people, first and foremost, were a consequence of the terrorist activity that was so rampant in their midst. That casualty, by design, had been disregarded by the Special Committee.

While he saw no point in debating the contents of the present report, he thought it would be useful to help fill in some of the history, which the report so

deliberately and systematically ignored. For one thing, under the courageous and visionary leadership of Anwar Sadat, and later King Hussein, Israel had succeeded in reaching peace agreements with two of its neighbours, Egypt and Jordan. Unfortunately, neither the Palestinians, nor Syria or Lebanon had produced a comparable quality of leadership. No one had yet emerged in any of those three societies who was genuinely prepared to recognize that neither Israel nor the Palestinians were going anywhere, and that the only solution was to find a way to live together in peace.

Instead, he said, those peoples were enduring the effects of leaders who preferred to incite terrorism and violence, rather than speak the truth that terrorism was not only immoral and illegal, but also ultimately futile. When leaders were prepared to speak frankly to their own people and were ready to engage in talks in an atmosphere free from violence and threats, then peace in the Middle East would be within reach. Israel had no conflict with the Palestinian people, or those of Syria and Lebanon. It was eager to engage in negotiations on any outstanding issues between the parties without preconditions. It looked forward to the day when talking replaced terrorism, and dialogue replaced diatribes, and all parties agreed to achieve their objectives around the negotiating table and not on the battlefield.

ALI AL-MALKI ( [Qatar](#) ) stressed the importance of the Special Committee's work. Israel continued to violate the legitimate rights of the Palestinians in the occupied territories. Israel's refusal to cooperate with the Special Committee was not surprising, in that it was that body's task to expose Israeli activities and flagrant violations of international and humanitarian law. For more than two years, the world had witnessed a brutal campaign by the Israeli forces against the Palestinian people. A tragic series of events had unfolded. The deteriorating situation in the occupied territories demonstrated the importance of the Special Committee's mandate.

The international community must take urgent measures to ensure the application of humanitarian law, he said. The occupation forces continued to violate international and humanitarian law in disregard of Security Council resolutions, as well as the provisions of the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention. He urged immediate action to end the occupation practices, which were tantamount to war crimes, including the murder of unarmed civilians and the destruction of houses and agriculture. Illegal settlements had also been expanded. The practices of the Israeli occupation forces prevented the movement of Palestinians, many of whom were left without food and access to medical treatment. Israeli practices had increased the unemployment of Palestinian workers, who could not reach their jobs due to closures and blockade. Detention and torture continued.

The Special Committee's report confirmed the deteriorating human rights and economic situation in the occupied territories, he continued. Israel, as the occupation force, continued to violate international and humanitarian law. Illegal settlements continued, entailing incalculable violations of international law. There had also been an attempt to change the legal status of Jerusalem. That was an essential part of the campaign to Judaize that city. The resolution of the question of Jerusalem was key to peace in the area. A just and lasting settlement of the Palestinian question could only come about by ending occupation activities, dismantling settlements, and allowing the Palestinians to enjoy their right to independence. The occupied Syrian Golan must also be restored.

ELLEN MARGRETHE LOJ ( [Denmark](#) ) speaking on behalf of the European Union, as well as associated Countries of Central and Eastern Europe, noted that in the last year the Middle East had been struck by great tragedy, but there had been, as well, a small glimmer of hope. The situation had escalated dramatically with continued violence with attendant violations of fundamental human rights and international humanitarian law in the occupied territories. She observed, however, that efforts to restart political talks were gaining momentum.

The Union condemned violent attacks targeted at innocent civilians on both sides, including the terrorist attack last night on Israeli citizens, she said. The Union recognised Israel's right to live in security. But, such a right by Israel must be exercised in accordance with international humanitarian law. Self-defence was not a blank cheque that freed Israel from its obligations under international law. The use of excessive force leading to serious violations of human rights and international law could never be justified, and the Union was gravely concerned at Israeli use of extra-judicial killings, indiscriminate military attacks in civilian arrears, arbitrary detentions, deportations, the demolition of houses and infrastructure, and the confiscation of property. Israel must end such actions.

