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# General Assembly

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Sixty-seventh General Assembly  
Fourth Committee  
23<sup>rd</sup> Meeting (AM)

### **VOTING MACHINE LOCKS IN FAMILIAR PATTERN AS FOURTH COMMITTEE**

### **CONCLUDES SESSION WITH APPROVAL OF NINE TEXTS ON PALESTINE**

### **REFUGEE AGENCY, ISRAELI PRACTICES**

#### **In All, 24 Draft Resolutions, 4 Decisions Sent to General Assembly On Decolonization, Outer Space, Peacekeeping, Information, Atomic Radiation**

Fourth Committee concludes work with the approval of nine draft resolutions on the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and Israeli practices, another on peacekeeping, and a draft decision on its work, forwarding a total of 28 texts to the General Assembly.

Following its usual voting pattern on this last cluster of texts, the Committee, by a recorded vote of 91 in favour to 8 against (Australia, Canada, Federated States of Micronesia, Israel, Marshall Islands, Palau, Panama, United States), with 71 abstentions, approved the draft resolution on the Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices.

By its terms, the General Assembly would stress the urgency of bringing a complete end to the Israeli occupation that began in 1967 and deplore those policies and practices of Israel that violated the human rights of the Palestinian people and other Arabs of the occupied territories.

Also, by a recorded vote of 160 in favour to 8 against (Australia, Canada, Federated States of Micronesia, Israel, Marshall Islands, Palau, Panama, United States), with 6 abstentions (Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, El Salvador, Honduras, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu), the Committee approved a draft resolution on Israeli practices affecting the human rights of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem.

Among its provisions, the General Assembly would demand that Israel, the occupying Power, cease all practices and actions that violate the human rights of the Palestinian people, including the killing and injury of civilians, the arbitrary detention and imprisonment of civilians and the destruction and confiscation of civilian property.

Another of three additional drafts on Israeli practices, concerning Israeli settlements, would have the Assembly reiterate its demand for the cessation of all Israeli settlement activities in all of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan. It was approved by a recorded vote of 163 in favour to 6 against (Canada, Federated States of Micronesia, Israel, Marshall Islands, Palau, United States), with 6 abstentions (Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Honduras, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu).

Also requiring a recorded vote was the draft resolution on the occupied Syrian Golan, approved by a vote of 161 in favour to 2 against (Israel, Panama), with 13 abstentions. That text would call 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.

The draft on the applicability of the Geneva Convention, approved by a recorded vote of 163 in favour to 6 against (Canada, Federated States of Micronesia, Israel, Marshall Islands, Palau, United States), with 4 abstentions (Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu), would stress that Israel should comply strictly with its obligations under international law and reaffirm that the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, was applicable to the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

The first of four drafts on UNRWA concerned assistance to Palestine refugees and was approved by a recorded vote of 165 in favour to 1 against (Israel), with 6 abstentions (Cameroon, Canada, Federated States of Micronesia, Marshall Islands, Palau, United States). That text would have the Assembly note with regret that the situation of the refugees remained a matter of grave concern and that they continued to require assistance to meet basic health, education and living needs.

Another draft, approved by a recorded vote of 163 in favour to 6 against (Canada, Federated States of Micronesia, Israel, Marshall Islands, Palau, United States), with 4 abstentions (Cameroon, Honduras, Panama, Papua New Guinea), would have the Assembly reaffirm the right of all persons displaced as a result of the June 1967 and subsequent hostilities to return to their homes or former places of residence in the territories occupied by Israel since 1967 and stress the necessity for their accelerated return.

A further draft resolution would have the Assembly express deep concern about the Agency's extremely critical financial situation and urge all States, the specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations to urgently increase their contributions in order to address its persistent, growing and serious financial constraints. That text was approved by a recorded vote of 166 in favour to 6 against (Canada, Federated States of Micronesia, Israel, Marshall Islands, Palau, United States), with 1 abstention (Cameroon).

The final draft resolution on UNRWA would urge the Palestinian and Israeli sides, to deal with the important issue of Palestine refugees' properties and their revenues within the framework of the final status negotiations of the Middle East peace process. It was approved by a recorded vote of 164 in favour to 6 against (Canada, Federated States of Micronesia, Israel, Marshall Islands, Palau, United States), with 2 abstentions (Cameroon, Papua New Guinea).

