



# General Assembly

Seventy-fourth session

**37<sup>th</sup>** plenary meeting  
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Official Records

*President:* Mr. Muhammad-Bande ..... (Nigeria)

*The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.*

## Agenda item 35

### Question of Palestine

**Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (A/74/35)**

**Report of the Secretary-General (A/74/333)**

**Note by the Secretary-General (A/74/272)**

**Draft resolutions (A/74/L.14, A/74/L.15, A/74/L.16 and A/74/L.17)**

**The President:** I now give the floor to the Permanent Representative of Senegal, in his capacity as Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, to introduce draft resolutions A/74/L.14, A/74/L.15, A/74/L.16 and A/74/L.17.

**Mr. Niang** (Senegal), Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People: Allow me to first thank all delegations and you personally, Mr. President, for recently participating actively in the special meeting of the Committee on the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People on 27 November to observe the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People (see A/AC.183/PV.398). The messages and statements of support that we received spoke eloquently of the international community's commitment to upholding the rights of the Palestinian people, the two State-solution as the only way to build a future of peace, justice, security

and dignity for Palestinians and Israelis alike, support for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and absolute rejection of all unilateral actions, including of illegal settlement activities.

The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People will continue to advocate these rights and international consensus in cooperation with Member States, regional and international organizations and civil society. We will also continue to engage representatives of both sides of the divide — Palestinians and Israelis alike.

I would like to introduce the four draft resolutions A/74/L.14, A/74/L.15, A/74/L.16 and A/74/L.17, circulated under this agenda item. The drafts have been consulted upon with regional groups and unanimously endorsed by the Committee. The four draft resolutions are related, respectively, to the call for the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine, the mandate and work of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the work of the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat, and the activities of the special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Global Communications. Three of the four draft resolutions reaffirm the important mandates entrusted to those entities by the General Assembly. Allow me to highlight a few elements.

The draft resolution entitled "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine," contained in document A/74/L.15, calls upon all States, consistent with the

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provisions of paragraph 5 of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016),

“(a) [N]ot to recognize any changes to the pre-1967 borders, including with regard to Jerusalem, other than those agreed by the parties through negotiations ...; (b) To distinguish, in their relevant dealings, between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories occupied since 1967; (c) Not to render aid or assistance to illegal settlement activities, including not to provide Israel with any assistance to be used specifically in connection with settlements in the occupied territories ...; and (d) To ... ensure ... accountability, consistent with international law” (A/74/L.15, *para. 13*).

Draft resolution A/74/L.14, requests our Committee, in the light of the passage of 52 years since the onset of the Israeli occupation and 72 years since the adoption of resolution 181 (II) on 29 November 1947, to, *inter alia*, redouble international efforts aimed at establishing an expanded multilateral framework for the revitalization of efforts to achieve a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine. It invites all Governments and organizations to extend their cooperation to the Committee in the performance of its tasks.

Draft resolution A/74/L.16 renews the mandate of the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat for its work in providing substantive support to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People in the implementation of its mandate and its contribution to raising international awareness on the question of Palestine.

The draft resolution on the special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Global Communications, in document A/74/L.17, renews the mandate of the special programme to continue in its efforts to support media awareness in contributing to peace between Palestinians and Israelis.

The Committee hopes that the foregoing and other provisions of the texts will elicit overwhelming support from the Assembly and calls on all Member States to vote in favour of the draft resolutions.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the Vice-Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to introduce the Committee’s report.

**Mrs. Raz** (Afghanistan), Vice-Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights

of the Palestinian People: It is an honour for me, in my capacity as Rapporteur of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, to present to the General Assembly the annual report of the Committee, contained in document A/74/35. The report covers developments relating to the question of Palestine as well as the work of the Committee between 6 September 2018 and 31 August 2019.

The report is organized into seven chapters. Chapters I and II contain the introduction to the report and a brief overview of the major political developments during the reporting period. The referenced developments served as the context for the Committee’s evolving work programme and activities during the reporting period.

Chapters III and IV outline the mandate entrusted to the Committee by the General Assembly and contain information on the organization of the Committee’s work during the year.

Chapter V features the work of the Committee as well as the activities carried out on its behalf by the Division for Palestinian Rights around four major aspects of its mandate; first, mobilization of the diplomatic community; secondly, raising awareness; thirdly, cooperation with intergovernmental organizations, United Nations entities and non-governmental organizations; and, fourthly, capacity-building.

Chapter VI reports on the activities of the Department of Global Communications’ Special Information Programme on the Question of Palestine.

The final chapter of the report, Chapter VII, contains recommendations of the Committee to the Assembly and other relevant actors, including the following.

The Committee urges the international community to redouble its efforts towards the achievement of the two-State solution, based on the 1967 borders.

The Committee reiterates the need to reframe the Palestinian-Israeli conflict not as one between two equal parties over disputed territory but as one emanating from one State occupying, colonizing and annexing the territory of another State, under oppressive and discriminatory conditions.

The Committee supports an expanded multilateral framework for negotiations and a comprehensive regional solution such as that offered by the Arab Peace Initiative. It also calls on international and regional

organizations, including the European Union, the League of Arab States and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, to take on a more politically active role in mediating an end to the conflict.

The Committee calls for a shift from a humanitarian to a human rights framework and demands an end to the 12-year-old Israeli air, land and sea blockade of Gaza.

Acknowledging that intra-Palestinian unity is crucial to the reunification of Gaza and the West Bank under a single, democratic and legitimate national Government, the Committee offers its support for ongoing efforts to advance the unity process.

The Committee urges the Security Council and the General Assembly to secure the full implementation of the relevant United Nations resolutions and the long-standing parameters for peace recently reiterated in Security Council resolution 2334 (2016) and General Assembly resolution 73/19.

The Committee underscores the responsibility of States and private entities not to contribute to violations of Palestinian human rights, in particular with respect to settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. It looks forward to the publication by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights of the database of business enterprises engaged in activities in the illegal settlements.

The Committee deems unilateral decisions by Member States to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and the transfer of embassies in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem as null and void. It also calls upon Member States to rescind those decisions and respect the historic status quo of the holy sites in Jerusalem and to preserve the legal, demographic and historical multicultural and multireligious status of the City.

The Committee deplores the use of disproportionate and indiscriminate force by Israeli forces against Palestinian civilians, including during the protests in the Gaza Strip in 2018 and 2019. In that context, it calls for the implementation of the recommendations of the Human Rights Council-mandated independent international commission of inquiry contained in document A/HRC/40/74.

The Committee regrets the non-renewal of the mandate of the Temporary International Presence in Hebron. It urges Member States to remind Israel of its obligations under international law to protect civilians

and ensure the establishment of an international protection mechanism that can credibly ensure the safety and welfare of Palestinian civilians.

The Committee emphasizes the importance of the acknowledgement by Israel of the Nakba and its impact. It strongly advocates the right to return and just compensation for Palestine refugees and encourages all Member States to fund the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) sufficiently and predictably.

The Committee recognizes the growing importance of cooperation among Member States and regional and subregional organizations within the framework of South-South and triangular cooperation for sharing experiences towards the achievement of self-determination and independence.

The Committee commends civil-society initiatives and encourages civil-society partners to work with their national Governments, parliamentarians and other institutions to promote the achievement of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

The Committee will continue to work closely with other United Nations entities, including the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and UNRWA, to synergize efforts and uphold the permanent responsibility of the Organization towards the question of Palestine in all its aspects in accordance with United Nations resolutions and international law.

The Committee urges its members, observers and others to participate actively in its programme of activities as a form of political support for the resolution of the question of Palestine and the achievement of the two-State solution.

Lastly, the Committee invites the General Assembly to reconfirm its mandate in recognition of the importance of its role.

In closing, I would like to seek the support of my colleagues for the four draft resolutions (A/74/L.14, A/74/L.15, A/74/L.16 and A/74/L.17) endorsed unanimously by the Committee for adoption by the General Assembly.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer of the Observer State of Palestine.

**Mr. Mansour (Palestine):** We thank you, Sir, for presiding over this important meeting as the General Assembly convenes to address the question of Palestine,

and we express our appreciation for your calls for justice and respect for the United Nations resolutions aimed at ending this injustice, resolving the conflict and establishing lasting peace and security between Palestine and Israel and in the Middle East region as a whole.

We are grateful for the principled support and meaningful solidarity extended by the international community to the Palestinian people, including unequivocal support for their right to self-determination.

The statements in these chambers and from capitals around the world, along with the heartfelt messages received on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, reaffirm that this global support is threaded together by our shared values and conviction that a just solution can be achieved only on the basis of respect for international law, human rights and the equality of all peoples and nations. This in turn reassures our people that they have not been abandoned by the international community but, rather, continue to be backed by strong political, legal and moral positions.

Such solidarity reinforces the resilience that has helped to sustain us through many hardships, setbacks and crises. Seventy-two years after the General Assembly's adoption of resolution 181 (II) partitioning Palestine, against the will and the rights of our people, after more than 71 years of Nakba and 50 years of Israeli foreign occupation and despite all the loss and suffering experienced across generations, we remain determined to realize our inalienable rights and will not relinquish our right to freedom and independence in our homeland. Although we face rising despair and challenges, we remain firm both in our belief in the justness and integrity of our cause and in our belief that the injustice will be brought to an end.

We come before the General Assembly today to reiterate our appeal to the international community — all States, intergovernmental organizations and civil society — to strengthen the resolve to uphold their obligations under international law to fulfil their responsibilities and pledges with regard to the Palestine question. This requires not only standing up against injustice, but also acting seriously to end it by all the legitimate political, legal and popular means available to the international community. Only such action, taken collectively and individually, can lead to a just peace. There is no other way to end the conflict and spare the millions of human lives hanging

in the balance. It has been witnessed repeatedly throughout history, most strikingly in the global efforts that defeated apartheid and colonialism.

The Palestine question must not be the exception. There is no military solution to the conflict and there is no way that the Palestinian people will accept less than the fair and full enjoyment of their human rights. Partial solutions or attempts to bully, oppress or exhaust the Palestinian people into accepting limited autonomy or anything less than freedom — or into submitting to perpetual colonization and occupation — will never work. In the words of former United States President and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Jimmy Carter, who, knowing full well the requirements of peace, courageously acknowledged decades ago the illegality and destructive nature of Israel's colonization of occupied Palestine:

“It will be a tragedy — for the Israelis, the Palestinians, and the world — if peace is rejected and a system of oppression, apartheid, and sustained violence is permitted to prevail”.