She added that the Palestinian Authority must make all possible effort, with all legitimate means at its disposal, to fight terrorism, prevent terrorist attacks and dismantle terrorist networks. The Authority must prosecute terrorists, denounce terrorism and stop incitement, while continuing reform with a view to strengthening good governance, transparency and the devolution of power.

She expressed grave concern about intensified Israeli occupation of Palestinian cities and severe restrictions on the freedom of movement of persons and goods, and called on Israel to lift the blockade on the occupied territories. Israel must also ensure that the Palestinian population in the occupied territories had access to all basic social services. The Union also reiterated the call on Israel expressed by the Middle East Quartet to ensure full, safe and unfettered access by international and humanitarian personnel to the occupied territories. Israel was also asked to transfer withheld Palestinian taxes amounting to some \$600 million. Noting that there had been a continued expansion of illegal settlements, the Union urged Israel to reverse its settlement policy in the occupied territories, which ran counter to international humanitarian law and the Oslo agreements. Also, Israel must immediately halt illegal and unilateral actions that prejudged a final settlement of the crisis, such as changing of the physical and demographic composition of occupied territories.

CINDY COSTA ( [United States](#) ) said the resolutions under the agenda item focused on Israeli actions without reference to the context in which they occurred – a conflict involving other parties that could only be resolved through negotiations between those parties. The resolutions ignored the issue of Palestinian accountability for their role in the perpetuation of the current conflict, which had claimed so many lives on both sides. The United States was aware of the suffering of the Palestinian people and was at the forefront of international efforts to address underlying causes. It was hard to see, however, how supporting resolutions so detached from reality on the ground would either alleviate that suffering or contribute to a solution.

For that reason, she said, the United States could not support the resolutions. She strongly urged Member States to refrain from supporting the standard call for the Special Committee to continue its work year after year. She said the resolutions that provided the mandate for the Special Committee failed to address the human rights abuses by the Palestinian Authority or the acts of terror perpetrated by Palestinian militant groups – groups that supported and encouraged terrorist attacks that killed Israeli civilians. Quoting from the statement of the head of a human rights organization, she said the scale and systematic nature of attacks clearly fell under the category of "crimes against humanity". The United States condemned the recent attack on an Israeli kibbutz last evening.

To its credit, the Special Committee had alluded to the complex context in which Israeli practices were judged in one instance, where it noted that Israeli raids began shortly after the assassination of then Israeli Tourism Minister Ze'evi on 18 October 2001. The United States commended Special Committee members for stepping beyond their one-sided mandate to investigate Israeli practices to recommend that all parties to the conflict respect full compliance with international human rights standards and the need for accountability on all sides for what had happened, as well as steps to ensure that proper rule and safeguards were in place to prevent violations of the human rights of both peoples, Palestinian and Israelis.

The United States policy on settlements was well known and longstanding, she said. According to a statement by United States Secretary of State, Israeli settlement activity had severely undermined Palestinian trust and hope. The United States had long opposed settlement activity, which, according to the report of the Mitchell committee, must stop. Concluding, she expressed her personal sentiments as a public delegate from the United States. She said she was amazed to hear some States continuously justify terrorist acts and try to give them credence by making statements such as: "you just don't know what kind of situation would cause someone to carry out a suicide bombing". Such rhetoric was abominable and only energized and encouraged activities which could not be given any credence under any circumstance.

ORLANDO REQUEJO ( [Cuba](#) ) said that during the last year the world had witnessed an escalation of violence and unprecedented aggression in the Arab occupied territories. The international community's efforts, including those of the United Nations, had been useless in the face of Israel's lack of cooperation, despite numerous General Assembly and Security Council resolutions on the issue. The Security Council's impotence had been mainly due to the

implementation of double standards and the exercise and threat of veto by one of its permanent members on any draft resolution that sought a true settlement to the bloody conflict. The violent confrontations between Israeli forces and the Palestinian population had intensified last year, with a resulting increase in the number of deaths and injuries among Palestinian and Israeli citizens – and devastating losses to the Palestinians in Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

The damages to the economy of the Palestinian Authority had put its own survival at stake, he said. Closures and prohibitions had limited Palestinian access to workplaces and the source of livelihood for tens of thousands of families. The most modern military equipment available had been used against the Palestinian people, from jet navigation and missiles to conventional weapons. The Fourth Geneva Convention and numerous resolutions on its applicability in the Arab territories were once again being violated.