Explaining her negative votes to those four draft resolutions, the representative of Israel said that while she supported the humanitarian aspects of UNRWA's work, the resolutions were politically driven and did not reflect the cooperation of Israel with the Agency, whose mandate was clearly to keep the refugee question alive. "One-sided resolutions that ignored the culpability of anyone other than Israel served no purpose other than scoring cheap political points at Israel's expense," she said.

The observer for Palestine declared that the adoption of those resolutions "was diplomacy and international law at work, not cheap political points as the Israeli delegate had characterised this multilateral exercise". The texts remained significant as they affirmed that the rights of the Palestinians had not diminished over time and that the rule of law and not the laws of brutality and power should prevail. Rather than denying the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and denying Palestine its rightful place in the community of nations, Israel must be held accountable.

The Committee then turned to a draft resolution on peacekeeping, which capped its three-day debate on that subject on 1, 2 and 8 November. The terms of that text would have the Assembly acknowledge the increase in the number and the complexity of special political missions and request the Secretary-General to submit a report on all policy matters pertaining to special political missions, including their evolution, trends and nature, as well as their role in activities of the Organization. The Committee approved the draft by consensus, as orally revised.

The Committee also approved a draft decision submitted by its Bureau on its programme of work for the sixty-eighth session.

The representative of Indonesia introduced the four draft resolutions relating to UNRWA. The representative of Cuba introduced the five draft texts on Israeli practices. The representative of Mexico introduced the draft resolution on peacekeeping.

Speaking on the various resolutions relating to the Middle East were the representatives of Canada, Peru, Iran, and Syria.

Closing the session, Committee Chairman Nelson Messone ( Gabon) said that the Fourth Committee, with the approval of 24 draft resolutions and four draft decisions, had adopted "flexible working methods". In particular, the format of interactive dialogue had proven to be very informative and useful. Further, delegates had demonstrated a constructive approach throughout the session and were

especially flexible in dealing with the challenges to the schedule. He thanked the Committee's Bureau, which had contributed to the Committee's work.

### Background

The Fourth Committee (Special Political and Decolonization) met this morning to take action on all pending drafts before it, including four draft resolutions relating to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), five on 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, one on the comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects, and a draft decision on the Committee's programme of work.

### General Statements

YUSRA KHAN ( Indonesia) introduced four draft resolutions under agenda item 52 — L.10 through L.13 — saying that those texts reaffirmed the fundamental principles and positions upheld by the international community regarding the Palestine refugees and reflected the strong support of the international community for the Agency and its mandate. Until the achievement of a just solution, those resolutions reaffirmed the international community's commitment to alleviating the plight of the refugees and recognized UNRWA's vital contribution to regional stability. Regrettably, a just solution remained elusive and the drafts had been updated only to recognize the ongoing hardships and further deterioration of the situation on the ground. He hoped the draft resolutions would once again receive the overwhelming support of the international community.

OSCAR LEÓN GONZÁLEZ ( Cuba) introduced five draft resolutions submitted under agenda item 53 — L.14 through L.18 — saying that the human rights situation of the Palestinian civilian population in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and the civilian population in the occupied Syrian Golan remained critical due to the ongoing human rights violations by Israel. That situation raised tensions, fragmented the Territory and undermined the prospects for a two-State solution on the basis of pre-1967 borders. It also affected the credibility of the peace process. The continuing blockade was also causing great hardship. The texts addressed those violations and called for compliance with the Charter of the United Nations, the Fourth Geneva Convention and other relevant international law instruments.

### Action on Drafts

The Committee then proceeded to take recorded votes on the four draft resolutions relating to UNRWA.

The draft text on assistance to Palestine refugees, L.10, was approved by a recorded vote of 165 in favour to 1 against ( Israel), with 6 abstentions ( Cameroon, Canada, Federated States of Micronesia, Marshall Islands, Palau, United States).

The draft resolution on persons displaced as a result of the June 1967 and subsequent hostilities, L.11, was approved by a recorded vote of 163 in favour to 6 against (Canada, Federated States of Micronesia, Israel, Marshall Islands, Palau, United States), with 4 abstentions (Cameroon, Honduras, Panama, Papua New Guinea).

Then, the draft resolution on UNRWA's operations, L.12, was approved by a recorded vote of 166 in favour to 6 against (Canada, Federated States of Micronesia, Israel, Marshall Islands, Palau, United States), with 1 abstention (Cameroon).

The text on Palestine refugees' properties and revenues, L.13, was approved by a recorded vote of 164 in favour to 6 against (Canada, Federated States of Micronesia, Israel, Marshall Islands, Palau, United States), with 2 abstentions (Cameroon, Papua New Guinea).