Ironically and tragically, this is the reality confronting us today, as a just solution continues to be rejected and obstructed by Israel, the occupying Power, and those supporting its illegal occupation. Without a doubt, appeasement of the occupation has also contributed to this reality. Failing to hold Israel accountable for its crimes has led Israel to believe that it is a State above the law and to a situation where the Charter of the United Nations, international law, including humanitarian and human rights law, United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolution 2334 (2016) and all that preceded it, and the 2004 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice are being trampled upon with utter contempt and with Israel even bragging about its violations, as illustrated by the Israeli Prime Minister's recent threats of annexation.

The consequences have been devastating for the Palestinian people, the prospects for peace and the rules-based order. Absent accountability, Israel's impunity has increased dramatically, entrenching the occupation and deepening the suffering of our people, whose every right is being systematically violated by an occupying Power whose cruelty and appetite for expansion and aggression know no limits. Palestinian civilians, including children and women, continue to be killed and injured in the sanctity of their own homes,

in civil demonstrations that continue to be met with the occupying force's lethal weaponry and in terror attacks by extremist Israeli settlers. Palestinians, including young children, continue to be arrested, imprisoned and detained, with thousands held captive in the occupying Power's jails, enduring every human indignity, including torture and medical neglect leading to death.

Palestinian families continue to be forcibly dispossessed and displaced at an unprecedented rate, with vast tracts of their land confiscated for colonial settlements and the wall. Hundreds of properties have been demolished, hundreds more civilians were rendered homeless this year alone, especially in and around occupied East Jerusalem, and massive quantities of natural resources have been exploited and profited from. Inflammatory rhetoric about Palestinians and racist incitement continue to be spewed by the Israeli Government and military officials, as well as religious extremists, who also continue their incessant provocations against Christian and Muslim holy sites, especially Al-Haram Al-Sharif, recklessly threatening to ignite a religious war.

Measures of collective punishment and movement restrictions continue to affect every single aspect of Palestinian life and to infringe all human rights. The most heinous of such measures remains Israel's 12-year blockade of the Gaza Strip, where 2 million Palestinians are being hermetically isolated in what is widely recognized as an open-air prison. They are being maliciously and methodically kept in a state of deprivation, dire humanitarian conditions and poverty, a situation that is compounded by unprecedented unemployment — at a global high of 53 per cent and nearing a shocking 70 per cent among youth — and rampant despair.

This illegal foreign colonial occupation, including the inhumane blockade, must end. Attempts to justify the shameful situation must be rejected, and the international community must act forthwith to fulfil its obligations to resolve the conflict peacefully and fairly and to assist the Palestinian people in realizing their inalienable rights.

The solution is well-known to all of us. The draft resolution on the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine (A/74/L.15), which the Assembly will hopefully be voting on today, sets forth the pillars of a just peace in accordance with international law, the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid

principles and the Arab Peace Initiative. The annual reaffirmation of these terms of reference, parameters and principles by an overwhelming majority of Member States reflects the international consensus in this regard.

That consensus has not wavered despite Israel's intransigence and attempts to destroy the two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders and the recent aberrant decisions by the current United States Administration that contradict international law, United Nations resolutions and decades of its own policies. Such decisions, as with all of Israel's unlawful measures to alter the demography, geography, character and status of the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, are null and void and without any legal effect.

The facts are that Israel's settlement activities and annexation measures are illegal, regardless of schemes or proclamations trying to legitimize such actions. This was unequivocally reaffirmed in the blanket rejection of the recent United States pronouncement on Israeli settlements, including within the Security Council itself. The international consensus stands. What is missing is the political will to implement that consensus. Once again, this requires action, primarily to hold Israel accountable. Only this can bring its violations to a halt, stop and reverse the deterioration of the situation, protect innocent civilians and salvage the two-State solution and prospects for peace, which diminish every day that action is delayed.

The path we have chosen to solve the Palestine question — the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict — is a peaceful path. We are committed to all legitimate political, diplomatic, legal, non-violent and popular means to bring an end to the Israeli occupation, achieve the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including to self-determination and return, and establish Palestinian-Israeli peace and security. This includes negotiations, which we long ago committed to and engaged in for decades in good faith, having marked this year 26 years since the signing of the Oslo Accords. But negotiations are not exclusive of other efforts and cannot be detached from respect for international law and United Nations resolutions — the guarantors of a just and lasting solution.

We therefore reiterate our call on the international community to act to advance such a just solution, as repeatedly called for by the General Assembly and the Security Council. The international community cannot

continue to simply express concern about the violation of Palestinian rights and destruction of the two-State solution without acting to end this unlawful situation. We appeal to all States to act consistently with their obligations under international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions. The high contracting parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention must act to respect and ensure respect for the Convention in all circumstances according to its Article 1.

As Israel continues to defy the law and the will of the international community, even loudly boasting that it will continue to do so, all legitimate political and legal measures available, including sanctions and prosecution in the competent courts, must be pursued to ensure accountability. States have an obligation not to recognize any changes to the pre-1967 borders, including with regard to Jerusalem, other than those agreed by the parties through negotiations, including by ensuring that agreements with Israel do not imply recognition of Israeli sovereignty over the territories occupied since 1967. In this regard, States have a duty to distinguish, in their relevant dealings, between the territory of Israel and the territories that it has occupied since 1967, in accordance with paragraph 5 of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016). Moreover, pursuant to Security Council resolution 465 (1980) and the relevant General Assembly resolutions, States must not render aid or assistance to illegal settlement activities. In addition, the legal and historic status quo of the holy sites in occupied East Jerusalem, including Al-Haram Al-Sharif, as well as Jordan's custodianship of the Muslim and Christian holy sites, must be respected.

We urge States to uphold these obligations and to take all possible practical steps in both multilateral and bilateral frameworks, in line with their legal obligations and affirmed support for the two-State solution. In this regard, we reiterate our call for the release of the database listing businesses engaged in activities related to the illegal settlements, as mandated by the Human Rights Council, which will help States uphold their obligations.

We reiterate our call for continued principled support for the rights of the Palestinian people, including to self-determination and freedom. Until these rights are realized, we reiterate our appeals for humanitarian assistance to alleviate the plight of our people, including Palestine refugees. We are grateful for the generous international support provided through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency

for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and for the overwhelming endorsement of its mandate — a critical expression of responsibility and solidarity and an indispensable source of hope and stability — until a just solution for the Palestine refugees is realized, based on resolution 194 (III).

Only such determined and coordinated action can move us from deadlock to progress towards finally bringing an end to the Israeli occupation that began in 1967, fulfilling the Palestinian people's right to independence in their sovereign, contiguous and democratic State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side in peace and security with Israel, based on the pre-1967 borders. This, we all know, will be the cornerstone for lasting peace and stability in the Middle East. Failing that, we will have to face the reality of the existence of an apartheid situation and act accordingly to bring it to an end in a manner that ensures the human rights and equality of all the people living in this land.

I wish to express once again our gratitude to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for its support and active engagement with international efforts aimed at achieving a just solution. We urge States to cooperate with and support the Committee, in line with the permanent responsibility of the United Nations with regard to the Palestine question. We thank Senegal, Chair of the Committee, for assuming this important role, and all other Bureau members, namely, the Vice-Chairs — Afghanistan, Cuba, Indonesia, Namibia and Nicaragua — and all Committee members and observers, for their principled support. We also thank the Division for Palestinian Rights and the Department of Global Communications of the Secretariat's special information programme on the question of Palestine for their efforts.

Today we also reaffirm our appreciation to Secretary-General António Guterres for his relevant reports and leadership in the United Nations efforts in this regard, including through the work of his Personal Representative and Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process. We also recognize the tireless efforts of the many United Nations agencies assisting the Palestinian people, namely, UNRWA, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme, UNICEF, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, UN-Women, the World Food

Programme, the World Health Organization, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the United Nations Mine Action Service, with the generous support of States, organizations and partners from around the world. We urge continuation of that vital support pending the achievement of a just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine in all its aspects, which will mark the dawn of a new era regionally and globally.

I thank you, Mr. President, for presiding over this meeting of the General Assembly on the question of Palestine.

**Ms. Hussain** (Maldives): My delegation wishes to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important dialogue on the question of Palestine in the General Assembly.

The illegal 52-year occupation of Palestine by Israel has decimated its economy and natural resources and severely undermined the right of its people to self-determination. According to the International Labour Organization, the occupied Palestinian territory has the highest unemployment rate in the world. Israel's actions in Palestine contradict the very principles of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Palestinians have lost access to clean water and sanitation, legal recourse and representation and access to mineral resource extraction as a direct result of the illegal occupation of Palestinian territories by Israel.

Across the occupied Palestinian territories, we see human suffering, injustice and inequality, engrained by years of illegal occupation. The continuing violence in Gaza negatively affects the lives of the Palestinian people, especially women and children. Palestinian children are continuously being forced into arbitrary detention, harmed and injured, with many losing their lives.

We proudly celebrated the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in this very General Assembly Hall just two weeks ago. We have a duty to ensure the protection of the rights of the children in Palestine. As the international community, we must not ignore the plight of over 2 million Palestinian children.

The Maldives calls on the international community to protect and promote the human rights of the most vulnerable in Palestine, in accordance with international

humanitarian law and human rights law. The human rights violations committed by Israel in the occupied territories of Palestine also violate the law of occupation and demonstrate Israel's blatant subjugation of the Palestinian people. Security Council resolution 2334 (2016) states clearly that Israel's settlement activities have no legal validity and constitute a flagrant violation of international law.

Israel's routine disregard for Security Council resolutions showcases its indifference to international law. Israel's actions in disregarding those instruments blatantly undermine the role of the United Nations and the Security Council in maintaining a peaceful and rules-based global order, including in the Middle East. As the international community, we have consistently failed to realize our own promise of creating two separate and independent States that would live side by side in peace, harmony and security. The most recent Security Council resolution on Palestine (resolution 2334 (2016)) called for an end to all Israeli settlement and all other activities that can jeopardize the two-State solution. However, Israel has continued with its settlement goals, and any demonstrations calling for an end to its aggression have been brutally suppressed. No State should act with such impunity, especially when the whole world is calling for respect for the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination.