The Special Committee's report offered detailed information on Israeli policies including the continuation of settlements, the confiscation of land, closures, mistreatment of prisoners and detainees and the use of Palestinian civilians as human shields. Since 1968, the Israeli Government had not allowed access to Arab occupied territories. He regretted the traditional lack of cooperation of the Israeli authorities with a General Assembly-mandated Committee. The consequences of the policy of the Israeli Government in the occupied territories were well known. Cuba shared the aspirations of the international community for the achievement of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. He reaffirmed Cuba's support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to an independent and sovereign State, with East Jerusalem as capital.

NOUREDDINE MEJDOUN ( [Tunisia](#) ) underscored the importance of the Special Committee's role, in accordance with its mandate. The Chairman's statement clearly showed the seriousness of Israeli practices, from a human, legal and political perspective. This year's debate was taking place under special conditions marked by the tragic developments currently taking place in the Palestinian region, and in the Middle East as a whole. The occupying authorities had persisted in resorting to extreme violence against Palestinian civilians and the Palestinian Authority, by using all kinds of heavy weaponry.

He said that the testimonies had shown that the situation was worse than ever, following the Israeli military incursion. There had also been a rise in the number of arrests and detentions, which was turning Palestinian citizens into hostages and human shields and humiliating officials. Moreover, the destruction of homes and official institutions had continued unabated, forcing thousands of Palestinians to leave their homes. The persistence of Israeli occupation and the continued violations of human rights and expansionary measures, aimed at changing the demographics of the region, had led to a sense of despair and anguish among the Palestinian population.

Strongly condemning the repeated attacks, which defied the most fundamental of human rights, namely the right to life, he said those Israeli practices were a flagrant violation of international law. He renewed his appeal to Israel to refrain from any act of aggression or arbitrary measure against the peoples living under occupation. He invited Israel to adopt all necessary measures to return the situation to normal and encourage a climate conducive to negotiation.

DESRA PERCAYA ( [Indonesia](#) ) said that the report before the Committee confirmed what delegates already knew, that the human rights situation in the occupied territories had deteriorated considerably. Citing examples of human rights violations in the region, he said that even journalists had been shot and killed by Israeli soldiers. In that regard, his delegation was appalled by Israel's continuing disregard of the Palestinian people and other Arabs.

Emphasizing that no country should be able to ignore the will of the international community, he expressed disappointment that Israel had failed to respect resolutions adopted by the United Nations Security Council and General Assembly. In that context, he called on the Security Council to pressure Israel to implement the relevant United Nations resolutions, support the principle of land for peace, and treat Palestinians and other Arabs with the dignity and respect they deserved.

IMRAN AHMED SIDDIQUI ( [Pakistan](#) ) said that the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and the Golan Heights, as well as the people living in those territories, were all subject to the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention. That fact was agreed upon by numerous United Nations Security Council resolutions and the International Committee of the Red Cross, despite objections from the "occupation forces". The Convention prohibited occupying powers from intentionally killing, mistreating, or deporting occupied populations. It also forbade them from transferring their own civilian populations into such territories. The "occupying power" in this case, however, was in gross violation of every right granted by international law to the peoples of Palestine and the Golan Heights.

Citing numerous specific human rights violations carried out by Israel against the Palestinians, he maintained that Israel was irrevocably obligated to respect and protect human rights in accordance with the United Nations treaties it had signed. He compared the situation in the Middle East with that in Jammu and Kashmir, claiming that both "occupying powers" were refusing to comply with their legal obligations. International law needed to be enforced indiscriminately and without conditions, especially in cases where innocent lives were in danger due to state sponsored heavy-handedness, he said.

He called on the Fourth Committee to request the United Nations Security Council to take effective measures to ensure that Israel fulfilled its legal obligations, including allowing the United Nations to conduct unhindered monitoring operations in the occupied territories. He also wanted the Committee to request the States parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention to reconvene and propose a mechanism to ensure the implementation of the Convention by the occupying powers in a credible and sustainable way. Repeating his comparison of Palestine and Kashmir, he said that justice remained elusive in two of the most volatile regions of the world, namely the Middle East and South Asia.

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