Speaking in explanation of vote after the votes, the representative of Syria said that, as in previous years, his country strongly supported all resolutions on UNRWA because of its belief of the strong role that the Agency was playing in his country, as well as in Jordan, Lebanon and the Occupied Palestinian Territory. With regard to PP 19 of L.12, which expressed deep concern at the situation of Palestine refugees in Syria, as well as those who had fled to neighbouring countries, he said his country also deeply regretted the casualties among Palestine refugees and UNRWA staff. Were it not for the work of specialized agencies in Syria to protect the refugees and staff from armed terrorists, those casualties would be greater. Syria, which hosted over half a million refugees, would spare no efforts to help them lead a dignified life until their return to their land, Palestine.

The representative of Lesotho said his delegation had not been able to vote on L.10, but would have voted in its favour.

Also speaking in explanation of vote after the votes, the representative of Israel said that his country supported the humanitarian aspects of UNRWA's work. However, the resolutions did not reflect the cooperation of Israel with the Agency, and were politically driven. The Agency's mandate was clearly to keep the refugee question alive. "One-sided resolutions that ignored the culpability of anyone other than Israel served no purpose other than scoring cheap political points at Israel's expense," she said.

Speaking again in explanation of vote, the representative of Syria said that the representative of Israel was trying to manipulate the Committee and distract attention from the Agency's important work by making false allegations. "Israel must leave the bubble that it was living in," he said, adding that it should stop challenging the unprecedented international consensus to condemn Israel and guarantee the return of Palestine refugees to their country.

The Committee then proceeded to action on the five draft resolutions relating to 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.

Speaking before the votes, the representative of Peru said his delegation would support L.16, on Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, in line with its traditional position. The delegate reiterated the importance of the existence of the two States living in peace with safe, internationally-recognized borders. By reaffirming the position that the Israeli settlements were illegal, his delegation wished to join the international community's call for the peace process between Israel and Palestine to resume immediately, taking into account the Road Map.

The draft text on the work of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices, L.14, was approved by a recorded vote of 91 in favour to 8 against (Australia, Canada, Federated States of Micronesia, Israel, Marshall Islands, Palau, Panama, United States), with 71 abstentions.

The draft text on the applicability of the Geneva Convention relative to the protection of civilian persons in time of war, of 12 August 1949, to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the other occupied Arab territories, L.15, was approved by a recorded vote of 163 in favour to 6 against (Canada, Federated States of Micronesia, Israel, Marshall Islands, Palau, United States), with 4 abstentions (Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu).

The draft text on Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan, L.16, was approved by a recorded vote of 163 in favour to 6 against (Canada, Federated States of Micronesia, Israel, Marshall Islands, Palau, United States), with 6 abstentions (Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Honduras, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu).

Then, the draft resolution on Israeli practices affecting the human rights of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, L.17, was approved by a recorded vote of 160 in favour to 8 against (Australia, Canada, Federated States of Micronesia, Israel, Marshall Islands, Palau, Panama, United States), with 6 abstentions (Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, El Salvador, Honduras, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu).

The Committee then turned to the draft resolution on the occupied Syrian Golan, L.18, approving it by a recorded vote of 161 in favour to 2 against (Israel, Panama), with 13 abstentions.

Speaking in explanation of vote after the votes, the representative of Canada stated that her country's longstanding position was to support a two-State solution reached by a negotiated agreement between the two parties, as that was the only solution to a comprehensive and lasting peace. Both parties must continue to engage in direct negotiations as they both had a positive role to play in lasting peace. The sheer number of United Nations resolutions critical solely of Israel was a matter of concern to Canada. That package of texts against Israel was one-sided and did not address the issue's complexity. As a group, the resolutions were unbalanced and lacked reference to terrorist activity against Israel.

The representative of Chile stated that his delegation's vote in favour of L.15 was not reflected by the voting machine.

Also speaking in explanation of vote was the representative of Iran, whosaid that his delegation had voted in favour of all draft resolutions under agenda item 53, joining other Committee members in showing solidarity and sympathy with the Palestinian people. Iran continued to emphasize the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. The settlement of the Palestinian crisis could be achieved only if those rights were "recognized, restored and maintained".