The Government of the Maldives also wishes to take this opportunity to applaud the State of Palestine for the effective manner in which it has steered the work of the Group of 77 this year. It is a clear indication of Palestine's commitment to the international community and due regard for multilateralism. It is time for the international community to take a step in the right direction to secure a just and better future for the people of Palestine and towards the State of Palestine's full membership to the United Nations.

True change can be realized only if all parties first of all desire a solution and are willing to engage in sincere and open negotiations. The people of Palestine deserve justice and the right to live peacefully in accordance with their right to self-determination.

The Palestinian people have endured immense pain and suffering in the past 52 years. That must end. The Maldives reiterates its call for the two-State solution and supports the formation of an independent and sovereign State of Palestine, established on the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, where the people of

both States live side by side in peace and security. We see this as the only viable solution that can bring lasting peace to the people of Palestine and to the region.

**Mr. Al Omoush** (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, allow me to express my sincere thanks and appreciation for your efforts, Mr. President, to ensure the success of the work of the General Assembly during the seventy-fourth session. It would be remiss of me not to commend your sincere positions on the Palestinian question and on the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

I would also like to express my thanks and appreciation to the Chair and all members of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian people for the Committee's concerted and ongoing efforts to defend the rights of the brotherly Palestinian people, in particular the right to self-determination, and to meet their legitimate aspirations to an independent, sovereign and viable State on the Palestinian national land. We sincerely appreciate the work of the Committee, which has been playing a vital role in highlighting the Palestinian question and keeping the focus on it internationally. This has contributed to mobilizing international support for the Palestinian people and their just cause. It has also drawn the whole world's attention to this brotherly people's suffering in difficult conditions that contravene the values of justice, human dignity and the most basic human rights.

We meet today amid the many difficulties and challenges that our peoples are facing. As they await decisions from us that fulfil their hopes, we are called to meet their aspirations with special emphasis on our common destiny and shared future. We must work towards a better tomorrow because it is what our peoples — in particular young people, who represent a majority — deserve.

The ongoing suffering of the Palestinian people stemming from harsh socioeconomic conditions, especially in the Gaza Strip, has led to an enormous rise in poverty, hunger and deprivation of the most basic human rights and dignity, which is a reflection of the magnitude of the historical injustice these people have endured. Positive and effective international action is crucial to bringing this tragedy to an end. Working together with the rest of the Arab and Islamic worlds, Jordan is committed to achieving a comprehensive peace that would restore the rights of the Palestinian

people and contribute to the security, stability, well-being and prosperity of those who yearn for better living conditions and a brighter future.

We have an opportunity to achieve that end with the two-State solution, in line with the approved terms of reference and the Arab Peace Initiative, which represents a genuine starting point for reaching a comprehensive settlement. This is an opportunity that in fact requires courage, vision, determination, will and active and serious engagement in the peace process. Peace cannot be achieved through the construction and expansion of illegal settlements, nor through the confiscation of Palestinian territories or the demolition of their homes. Peace cannot be achieved through the annexation of the occupied Golan or a declaration of the intention to annex the Jordan Valley and the northern Dead Sea, which are parts of the occupied Palestinian territory. These areas amount to approximately one third of the West Bank; their annexation would therefore constitute a death sentence for the two-State solution. It will certainly not contribute to peace and security.

We need not reaffirm once again the illegality of the settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory. Their illegal character is clearly established in Security Council resolution 2334 (2016) and in the confirmed legal position set out in article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, as well as other international resolutions and conventions. Nevertheless, we must once again warn against the catastrophic repercussions of settlements on efforts aimed at achieving a comprehensive and lasting peace. Settlements are nothing but a perpetuation of the illegal occupation, and their existence and growth constitute a threat to regional and international peace and security.

Our positions on the responsibility to protect the Islamic and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem are consistent and uncompromising, despite the growing dangers and threats targeting these holy sites. Under the historical Hashemite guardianship over the Islamic and Christian holy sites in Al-Quds Al-Sharif of His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein, the Kingdom of Jordan will continue care for and protect the holy sites, especially the holy Mosque of Al-Aqsa and Al-Haram Al-Sharif, as well as their Arab and Christian character. We will staunchly resist any attempts to change their historical status or their existing legal status.

My country has welcomed the unequivocal international position in favour of supporting UNRWA,



with 170 States voting last month in the Fourth Committee to renew the Agency's mandate. In this context, we urge all brotherly and friendly countries to reaffirm their support for UNRWA when the report of the Fourth Committee containing draft resolution A/C.4/74/L.12 comes before the General Assembly on 13 December. Supporting UNRWA means standing up for the right of refugees to live in dignity.

It is high time for the world to recognize that, without a just and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian issue, there will be no stability in the Middle East. The international community must shoulder its legal and moral responsibilities and work to put an end to the illegal policies and practices being carried out in the occupied Palestinian territory, especially with regard to settlements and attempts to alter the status quo. Negotiations towards a comprehensive, lasting and just solution to the Palestinian issue must be resumed.

The Kingdom of Jordan will spare no effort and devote all available resources to supporting our brothers in order to see them released from the injustice and oppression they endure so that they may live in dignity and freedom. This is a prerequisite for achieving the lasting and comprehensive peace we all yearn for, the peace that will fully uphold the legitimate rights of the brotherly Palestinian people on the basis of the two-State solution, through the establishment of a sovereign and independent Palestinian State along the lines of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with all relevant international resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative.

**Mr. Alahmad** (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): The State of Kuwait attaches special importance to this agenda item, which we take up every year in the General Assembly. Our meeting today coincides with the celebration by the United Nations of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. We reiterate my country's principled and firm position, in solidarity with the Palestinian people, to work to alleviate their suffering and enable them to enjoy all their legitimate and inalienable rights, in the light of the occupation they have endured since 1967.

Although more than 70 years have passed since the adoption of resolution 181 (II) on the Palestinian question, the Palestinian people remain under Israeli occupation. Israel continues on a daily basis to flagrantly violate international humanitarian law and international human rights law, seeking to strip the

defenceless Palestinian people of their most basic freedoms and deny them decent living conditions. The Palestinian issue has been subject to United Nations resolutions and other international resolutions in support of the Palestinian people to the point of saturation. Unfortunately, Israel, the occupying Power, continues to defy these resolutions. Accordingly, we have seen no tangible progress in the situation for nearly half a century, while Israel has pursued activities that run counter to all humanitarian, moral and legal principles.

The renewed policy of barbarism adopted by the Israeli occupation authorities aims to change the demographic composition of the Palestinian territories through forced displacement, confiscation of land, property and goods, and the construction and expansion of settlements blatantly contravenes all international norms. In addition, we have witnessed acts of aggression on Al-Haram Al-Sharif that seek to alter the status quo, denying Muslims the right to exercise their legitimate rights to perform their religious rites.

As a non-permanent member of the Security Council, the State of Kuwait has urged the Council to shoulder its responsibilities to stop Israel's daily aggressions and illicit practices and policies in the occupied Palestinian territory. Israel's actions, which serve only to perpetuate the occupation, cause the defenceless Palestinian people great suffering and undermine any chance for a genuine peace because they prevent the people of Palestine from enjoying their legitimate rights.

The occupying Power carries out arbitrary arrests, demolishes and seizes Palestinian property and tightens the blockade that has been imposed on the Gaza Strip for nearly 12 years. It continues to take illegal unilateral decisions, including the freezing of Palestinian tax revenues and refusing to extend the mandate of the temporary international mission in Hebron. Israel is also attempting to change the demographic nature and historical status of the city of Jerusalem, implement a *fait accompli* policy and undermine the efforts of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, even though 170 States voted in the Fourth Committee in November to extend its mandate.

We reiterate our call on the international community, and the Security Council in particular, to urge the Israeli occupying Power to comply with

international legitimacy, in particular resolutions 1860 (2009) and 2334 (2016).

More than a year and a half have passed since the peaceful Great March of Return started in March 2018. It has seen the worst human rights violations, according to the report of the international independent commission of inquiry on the protests in the occupied Palestinian territory, established by the Human Rights Council to investigate violations committed during the demonstrations, some of which amount to war crimes. Indeed, 200 Palestinians, including 40 children, have lost their lives as a result of live ammunition fire by the Israeli forces and at least 22,000 have been injured. Accordingly, we call on Israel, the occupying Power, to comply with all resolutions and decisions on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, including the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report on the protection of the Palestinian civilian population, issued on 14 August 2018 (A/ES-10/794). It is also Israel's responsibility to respect its commitments, as the occupying Power, under the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949.

In conclusion, we reiterate our solidarity with the Palestinian people and our full support for their legitimate aspirations, and commend them for their resilience and struggle. We renew our firm commitment to seeing the Palestinian people enjoy all their legitimate political rights, create an independent State on their territory, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and set a timetable for ending the Israeli occupation in keeping with international law. We also renew our call on the various parties, and in particular those contributing to the peace process, to redouble their efforts to exert pressure on Israel to accept the resolutions of international legitimacy and comply with them. In that context, we stress that the United Nations and its various bodies must assume their responsibilities with regard to the Palestinian question until a comprehensive, lasting and just solution, encompassing all aspects of the Palestinian question, including the issue of refugees, is reached. We hope that the State of Palestine will become the 194th Member of the United Nations in the near future.

**Mr. García Moritán** (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Argentina wishes to speak on the situation in the Middle East and the question of Palestine, General Assembly agenda items 35 and 36, respectively.

A quarter of a century having passed since the Oslo Accords, the hope of a solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict still seems far off, as we are seeing an escalation of violence and an accelerated deterioration of the humanitarian situation. Nevertheless, Argentina still believes that the only solution is negotiations between the two parties aimed at seeking agreement on the final status issues identified in the Oslo Accords, namely, Jerusalem, refugees, settlements, borders and security measures.

Argentina supports a peaceful, definitive and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian question grounded in a two-State solution based on the 1967 borders and in which the parties determine during the negotiation process, in accordance with the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. Argentina reaffirms its support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to constitute an independent viable State, recognized by all nations, as well as for the right of the State of Israel to live in peace with its neighbours, within secure, internationally recognized borders.

Argentina again voices its concern at the continuous expansion of illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories and calls for a halt to this expansion. As the General Assembly has repeatedly pointed out, settlements are contrary to international law, impede peace, undermine the prospect of a solution enabling two States to live in peace and security and therefore promote the perpetuation of an unsustainable status quo. The seriousness of the situation was recognized by the Security Council in resolution 2334 (2016), the terms of which we fully reaffirm.

Argentina further condemns the indiscriminate firing of rockets from Gaza at civilians in Israel, as well as all violent actions by Hamas and other armed groups. Palestinian leaders must sincerely address Israeli security concerns. In this context, while we recognize Israel's right to exercise its legitimate defence, we emphasize the importance of its actions being in line with its obligations under international humanitarian law, taking into account, in particular, the principles of distinction and proportionality.

In the light of the financial difficulties facing the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, Argentina wishes to reiterate its full support for the Agency's work, which helps to prevent a further deterioration of the humanitarian

situation in the occupied Palestinian territories. Moreover, we reaffirm the need for the international community to roll out adequate responses to ensure that the Agency has the necessary funds to prevent the interruption of its services. For these reasons, we welcome the renewal of the Agency's mandate until 2023.

With regard to the situation of East Jerusalem, Argentina reaffirms the special status of Jerusalem in keeping with the relevant United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolution 478 (1980), and rejects any unilateral attempt to modify that status, particularly in respect of the Old City, which has special significance for the three great monotheistic religions. My country is of the view that the Holy City should be a place of assembly and peace and that Jews, Muslims and Christians should be guaranteed free access to sacred sites. Any attempt to deny or relativize the historical link and deep significance of these places for any of the three monotheistic religions is completely unacceptable, nor does it contribute to the objective of finding a solution to the conflict as it reinforces prejudice and mistrust between the parties. Argentina considers Jerusalem to be one of the issues whose final status must be defined by the parties in bilateral negotiations.

With respect to the Syrian Golan, Argentina takes a principled position about the illegality of the acquisition of territories by force and respect for the territorial integrity of States. We firmly believe in the principle of the peaceful settlement of disputes and therefore consider it important to seek a negotiated solution to the conflict between Syria and Israel with a view to ending the occupation of the Golan Heights as soon as possible, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the principle of land for peace.

In conclusion, Argentina would like once again to urge Palestinians and Israelis to resume peace talks and to act in good faith, with flexibility and in accordance with international law in the search for an agreement on the outstanding issues with regard to the final status of Palestine in all its aspects.

**Mr. Almabrok** (Libya) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/74/333), issued pursuant to paragraph 26 of resolution 73/19, entitled "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine". We had hoped that the report

would have included positive indicators towards meeting the hopes and aspirations of the international community on the path towards reaching a peaceful settlement to the question of Palestine. For more than 70 years, the United Nations and the Security Council have failed to impose a peaceful solution for ending the Israeli occupation and its racist and inhumane practices against Palestinians. Such practices are confirmed by many relevant United Nations reports that cannot be listed in this meeting because of time constraints.

The continuation of this grim reality can be described at the very least as a stain on the global conscience and calls into question the credibility of the United Nations, which will always be held morally responsible if it fails to stand by the Palestinian people in seeking their right to self-determination and ending the injustice committed against them. The United Nations is also called on to exert strong pressure on the occupation authorities to comply with the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, as well as international law and instruments, in line with the international terms of reference of the peace process in the Middle East, including the Arab Peace Initiative.

The Palestinian leadership has often expressed its commitment to and faith in a peaceful solution and has accordingly made many concessions. It is ready to engage in credible peace efforts that are underpinned by the relevant United Nations resolutions and peace initiatives, including the Arab Peace Initiative. Regrettably, this civilized position, which seeks security and stability for all, has been met by the occupying Power with an increased level of intransigence and disregard for all international treaties and laws.

Every day, Israel demonstrates its persistence in carrying out a policy of *fait accompli*, based on the confiscation of Palestinian land and resources, building settlements and besieging Palestinian towns, as well as its unjustified violent acts against civilians resulting in daily killings, displacement and systematic detention. Other tragic humanitarian incidents are noted in the report of the Secretary-General.

The consequences of and risks related to the ongoing exacerbation of the question Palestine not only threaten the peace and stability of the region, but continue to be of concern with regard to international peace and security. The United Nations should therefore not remain complacent in drafting resolutions condemning actions and calling for compliance with international law, but

should demonstrate internationally grounded, strong and genuine political will to implement the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions on the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine and end violations and disregard by the occupying Power of international law. Israel should be held accountable for its hostile policies by well-defined mechanisms, and pressure should be exerted to compel Israel to accept a peaceful, comprehensive and just solution that meets the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people and achieves peace and security for all.

In that regard, we should not overlook the fact that the recognition by some States of Al-Quds Al-Sharif/Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and the transfer of their embassies there are not only outright violations of United Nations resolutions and the sensibilities of Muslims, but have also emboldened the occupying Power to commit additional violations against Palestinians and exacerbated the political stalemate, damaging peace efforts and initiatives, leading to disaffection and desperation among Palestinians and eroding the prospects for reaching peaceful solutions.

My country has endorsed the relevant declarations of the League of Arab States and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, as well as the relevant General Assembly resolutions, condemning any breach of the legal status of Al-Quds Al Sharif/Jerusalem and rejecting the decision by some States to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel or moving their embassies to it. Libya considers those actions as null and void, as well as biased, and running counter to the will of the international community, which seeks to reach a just and peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine.

In that respect, we would be remiss if we failed to note the threats posed by the continued Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan Heights — a Syrian territory that was occupied and annexed by force. The Israeli occupation has arrogantly declared its sovereignty over that territory, confiscated its resources and wealth, persecutes and unjustifiably oppresses its people and denies them their rights, including their right to their natural resources, in violation of all international resolutions and instruments. Once again, we demand an end to the occupation and reject any position or decision that supports or endorses Israel's sovereignty over the Syrian Golan Heights.

Undoubtedly, the persistence of the Israeli occupying Power in implementing a fait accompli policy, based on all kinds of violent and unjust practices and deprivation against the Palestinians, who are demanding the restoration of their legitimate rights, and the disastrous ramifications of that policy have led to the deterioration of their living and health conditions, the collapse of services and a horrifying increase in poverty and hunger that has created an intolerable and unacceptable level of daily suffering.

*Mr. Dogan (Croatia), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

The Palestinian people continue to express the unacceptability of the situation by demonstrating, and their demonstrations are met by excessive force by Israel, thereby causing more innocent victims to suffer additional casualties, personal tragedies and pain. It is therefore incumbent upon the United Nations to consider taking practical and tangible measures, commensurate with meet international commitments, to ensure the protection of civilians. That commitment is disregarded and deliberately violated by Israel, the occupying Power. It is therefore the right of the Palestinians to enjoy international protection ensuring their rights under international humanitarian law and the international human rights law. Such protection will mitigate escalation and tensions and will contribute to an environment conducive to achieving comprehensive and just peace.

In conclusion, I reiterate that my country, Libya, despite the harsh conditions it is experiencing, continues to prioritize the question of Palestine among its concerns and will continue to support and stand by the Palestinian people in their struggle to achieve full independence and establish their independent State, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital and the return of refugees to their land and homes to live in peace, security and prosperity on an equal footing with the other nations of the world.

**Mr. Morita (Japan)** (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important meeting.

Last week, on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, we reaffirmed our long-standing support for Palestinians' aspirations for establishing their State. Today we want to once again express our sincere hope for the achievement of peace in the Middle East as soon as possible, and for Israel and an independent Palestinian State to be able to

coexist in peace and security. Japan firmly supports the use of negotiations as a means to achieve a two-State solution. We believe that the issues that the parties are dealing with cannot be resolved through violence but rather that each must face the other in earnest and seek a peaceful resolution.

In that regard, we are deeply concerned about the continued violence and terrorism in the region, and about the casualties and injuries among both Israelis and Palestinians caused by the consequent responses from both sides. The indiscriminate launching of rockets aimed at civilian population centres is unacceptable, and we strongly condemn all violence and terrorism directed at innocent civilians, especially children, women and journalists. There can be no justification for killing civilians anywhere. We therefore call on all the parties concerned to take immediate steps to prevent all acts of violence, as well as provocations and incitements to violence, and strongly urge the parties concerned to make every possible effort to resume peace negotiations.

Japan deeply deplores the Government of Israel's continuing settlement activities and its demolition of Palestinian-owned structures. As a member of the Security Council at the time, we voted in favour of its resolution 2334 (2016), and our principled position remains unchanged. As the resolution states, Israel's establishment of settlements in the Palestinian territory that has been occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, has no legal validity. It constitutes a flagrant violation of international law and a major obstacle to the achievement of a two-State solution and a just, lasting and comprehensive peace. The international community, including Japan, has repeatedly called on the Government of Israel to renounce its settlement activities entirely. In that regard, we once again strongly urge it to completely cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including the implementation of construction plans, all of which undermine the viability of a two-State solution.

Regarding the recent rise in tensions in Gaza, Japan welcomes Egypt's mediation efforts. We will continue to closely follow the situation on the ground and to play an active role in working to stabilize Gaza and the entire Middle East, not just by providing temporary assistance and emergency humanitarian aid but also through other long-standing commitments. In that context, we welcome the Fourth Committee's overwhelming vote in favour of draft resolution A/C.4/74/L.10,

extending the mandate of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). UNRWA's assistance to Palestine refugees unquestionably continues to play a crucial humanitarian role in the region, and we note that the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services did not find any fraud involving donor funds to UNRWA. Together with other international partners, Japan will therefore continue to support UNRWA's activities through multi-dimensional contributions.

Japan welcomes the efforts aimed at holding general elections in Palestine. Elections are fundamental to democracy and crucial to establishing a viable and sovereign Palestinian State. We therefore call on all the parties to take the necessary measures to ensure free and fair elections, including in Gaza and the occupied East Jerusalem, and we hope that they will contribute to peace and stability in the region. The Middle East peace process remains a top priority for the international community. We cannot achieve lasting peace and stability in the region without finding a solution to the problem. Japan will remain actively engaged, both politically and economically and in cooperation with international partners, in order to support progress in the peace process.