Regrettably, he said, due to lack of attention to the root causes of the issue, the crisis had remained unsolved for six decades. A durable peace in Palestine would be possible only through the end of the occupation of all Palestinian Territory, the return of refugees to their homeland, and the establishment of a democratic Palestinian State with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

#### General Statements

FEDA ABDELHADY-NASSER, observer for Palestine, expressing deep appreciation for the support of the resolutions submitted under agenda items 52 and 53, said that their adoption was a reaffirmation of the human rights of the Palestinian people, including that of the Palestinian refugees. "That was diplomacy and international law at work, not cheap political points as the Israeli delegate had characterised this multilateral exercise," she said. The texts remained significant as they affirmed that the rights of the Palestinians had not diminished over time and that the rule of law and not the laws of brutality and power should prevail. Rather than denying the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and denying Palestine its rightful place in the community of nations, Israel must be held accountable to the Charter of the United Nations and the rule of international law, she said.

IHAB HAMED ( Syria) thanked delegations that had voted in favour of draft resolutions under agenda items 52 and 53, including the draft on the occupied Syrian Golan. With the adoption of those resolutions, the international community had reaffirmed its rejection of the occupation, sending a clear message to Israel to put an end to it and to also comply with its obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention. The landslide majority that had voted in favour of the resolution on the Syrian Golan showed that Israel's attempts to build settlements there were null and void and had no legal basis. It was no secret that Israel had not only occupied the Syrian Golan, but also promulgated absurd laws. That was only a repetition of the dark pages of humanity's recent past, especially that which had occurred in Europe after the end of the Second World War.

Noting that only a small number of countries had abstained against the draft on the Syrian Golan, he added that any hesitation to condemn the occupation of the Syrian Golan sent the wrong message to the world that "the law of jungle was an alternative to law and order". Those who voted against the resolution should put themselves in the shoes of Arab citizens who were suffering from colonization and other inhuman practices that violated the basics standards of all human rights.

#### Action on Programme of Work

The Committee then approved a draft decision on its programme of work for the sixty-eighth session.

#### Action on Peacekeeping

LUIS-ALFONSO DE ALBA (Mexico), introducing L.19/Rev.1 on Special Political Missions, as orally revised, highlighted the work of the delegations of Egypt, Indonesia, Finland, the European Union and the members of his own regional group and said that with the draft resolution, the United Nations was taking an important step towards understanding one of the more important tools in the Organization's ability to promote peace and security. The draft would further strengthen discussion, transparency, and exchange of views among Member States, the Secretariat and relevant protagonists.

The Committee then approved the draft by consensus.

Speaking after the vote, the representative of United States said that her country remained a strong supporter of special political missions and the unique capabilities that they provided to the United Nations in maintaining peace and security. However, although the resolution was submitted under the agenda item relating to peacekeeping, she understood and expected that the resolution would ensure the appropriate distinction between special political missions and peacekeeping, given their inherent differences.

Further, in light of the abbreviated timetable for the draft's consideration, she said her delegation maintained reservations about it, especially because the matter was currently being considered in another committee of the General Assembly. She appreciated that the resolution respected the primary role of the Security Council in regard to special political missions, but she also recognized that the resolution consciously sought to avoid the administrative and budgetary aspects that were under consideration outside the context of the Fourth Committee. In closing, she emphasized that the resolution should be "cost-neutral", and said her delegation had joined the consensus, subject to those considerations.

Also speaking after the vote was the representative of United Kingdom who said that transparency was key to improving understanding of special political missions, but said it was also important to remember that those missions often dealt with sensitive political issues and, therefore, the call for transparency should not undermine their functioning. The international community wanted special political missions to be as effective as possible, and flexibility was intrinsic to their effectiveness. The United Kingdom would be resistant to developing any policy on special political missions that impinged on their flexibility.

Also speaking after the vote was the representative of France who said that his delegation was pleased that the negotiations had led to consensus. France respected the powers of the principal organizations of the United Nations and trusted that the dialogue between the Secretariat and Member States on that important topic would not give rise to discussions of individual special political missions.

Also speaking after the vote was the representative of Sweden, who welcomed the adoption of the resolution, but stressed that the proposed outcome should not have any consequences on reimbursement.

#### Closing Statement

In closing remarks, the Chair, Nelson Messone of Gabon, said the Fourth Committee, with the approval of 24 draft resolutions and four draft decisions during 23 formal meetings, had adopted “flexible working methods”. In particular, the format of interactive dialogue had proven to be very informative and useful. Further, delegates had demonstrated a constructive approach throughout the session and were especially flexible in dealing with the challenges to the schedule. He thanked the Committee’s Bureau, which had contributed to the Committee’s work.

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