**Mr. Vongxay** (Lao People's Democratic Republic): I would like to express our appreciation for the report of the Secretary-General (A/74/333), as well as his tireless efforts to achieve a long-overdue resolution of the question of Palestine. The United Nations has been considering this question for more than seven decades, and numerous resolutions have been adopted in that regard. Yet the hopes and aspirations of the Palestinian people for achieving their freedom and independent statehood have not been realized. It is therefore time for the international community to uphold its responsibilities and take concrete measures towards putting an end to Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territory and paving the way for a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

We are deeply concerned about the ongoing conflict and violence in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and Jerusalem. The continued illegal settlement activities and the destruction of property and economic institutions in the occupied Palestinian territory have not only compounded the already critical socioeconomic situation facing the Palestinian people but also constitute a breach of international law. We call on the parties concerned to do their utmost to prevent

an already fragile situation from worsening and to take all possible steps to create conditions conducive to a resumption of peace negotiations.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic would like to see a just, lasting, comprehensive and peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in line with the relevant United Nations resolutions and major initiatives that envisage a sovereign, independent and viable State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side in peace and security with Israel, within secure and internationally recognized borders. We therefore reiterate our strong support for the engagement in that regard of many world leaders and call on the parties concerned to resume direct peace negotiations in order to reach a peaceful final settlement on that basis. To that end, we need sustained and active international involvement in order to ensure that the parties live up to their commitments and negotiate in good faith while refraining from taking any further steps that could jeopardize the peace process.

In that connection, the Lao People's Democratic Republic reaffirms its long-standing solidarity with and steadfast support for the Palestinian people in their legitimate quest for dignity, justice and their inalienable right to self-determination in an independent State of Palestine that is a full-fledged member of the United Nations. We would like to take this opportunity to commend the work of United Nations agencies, especially the United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, in assisting Palestinian people in need for all these years amid many difficulties. I wish the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People every success in its noble task.

**Ms. Al-Thani** (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this session. I would also like to thank the Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for his briefing and to commend the efforts of the Committee, the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat and the special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information.

The statements by Member States, and our various meetings here and in other international forums on the question of Palestine, reflect the continuing interest in this cause and the need for a comprehensive, just and permanent settlement of it. Decades have passed without

a solution being found to the issue, but that has not weakened the Palestinian people's determination in their just endeavour to regain their legitimate and inalienable rights. It is crystal clear that there can be no alternative to a peaceful settlement agreed on through negotiations between the two parties, based on the agreed terms of reference and resolutions of international legitimacy, as well as the principle of land for peace, the Quartet road map, the Arab Peace Initiative and a two-State solution that ensures an independent, viable Palestinian statehood within the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital. That would also ensure the end of Israel's occupation of Arab territories, including the Syrian Golan, and guarantee all Palestinians their rights, as well as a fair solution to the refugee problem.

In that connection, we support all genuine efforts aimed at reaching a settlement of the question of Palestine and bringing about peace in the Middle East. We also support all the General Assembly's annual resolutions on the question of Palestine and on the Middle East, based as they are on the principles of international law, the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international norms and the importance of respecting human rights for all and maintaining international peace and security.

Practices such as the Israeli occupation of Arab land, settlement activities in the occupied territories, measures aimed at altering the character, legal status or demographic composition of Jerusalem, the blockade of Gaza, arbitrary detentions, obstacles to freedom of movement, excessive violence against civilians, the demolition of Palestinians' homes and the exploitation of their natural resources and other violations all constitute gross breaches of international law and United Nations resolutions. The deteriorating economic situation in the occupied Palestinian territory is also worrying, especially in the Gaza Strip, which for almost 12 years has been subjected to a blockade that has led to huge humanitarian suffering.

Economic stability is a fundamental element in ensuring peace and security, and the State of Qatar therefore continues to provide political and humanitarian support to our Palestinian brethren. Over the past eight years that financial support has amounted to more than \$1 billion, thanks to Qatar's development fund and committee for reconstruction of the Gaza Strip, as well as contributions by Qatari civil-society organizations. This year His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani gave instructions

to provide humanitarian and developmental assistance to our brother people of Palestine in order to address their long-term and urgent needs, especially in the areas of education, electricity supply, infrastructure improvement, the maintenance and construction of houses and the creation of job opportunities. In addition, we have recently contributed a multi-year pledge of \$16 million to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and have supported its programmes and activities in the amount of approximately \$50 million. We also reaffirm UNRWA's vital role, which is crucial to meeting the needs of millions of Palestinian refugees and ensuring stability.

We will remain committed to providing every kind of political and developmental support to our Palestinian brothers, and we would like to take this opportunity to affirm Qatar's principled position in solidarity with the Palestinians until they gain their just and legitimate rights.

**Mr. Danon** (Israel): On 29 November 1947, the General Assembly voted in favour of resolution 181 (II), the partition plan. The vote formalized the international community's approach to the conflict, based on a belief that there is truth in both the Jewish and Arab claims to the land. The international community showed that it was not afraid of a complex approach that accepted arguments from both sides and looked for a constructive solution. Such an approach and such an important resolution should be remembered as a monumental moment for the international community. It should be celebrated, and indeed it is celebrated by Israel, its allies and Jewish people around the world.

However, since 1977, 29 November has become a day of solidarity with Palestinians. It has been twisted into a day of blaming Israel for the Palestinians' situation. Perhaps it would be better if this day were used for contemplation by both the Palestinians and the international community. The Palestinians must realize that if their leadership had chosen a pragmatic approach and demonstrated a willingness to compromise, as the international community and the Jewish leadership did, we would not have had even one Palestinian refugee. The international community must recognize that in the past 72 years it has gone from a pragmatic approach to one that fully embraces the Palestinian method and perspective. That new approach — call it the Palestinian way — stands in the way of ending the conflict, encouraging the Palestinians to refuse direct

negotiations and instead hold pointless events such as this meeting today.

It is fair to say that neither side was fully content with the partition plan devised more than 70 years ago. Both parties hoped for a different outcome, because they believed that they were entitled to more. However, while one of the parties — us — showed its willingness to accept the international community's approach and solution, the other turned to its long-lasting approach of rejectionism. Back then, the Jewish leadership was within its rights to refuse to accept the outcome of resolution 181 (II). The Jewish people have a biblical, historical and legal right to the land in its entirety. Not only has there been a Jewish presence in the land for more than 2,000 years, but the Balfour Declaration of 1917, the 1922 League of Nations mandate for Palestine and the Peel Commission's decision of 1937 developed a legal and political basis that reaffirmed our connection to the land.

Yet despite all of that, the Jewish leadership accepted the United Nations plan to divide the land. On the other hand, the Arab leadership decided to reject the resolution completely. In its anti-Semitic belief that the Jewish people have no right to the land of Israel, it chose to declare war rather than find a constructive solution. The Arab leadership's approach was an unwillingness to compromise and unfortunately has remained so. Those two approaches, constructive on the one hand and destructive on the other, have defined the Israeli and Palestinian leaderships ever since.

Since its inception, Israel followed that pragmatic and constructive approach. It is ingrained in our DNA and has enabled us to find ways to work with our other neighbours. We have reached peace agreements with Jordan and Egypt. We have been developing ties with other countries in the region. Israel has also attempted to apply its constructive approach to dealing with the Palestinians. We have tried to reach an agreement many times, but the Palestinians continue to reject all offers. Our approach strives to find a solution that will allow us to live in peace. On the other hand, the Palestinian leadership's uncompromising and destructive approach has led its people nowhere, and instead of changing its approach, it has doubled down on it.

Let us remember that in 1948 the Palestinians waged war on the young and vulnerable Jewish State with the help of the Arab allies' armies. When that failed, they resorted to guerrilla warfare in the 1950s. In the

1970s, when the Israel Defense Forces demonstrated its abilities even against such tactics, we all remember the Munich massacre. We all remember the terror campaign of hijackings and bombings in an attempt to intimidate and bully the international community into adopting their narrative. When that was insufficient, they turned to terrorism in Israel through multiple intifadas in the 1980s and early 2000s. In the past decade, when even that was not enough to break the Israeli spirit, they pursued a diplomatic terror campaign. We see it a lot here in this building — misinformation, demonization and many lies. They have done all of that, instead of changing their approach and doing what any other actor in the world would do — negotiate.

In 1947, the international community had a balanced view of the conflict and attempted to find a constructive solution to end it. Today, however, many have adopted the Palestinian narrative by trying to force their preferred legal solution. The international community is actively preventing any chance of solving the conflict. The justification of all Palestinian actions and criticism of any Israeli decision knows no bounds. The international community should be able to criticize the Palestinians when they do something wrong, just as it has no hesitation in doing so when it believes that Israel has acted in error. The international community must bring back its pragmatic approach to discussing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It must stop the automatic adoption of the Palestinian narrative, which only encourages the Palestinians to follow their uncompromising approach in continuing to reject everything, even negotiations.

For example, when discussing the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the international community should be able to point to the problems in the organization, and I am not talking only about corruption. After 70 years, perhaps it is time to admit that there might be some truth in our arguments against UNRWA. That is not the only example of a one-sided narrative when it comes to refugees. I am sure that the Assembly has not heard about the estimated 850,000 Jews who were forced out of Arab countries and Iran and became refugees in the twentieth century, the forgotten Jewish refugees. They were subjected to brutal attacks and harassment and forced to flee, leaving everything behind in Morocco, Iraq, Egypt, Iran and many other countries, and we still do not hear the international community speak of them when they discuss the refugees of the conflict, perhaps

because it does not serve the Palestinian narrative. Israel took in those refugees and integrated them into our society. The international community, on the other hand, ignored them and built corrupt institutions that serve only so-called Palestinian refugees. In order to right the historical injustice done to the Jewish refugees of this conflict, I will propose a draft resolution to the Assembly that will acknowledge the wrong done to the forgotten Jewish refugees and will make right the injustice that they suffered.

When the whole Assembly calls on both sides to show restraint as Hamas and jihad rockets target Israeli children, that is counterproductive to peace. When it wilfully ignores the Palestinian Authority's culture and stated policy of glorifying and rewarding terrorist attacks against Jews, that is counterproductive to peace. When it constantly focuses on Jews who are building homes in Judea and Samaria and condemns Jews living in Jerusalem as a flagrant violation of international law, that is counterproductive to peace. That one-sided agenda demonstrates that the international community is morally bankrupt. The international community's approach of adopting a one-sided narrative, the Palestinian narrative, leaves Palestinians no reason to come to the negotiating table. They are led to believe that they can only lose by showing up. That is not the case but exactly the opposite. Eventually they will have to show up and negotiate. But today they ask, why compromise when the international community is already in our corner? But as we have all learned from the past seven decades, not showing up to negotiate gets the Palestinians nowhere. Every year we come here and hear the same declarations and speeches, and look at what happens. They are going nowhere.

The date of 29 November should serve as a day to remember that a balanced approach and a willingness to accept constructive solutions can lead to prosperity, but a one-sided approach and an unwillingness to find a constructive solution leads nowhere. The international community believes that adopting the Palestinian approach will help to bring peace, but it does not. It serves only to prolong the conflict.

The Israeli approach of pragmatism and searching for constructive solutions has transformed us into a democratic beacon of light in the region and a technological powerhouse for the benefit of humankind. In contrast, the Palestinian's destructive approach has left them with limited freedoms and rights, a dysfunctional economy and a corrupt and immoral leadership. In



order to create a better reality for all in the region, the Palestinians and the international community must change their approach. The Palestinians must end their incitement and rejectionism. They must come back to the negotiating table. The States Members of the United Nations must recall how they approached the conflict in 1947. Only with that mindset can there be hope for bringing the two sides towards a solution, and when that day comes, the international community and the Palestinian people will find that Israel is ready and willing to sit down and discuss a brighter future for all.

**Mr. Othman** (Malaysia): Seventy-two years have passed since the General Assembly's adoption of resolution 181 (II), on the partition of Palestine, yet the Palestinian-Israeli conflict remains an issue of regional and global concern. It is a source of instability, misery, hatred and violence that we, the international community, have a responsibility to resolve collectively. The occupying Power, Israel, has been implementing policies and a blockade that deprive Palestinians of the most basic freedoms, including socioeconomic rights and self-determination. Illegal settlements, property confiscation and demolitions, as well as the killing of many innocent Palestinian civilians by this regime, continue unabated. In short, to be a Palestinian means to be deprived of many things that to others are normal. It is evident that Israel's repressive policies and practices have violated numerous United Nations resolutions and international law, including humanitarian law. Under the pretext of security and national interests, Israel has been depriving Palestinians of their basic rights and fundamental freedoms and taking them away. Such constant violations, in fact, will contribute only to further unrest and violence.

Malaysia reaffirms its support to the realization of a State of Palestine based on the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. We believe that a two-State solution can lead to a peaceful and just solution to the conflict. A comprehensive solution to that decades-long conflict may also offer new opportunities for the broader, more peaceful resolution of conflicts in other parts of the region. As a member of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and other Arabs of the Occupied Territories and the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, Malaysia remains committed to supporting the Palestinian people in their quest for basic rights, particularly their inalienable right to self-determination

and sustainable development. We will also continue to extend our support to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, which provides assistance, protection and advocacy for more than 20 per cent of the world's refugees.

Malaysia also denounces the recent decision by the United States that considers Israeli settlements in the occupied territory of Palestine no longer inconsistent with international law. We also strongly reject any unilateral action regarding the final status of Jerusalem. To that end, Malaysia hopes that the international community can continue to strengthen its solidarity and make every effort to uphold international law, the relevant United Nations resolutions and respect for the human rights of the Palestinian people. In that regard, Malaysia would like to take this opportunity to applaud Canada's decision on 19 November in the Third Committee to support and vote in favour of the draft resolution on the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination.

The United Nations was created on the principles of ensuring the presence and practice of human rights, justice, peace and respect for international law for all, including our Palestinian brothers and sisters. For that reason, the international community must not turn a blind eye to the more than seven decades of misery of the Palestinians, a people whose every human right has been violated with complete impunity. While we are making progress in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with the promise of leaving no one behind, we must not ignore the Palestinian people's right to development, peace and prosperity.

**Mr. Gertze** (Namibia): At the outset, I would like to thank the President for convening this important meeting of the General Assembly to consider four draft resolutions under item 35 (A/74/L.14, A/74/L.15, A/74/L.16 and A/74/L.17) on the question of Palestine, as recommended by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. My delegation thanks the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (A/74/333). We also thank the Committee for its detailed report (A/74/35) and recognize its remarkable work in maintaining international awareness and mobilizing efforts to achieve a just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the question of Palestine.

For the past 72 years, since the adoption of resolution 181 (II) on 29 November 1947, we have been

waiting to see the illegal occupation of Palestine come to an end and Palestinian children, women and men exercise their inalienable right to self-determination and freedom. However, Israeli settlements, the destruction and confiscation of property, the exploitation of natural resources, the blockade imposed on Gaza, the detention of children and the use of administrative detention, as well as the construction of a wall in the West Bank and East Jerusalem continue unabated, despite the repeated calls by the United Nations for an end to the occupation and a halt to all repressive practices in the occupied Palestinian territories. Those actions remind us of apartheid in Namibia, when a majority of the population, including women and children, were forcefully displaced and separated from their homes and when many civilians who protested were subsequently killed. Because of that experience, Namibia knows that tension, frustration and anger will continue to mount for as long as the people are denied their inalienable right to self-determination and independence.

My delegation has also noted the latest declaration, on 18 November, by the Government of the United States, announcing that it does not consider Israeli settlements in the West Bank to be in contravention of international law. My delegation finds that extremely worrying, since settlements are illegal under the Fourth Geneva Convention and violate international law, international humanitarian and human rights law, as well as the relevant United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolution 2334 (2016). The announcement also represents an obstacle to peace and a two-State solution.

It is because of this state of affairs that last week my delegation, together with the international community, commemorated the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. That Day provides an opportunity to recognize the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, national independence and sovereignty, and their right to return to the homes and property from which they have been displaced. We call on Israel to immediately and completely cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem.

What we want is for the people of both Israel and Palestine to live in peace in a stable region that would ultimately be able to focus its energies, resources and talents on development and progress. We unwaveringly believe and support the Secretary-General and the overwhelming majority of United Nations States

Members in their conviction that there is no plan B to the two-State solution. Therefore, a political dialogue that addresses the historic injustice of occupation, based on the pre-1967 borders and in accordance with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions, is the only way to ensure peaceful relations between Israel and Palestine. No peace is achievable without a renewed political process and engagement to stabilize and heal.

Consequently, Namibia supports and co-sponsors the four draft resolutions to be considered today by the General Assembly, in particular draft resolutions A/74/L.14 and A/74/L.16, respectively to enable the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat to continue to carry out their mandates throughout 2020, in an effort to make constructive and positive contributions to raising awareness and mobilizing international solidarity and support for the Palestinian people until the question is resolved on the basis of the pre-1967 lines.

I wish to conclude by reaffirming Namibia's unequivocal commitment and full solidarity with the cause of the Palestinian people, in order for them to be able to exercise their inalienable right in an independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and as a rightful Member of the United Nations and its specialized agencies, so as to secure its long overdue rightful place among the global community of nations.

**Mr. Zhang Jun** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The question of Palestine is at the root of instability in the Middle East. At present, the Middle East peace process is at a standstill, combined with the ongoing conflict over the final status of Jerusalem, the grim humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territories and the continuing development of settlements, all of which China finds deeply disturbing. At the same time, there is an absence of peace in the entire Middle East region, protracted tension in the Gulf and rapidly evolving hotspot issues and political turbulence in many countries, which lack a solution. That regional chaos has been a breeding ground for terrorist forces and has caused serious spillover effects. Those points all deserve serious attention.

China is a sincere and good friend, partner and brother of the Palestinian people. China firmly supports the just cause of the Palestinian people to restore their legitimate national rights. On 27 November, the United

Nations held a special commemorative meeting in observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People (see A/AC.183/PV.398). China's President Xi Jinping sent a congratulatory message to the meeting, in which he reiterated that China supports Palestine in building an independent and fully sovereign State on the basis of the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

China is a staunch supporter of peace in Palestine and Israel. It is in the common interests of the international community to find a comprehensive and just solution to the Palestinian issue and help Palestine and Israel achieve peaceful coexistence and common development. China supports the political settlement of the Palestinian issue through negotiation and appreciates the active mediation by the United Nations, Egypt and other parties to push for a ceasefire agreement. China calls on all parties to remain calm and exercise restraint to prevent the intensification of confrontations and conflict and to remain committed to rebuilding and consolidating mutual trust, so as to create favourable conditions for the relaunching of peace talks between Palestine and Israel.

On the question of Palestine, the relevant United Nations resolutions, the two-State solution and the principle of land for peace represent the bottom line for fairness and justice and must be firmly safeguarded. China commends the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East for its assistance to Palestinian refugees. China has provided political and financial support to the Agency's work for a long time. We are ready to continue to provide assistance to Palestinian refugees and to support socioeconomic development.

China supports the realization of lasting peace and security in the Middle East as soon as possible. China stands for a common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security architecture in the Middle East. With a view to encouraging all parties to explore new ideas on, and pave new pathways for, security and governance in the Middle East, China hosted the Middle East Security Forum on 27 November in Beijing, with broad and active participation by officials in the diplomatic and security fields and scholars from the relevant countries in the Middle East and beyond.

In his meetings with foreign guests, State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi elaborated on the Chinese proposal for the security issues in the

Middle East by offering the following suggestions: first, staying committed to a political settlement headed in the right direction; secondly, defending the basic principles of fairness and justice; thirdly, leveraging the key role of the United Nations; and, fourthly, forging synergies in the region and the international community. The participants reached broad consensus to that end.

The Special Envoy of the Chinese Government on the Middle East Issue, Mr. Zhai Jun, recently visited countries in the region and has been in close contact with the relevant parties. He called on all parties to adhere to the basic norms governing international relations, stay committed to dialogue and consultation and find a solution that is in line with the realities of the Middle East and can accommodate the interests of all parties.

While justice may be delayed, it will come. China will continue to spare no effort to safeguard fairness and justice and maintain regional peace and stability. China will continue to be a peacebuilder, defender of stability and contributor to development in the Middle East.

**Mr. Rivero Rosario** (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of my delegation, I would like to begin by commending the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, Ambassador Cheikh Niang, for the excellent manner in which he steered the work of the Committee during 2019. We would also like to acknowledge the useful reports submitted by the Secretary-General (see A/74/272 and A/74/333), which provide important information on the issues under consideration. In my intervention, I will focus on both agenda item 35, entitled "Question of Palestine", and agenda item 34, entitled "The situation in the Middle East".

The question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East have been matters on which, unfortunately, the United Nations has been unable to reach a just solution or adopt measures to put an immediate and complete end to the illegal Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory and other Arab territories. Acting with impunity, Israel has promoted the expansion of settlements in occupied territory and threatened to annex Palestinian territory in the Jordan Valley in the West Bank and in East Jerusalem. Those new actions are serious and worrisome.

As we have said, Cuba condemns the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory and all illegal and colonizing policies, practices and measures, including

the construction and expansion of Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory, the punitive demolitions, the seizures of Palestinian structures by the Israeli authorities, the forced displacement of hundreds of Palestinian civilians, the blockade of the Gaza Strip and the surge in violence and the use of force, indiscriminately and disproportionately, against Palestinian civilians, in flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations and international humanitarian law. We express our concern about Israel's decision not to renew the mandate of the Temporary International Presence in Hebron, in flagrant violation of the relevant Security Council resolutions, the Oslo II Accords and international law.

We once again call on the Security Council to demand an immediate end to the occupation of the Palestinian territories and to Israel's aggressive policies and settlement practices, in accordance with the resolutions on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, particularly resolution 2334 (2016).

It is unacceptable that the Security Council has not even condemned the escalating violence and the tragic events in the Gaza Strip since 30 March 2018. The repeated obstruction by the United States, which is complicit in Israel's occupation and aggression, is bringing this body into disrepute. The international community cannot remain silent. International peace and security must be safeguarded and must demand Israel's compliance with international law, including humanitarian law, and with all relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2334 (2016).

We reaffirm our unstinting support for a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that allows the Palestinian people to exercise their right to self-determination and to have an independent and sovereign State based on the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, while ensuring the right of return of refugees.

We express to the Palestinian Government and people our unwavering solidarity and support for Palestine's entry as a full member of the United Nations. We support the call made once again by the President of the State of Palestine to convene an international peace conference.

We reject the unilateral action of the United States Government to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of

Israel and to establish its diplomatic representation in that city, disregarding its historical status. We condemn the withdrawal of financial support for the Agency for Public Works and Relief for Palestine Refugees in the Middle East, as well as all unilateral measures and attempts to undermine the two-State solution, which is the only viable and realistic solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

We can only express our surprise at the most recent statement by the United States Secretary of State on 18 November that the Israeli settlements in the West Bank do not violate international law. Cuba rejects such statements, which violate international law, the Charter of the United Nations and resolutions adopted by the Organization, including the Security Council, among other bodies.

Similarly, we reiterate our rejection of the so-called agreement of the century, drawn up by the current United States Government, which does not envisage the establishment of a Palestinian State, disregarding the two-State solution, which has historically been supported by the United Nations, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, the Arab League, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and other international actors. We once again reiterate our demand for respect for multilateralism and an end to double standards, interference in internal affairs, foreign aggression, illicit arms trafficking and sponsorship of terrorist groups in the region.

We reiterate our strongest condemnation of the decision by the United States Government to recognize the occupied Syrian Golan as a territory of Israel in flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations, international law and the relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution 497 (1981).

That ploy by Washington, which violates the legitimate interests of the Syrian people and of Arab and Islamic nations, could have serious consequences for stability and security in the Middle East and will further increase tensions in that volatile region. We will continue to support the demand of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to recover the Golan Heights, and we once again call for Israel's complete and unconditional withdrawal from the Syrian Golan and all occupied Arab territories.

We express our strongest condemnation of the application of the new, arbitrary and unjust unilateral coercive economic measures announced by the

Government of the United States against the Islamic Republic of Iran. The withdrawal of the United States from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on the nuclear programme, the increase in unilateral sanctions and the military threat against the Islamic Republic of Iran are causing increasing instability in the Middle East. We condemn the attacks on the two oil facilities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

We reiterate our call to exercise control and to act with restraint to prevent instability and conflict in the Middle East region. We urge the Security Council to fulfil its responsibility under the United Nations Charter for the maintenance of international peace and security.

**Mrs. Alhefeiti** (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, we commend the efforts of the United Nations, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian people and the Division for Palestinian Rights to highlight the suffering of the brotherly Palestinian people and to support them in achieving their legitimate aspirations.

The question of Palestine remains the central issue of the Arab world, given that stability cannot be achieved in the region without a just, comprehensive and lasting solution that allows the Palestinian people to establish an independent Palestinian State within the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the relevant international resolutions, the Madrid principles and the Arab Peace Initiative.

In that regard, I echo what Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates, said in his letter to the Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People:

“On this day, we, the Government and people of the United Arab Emirates, reiterate our support for the brotherly Palestinian people in their pursuit of self-determination, and we support all international and regional efforts to alleviate their suffering.”

Accordingly, we would like to clarify as follows.

First, the United Arab Emirates expresses its concern that the Israeli occupation continues its illegal practices in the occupied Palestinian territory, including the ongoing construction and expansion of settlements, the demolition of Palestinian properties, the confiscation of land and the violation of holy sites

in Jerusalem, jeopardizing the lives of civilians, as well as the continued blockade against Gaza. Such practices undoubtedly run counter to international law, hamper peace efforts and undermine the two-State solution, while being a key factor exploited by terrorists and extremist groups to destabilize and spread violence in the region.

We reiterate that the Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory are illegal under international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, and the relevant United Nations resolutions, in particular resolution 2334 (2016). We note the resolution of the Council of Ministers of the League of Arab States of 25 November, condemning the Israeli settlement policy, which is illegal in all its manifestations.

Secondly, we must address the deteriorating economic and humanitarian situation in the Palestinian territory and support vital sectors, particularly in Gaza, which is experiencing harsh conditions, notably growing unemployment and a shortage of energy and water supplies. We stress that supporting the Palestinian people is an integral part of the international community's commitment to achieving sustainable development and leaving no one behind.

In that context, we reiterate the importance of funding the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which provides vital services to more than 5.5 million Palestinian refugees. It also plays a crucial role in building a better future for refugees through its key education programmes. Accordingly, we will continue to provide assistance to the Palestinian people based on our solidarity with them and their just national cause and other humanitarian causes in the world. My country has provided more than \$630 million over the past five years to support vital sectors in Palestine. We are also among the largest donors to UNRWA, having provided approximately \$100 million to the agency between 2018 and 2019.

We stress that economic development alone cannot achieve durable peace. An environment conducive to peace efforts must also be established — by halting any illegal or provocative measures that undermine the two-State solution and putting an end to the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian and Arab territories in accordance with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions. As the international community, we should

also step up efforts to end the current stalemate in the peace process in the Middle East and start credible negotiations to end this prolonged conflict.

In conclusion, the latest developments in the Palestinian territory are of concern to all of us. Our region is embattled and ravaged by crises, We should therefore make every effort to prevent the emergence of any new confrontations that could claim the lives of innocent civilians and undermine regional stability. In that respect, we thank the brotherly Arab Republic of Egypt and the United Nations and its envoys for their unwavering efforts towards de-escalation.

**Mr. Alrowaie** (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): We take great pleasure in thanking His Excellency Mr. Cheikh Niang, Permanent Representative of Senegal, in his capacity as Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. We would also like to thank the members of the Committee for their report (A/74/35) and for the efforts they have made to ensure that our brotherly Palestinian people enjoy their inalienable rights like all the other peoples of the world

For 71 years now, our Palestinian brothers have been living under the yoke of Israeli occupation and suffering from its impact. That is why this year is of special importance to renew our appeal for a just solution to the question of Palestine in order to ensure that there will be a just, lasting and true peace by enabling Palestinian people to enjoy their inalienable rights. His Excellency Shaikh Khalid Bin Ahmed Al-Khalifa, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bahrain, conveyed a message to the Committee on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people, in which he reiterated the position of the Kingdom of Bahrain and stated the following:

“As we celebrate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people, we reiterate the fundamental position of the Kingdom of Bahrain and of his Majesty King Hamad bin Issa Al Khalifa in support of the legitimate, historical, inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, like all the other peoples of the world. That includes in particular the right to create an independent State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, based on the 4 June 1967 borders in accordance with the two-State solution, resolutions of international legitimacy and the Arab Peace Initiative. We stress that, in order to achieve a comprehensive, rapid

and lasting peace in the region, the international community must step up its efforts and continue to shoulder its responsibilities to address Israeli policies and practices that violate international law and customs and that undermine the rights of the Palestinian people, of the Palestinian territory and the holy sites, and which have led to the forced displacement and confiscation of Palestinian property and the construction of illegal settlements and other serious practices. That must prompt the international community to act quickly to bring an end to these practices.”

The report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the report of the Secretary-General (A/74/333) entitled “Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine” both refer to existing Israeli policies that violate Security Council resolutions, in particular resolutions 2334 (2016), 242 (1967) and 1515 (2003). Israel has pursued its colonization activities by expropriating Palestinian land and building settlements, thereby forcing Palestinians to leave their land, to which settlers are then moved, particularly in East Jerusalem and throughout the West Bank. That was followed by the exploitation of Palestinian natural resources and properties without any considerations to their fundamental rights. The two reports also refer to the suffering to which the Palestinian people are subject, both in humanitarian and economic terms, as a result of the blockade of the Gaza Strip that has been in place for nearly 12 years. The civilians there do not have any opportunities for development and decent lives, while the water and electricity crises undermine their access to the most fundamental services, namely, health care and education. Palestinians are also victims of premeditated murders.

We would like to highlight and commend the efforts of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, in particular in terms of its provision of education and basic services, which has been helping to improve the living conditions of Palestinian refugees. We stress the importance of continued support to the Agency so that it can perform its duties to the best of its abilities. The Kingdom of Bahrain continues to provide support to the brotherly people of Palestine in order to ensure economic growth and prosperity in all sectors. That is why in June Bahrain and the United States jointly hosted the Peace to Prosperity workshop, which represents a key

initiative and qualitative effort to enhance development and provide better lives for the Palestinian people and the peoples of the entire region.

In conclusion, the Kingdom of Bahrain reaffirms the need for the international community to stand in solidarity with the Palestinian people and continue to make efforts to enable them to regain their inalienable rights, as well as to ensure the return of Palestinian refugees to their homeland and achieve a just and lasting peace so that all inhabitants of the region can enjoy stability.

**Mr. Edrees** (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, we appreciate the convening of this meeting on the question of Palestine, which continues to be the central cause for the States of Middle East and the key challenge to achieving stability and security in the region.

Although more than seven decades have passed since the 1948 Nakba, and more than five decades since Israel occupied Arab territories in 1967, the question of Palestine remains unchanged. It is a stalemate with no prospects for a political settlement in the region, especially given that the two-State solution is being undermined and the Arab Peace Initiative and its proposals are not being seriously addressed. It could even be said that the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory has seen constant deterioration as a result of many of Israel's practices, such as expanding settlements by demolishing homes, destroying and confiscating Palestinian properties, establishing new settlement units and separating Jerusalem from its Arab environment, announcing a plan to close down all the East Jerusalem facilities of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, as well as its repeated incursions on Al-Haram Al-Sharif and its continued blockade of Gaza.

We cannot contemplate the achievement of security and stability in the Middle East without a just, comprehensive and durable solution to the question of Palestine, namely through the establishment of a Palestinian State, based on the 4 June 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with resolutions of international legitimacy and principles of international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, in particular Security Council resolution 2334 (2016). The current situation is not a viable option; rather, it causes continued tension,

an exacerbation of the conflict and a greater number of victims.

As we await the moment when the people of Palestine will achieve their full rights, Egypt wishes to express its appreciation for the efforts of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian people in providing support by raising awareness of their just cause. We look forward to continuing those efforts in order to reaffirm the international community's continued support for the Palestinian cause, as well as its commitment to the principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, in particular the principles of inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force and of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. Egypt commends the efforts of the Secretary-General and the Secretariat to continue to support the work of the Committee.

Egypt championed and presented a model for peace that we hoped would prevail in the region, and we will continue our efforts to that end. However, we regret the current situation in the Middle East in the light of the lack of peace and a genuine threat to the present and the future of the region. Accordingly, Egypt would like to express its support for the draft resolutions under the agenda item entitled "Question of Palestine" (A/74/L.14, A/74/L.15, A/74/L.16 and A/74/L.17). We call upon all States Members of the United Nations to endorse those draft resolutions in order to support the Palestinian people in achieving their freedom and the right to self-determination.

Egypt joins others in voicing our common aspiration to achieve security and stability in the Middle East by reaching a just and comprehensive solution to the question of Palestine. That will enable the region to enjoy peace, stability and security after having suffered tension and conflict for many decades. We hope that such suffering will not continue in the decades to come.

**Mr. Al Habib** (Islamic Republic of Iran): We deeply appreciate the work of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and its prominent role in promoting the cause of Palestine. I also value the work of the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat.

Last week, on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People (see A/AC.183/PV.398), we all renewed our shared commitment to a just and lasting solution for the question of Palestine and a durable peace in the Middle East.

The observance of that day is indeed an opportunity to highlight the dire and painful situation being endured by the Palestinians as a result of gross and systematic violations of their rights by the Israeli regime.

After more than seven decades, the occupying Power continues to violate the fundamental human rights and dignity of the Palestinian people and other Arabs living under its occupation. As a result, Palestinians are deprived of their rights, forcibly evicted from their properties and subjected to violence, terror and intimidation. The Israeli regime, in line with its discriminatory and racist policies, has totally negated any right of the Palestinians to self-determination, under the title of a so-called Jewish nation-State. Moreover, it has taken unprecedented measures to alter the demographic composition Al-Quds Al-Sharif by eliminating the presence of Palestinian Christians and Muslims in the holy city.

Nearly 2 million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip continue to live under a suffocating blockade, making Gaza the world's largest uninhabitable open-air prison. The situation amounts to collective punishment against the entire population of Gaza, including women and children, which constitutes a war crime under international law. In the meantime, ongoing illegal settlement activities in the Palestinian territory and the occupied Syrian Golan continue unabated. Such activities are in flagrant violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention and also constitute a war crime.

All such brutal, inhumane, unlawful and systematic practices have been taken while the Security Council, as the main organ responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security, has failed to fulfil its responsibility to put an end to this tragedy. Its failure is due to the United States policy of supporting Israel, which, in turn, has highly emboldened the Israeli regime to continue its illegal policies and cruel practices against Palestinians in clear violation of international law, international humanitarian law, international human rights law and the relevant Security Council resolutions. Moreover, the irresponsible and unilateral United States policy of relocating its embassy to Al-Quds Al-Sharif, as well as its recent decision regarding Israeli settlement activities, which we firmly reject and strongly condemn, are clear cases of flagrant violations of international law. The United States must be held accountable for such unjustifiable and irresponsible acts. Likewise, we strongly condemn the United States unlawful decision in support of the

annexation of the occupied Syrian Golan to Israel. The Golan is and will remain an integral part of the Syrian territory. All measures by the occupying Power in the Golan are in violation of international law, the Charter of the United Nations, the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions and the Fourth Geneva Convention, thereby rendering them null and void.

The question of Palestine is the longest-running crisis of our time. It has not been settled because the application of the golden principles of justice and international law, as enshrined in Article 1 of the Charter, has not been ensured with regard to the crisis. In fact, the occupying Power's non-compliance with the relevant international law and regulations has prevented the international community from finding a just solution to the crisis.

I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate our principled position that peace in the Middle East cannot be achieved through the promotion of a discriminatory and selective policy of support for the Israeli regime while simultaneously condemning the legitimate struggle of the Palestinian people against occupation. Ending seven decades of conflict and instability in the Middle East and establishing a durable peace will be possible only by resolving the Palestinian problem through the termination of the occupation, the return of Palestinian refugees to their homeland, ensuring the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and the establishment of a sovereign and viable State of Palestine with Al-Quds as its capital.

In conclusion, I reiterate my Government's full and unwavering support to the Palestinian people in their rightful and legitimate resistance against occupation and aggression and in their just quest to exercise their right to self-determination.

**Ms. Byrne Nason** (Ireland): Today's debate comes at a critical time for the Middle East peace process and the viability of the two-State solution. Three years since the adoption of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), the situation on the ground has continued to deteriorate. Israel's occupation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, continues, settlement activity has accelerated and the blockade on Gaza remains in place. Those actions erode the prospects for peace and for the two-State solution — a prospect further undermined by the constant threat of violence, extremism, terrorism and incitement, as well as the lack of progress with regard to intra-Palestinian reconciliation.



Against that backdrop, Ireland reiterates its readiness to work with all parties towards the resumption of meaningful negotiations to resolve all final-status issues and achieve a just and lasting peace. The meeting of European and Arab Ministers convened in Dublin in February by Ireland's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Simon Coveney, was testament to that commitment. Minister Coveney is currently visiting Israel and Palestine, which is his fourth visit as Minister for Foreign Affairs. He will be holding meetings with senior Israeli and Palestinian political leaders and United Nations officials. He will visit Gaza, including for a meeting with Minister Mazen Ghunaim, the head of the Palestinian Water Authority, to discuss Ireland's investment — along with other European partners — in solar energy to power a waste water plant in northern Gaza. He will also visit a United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees school for girls. Minister Coveney also plans to announce further support from Ireland for the Palestinian education sector. The Minister will use his visit to discuss how Ireland can support efforts towards a durable two-State solution to the conflict and to convey clearly and firmly Ireland's concerns about the impact of the occupation, including in relation to settlement activity and the blockade of Gaza. His visit reflects the importance that Ireland attaches to the Middle East peace process and the high priority that our Government and our people continue to give to the issue.

We continue to advocate for a negotiated two-State solution to end the occupation that began in 1967, ending all claims and fulfilling the aspirations of both parties, including Israeli and Palestinian security needs and Palestinian aspirations for statehood and sovereignty, on the basis of international law, internationally agreed parameters and the relevant Security Council resolutions. That aligns with the European Union's own firm and united position, as set out in detail on numerous occasions, and resolution 73/89, of 6 December 2018, on a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East. Ireland was proud to introduce that resolution, which was endorsed overwhelmingly by the Assembly.

Finally, in relation to the draft resolutions before us today (A/74/L.14, A/74/L.15, A/74/L.16 and A/74/L.17), we wish to thank the Permanent Observer Mission of the State of Palestine for its work on streamlining the draft resolutions under the agenda item "Question of Palestine". We look forward to the explanation of vote to be delivered by the observer of the European Union. We also look forward to the continued engagement of all parties in good faith — here and elsewhere — aimed at advancing a peaceful settlement to the conflict.

We believe that it is still possible to reach peace based on the two-State solution if credible steps are taken. Ultimately, it is the lack of implementation of international law that is the real challenge to the achievement of peace and security in the Middle East. We call on all States to uphold their responsibilities and obligations in that regard.

**The Acting President:** We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item for this meeting.

We shall continue the debate this afternoon at 3 p.m. here in the Hall. I should like to inform members that the consideration of the draft resolutions A/74/L.14, A/74/L.15, A/74/L.16 and A/74/L.17 will take place following the conclusion of the debate on agenda item 34 this afternoon.

#### **Programme of work**

**The Acting President:** The consideration of agenda item 128, entitled "Investigation into the conditions and circumstances resulting in the tragic death of Dag Hammarskjöld and the members of the party accompanying him", originally scheduled for Monday, 9 December, will now take place on Thursday, 12 December, as the second item on the agenda.

The consideration of agenda item 37, entitled "The situation in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan", originally scheduled for Monday, 16 December, has been postponed to a date to be announced later.

*The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.*