



# General Assembly

Official Records

## Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

**404**<sup>th</sup> meeting

Monday, 29 November 2021, 10 a.m.  
New York

*Chair:* Mr. Niang . . . . . (Senegal)

*The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.*

### International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People

**The Chair:** This is a special meeting to observe the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, in accordance with the provisions of resolution 32/40 B of 2 December 1977.

It is my honour and pleasure to welcome Mr. Abdulla Shahid, President of the General Assembly; Mr. Juan Ramón de la Fuente Ramírez, President of the Security Council; Ms. Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, Chef de Cabinet representing the Secretary-General of the United Nations; and Mr. Riyad Mansour, Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations and representative of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas at this meeting.

I would also like to welcome the representatives of Member States, intergovernmental organizations and civil-society organizations and all those who have accepted the Committee's invitation to participate in this special meeting. Our special thanks go to Mr. Mohammed El-Kurd, a Palestinian activist, who has kindly accepted the Committee's invitation to be with us this morning and to deliver a message as a representative of civil society. We will also be showing a video with messages of solidarity from additional prominent representatives of civil society. I should remind the Committee that this meeting is being webcast live on United Nations Web TV with simultaneous

interpretation in all six official languages. We also wish to acknowledge with regret the many members of the public who would have liked to be present at this solemn meeting but have been unable to attend because of restrictions due to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

I would like to urge all speakers to keep their statement within five minutes. Some of the dignitaries may have to leave the meeting at the end of its first segment. I would now like to make a statement in my capacity as Chair of the Committee.

On this day every year we commemorate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. With heavy hearts, we know that the promise of an independent Palestinian State and the realization of Palestinian rights remains unfulfilled. Since 1967, and more than seven decades after the 1948 Nakba, the Palestinian people continue to experience increasing levels of dispossession, violence and insecurity under the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. The Committee notes with regret that despite the adoption of countless United Nations resolutions, including General Assembly resolution 181 (II), now marking its seventy-fourth anniversary, and Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), and despite the international community's efforts over the years, the question of Palestine remains unresolved. Israel continues to deepen its occupation by expanding its illegal settlements, confiscating Palestinian property and structures, demolishing homes, forcibly displacing

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Palestinian families and arresting and imprisoning Palestinian civilians, including children, creating a very volatile situation. The fast-deteriorating situation is a stark reminder that the work of the Committee and the international community at large is more relevant than ever. But we cannot lose hope or cease our collective efforts to achieve a just peace based on international law and the many relevant resolutions adopted at the United Nations.

The Committee has a mandate from the General Assembly to raise awareness and advocate for a just solution to the question of Palestine. During 2021, in solidarity with the Palestinian people, the Committee was resolute in its response to the many serious unfolding events. Despite the difficulties resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Committee made sure that the current challenges remained a focus of attention of the international community. It engaged partners in advancing Palestinians' achievement of their rights and a two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders. In response to Israel's further expansion of its settlement enterprise — with close to 700,000 Israeli settlers now living in illegal settlements in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem — the Committee consistently condemned this flagrant breach of international law in its quarterly statements to the Security Council open debates. It also publicly condemned the expansion of settlements as a source of volatility and a threat to a peaceful resolution of the conflict. In March, ahead of the planned Palestinian elections, the Committee called on Israel to allow elections in East Jerusalem, a vital part of the occupied Palestinian territory. The Committee also organized a virtual event to highlight the contribution of Palestinian women as agents of change and their crucial role in bringing about a just and sustainable solution.

In April, in solidarity with the 5.7 million Palestinian refugees registered with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in the occupied Palestinian territory, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, the Committee partnered with Mr. Philippe Lazzarini, Commissioner-General of UNRWA, to call on Member States to deliver on their political commitment and provide sustainable and reliable funding to the Agency. When deadly conflict broke out in May, the Committee expressed grave concern about the ongoing attempts to expel Palestinian families from their homes in occupied East Jerusalem, the Israeli incursions and outbreak of

violence at Al-Aqsa Mosque and the escalation in Gaza, where many civilians, including children, were killed by Israeli air strikes. The Committee called for a halt to all indiscriminate attacks on civilians and for respect by all for international law, including humanitarian and human rights law.

In support of just efforts to keep the issue of Jerusalem high on the international community's agenda, the Committee organized a virtual conference in July on the issue of forced demographic change in the city, to highlight the actions of the occupying Power as a grave breach of international law and a threat to peace. In October, the Committee joined Ms. Michelle Bachelet, High Commissioner for Human Rights, several United Nations experts and other organizations in expressing deep concern about Israel's decision to designate six Palestinian civil-society organizations as terrorist organizations. Those organizations are reputable and reliable partners of the Committee and the United Nations and have been advocating for years for the protection and promotion of the human rights of Palestinian children, women and men. In its public statement the Committee reaffirmed its determination to continue its engagement with civil-society partners in implementing its mandate. In addition, since March 2021, the Committee has directly engaged with the members of the Middle East Quartet and the Security Council to support calls for and to act to achieve a resumption of meaningful negotiations firmly based on international law.

On this day of solidarity with the Palestinian people, let me reaffirm our ongoing commitment to their just cause. The Committee will continue to spare no effort in advocating for a just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine. It will continue to stand firmly in solidarity with the Palestinian people for the achievement of their inalienable rights, including their right to self-determination and to build their own State in the full enjoyment of their human rights. The Committee will continue its untiring efforts to serve as a torchbearer until we reach the finish line of a just, lasting and comprehensive solution, whereby two States, Israel and Palestine, will live side by side in peace and security, with East Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Palestine, and with freedom and dignity enjoyed by all. We invite the overwhelming majority of Member States that have long recognized the urgent need for a just and peaceful solution, as well as international

organizations, to join the Committee in support of this noble goal.

I now have the honour to give the floor to the President of the General Assembly, Mr. Abdulla Shahid.

**Mr. Shahid** (President of the General Assembly): Today, as we mark the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people, we must do so with a sense of humility. Peace in the Middle East has remained at the forefront of the global agenda since the foundation of the United Nations, and much of that conversation has revolved around implementing a just settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. It is disappointing that despite the priority accorded to the issue, the amount of energy expended, the multiple United Nations resolutions adopted and the decades of negotiations, dialogues and engagements, so little has been accomplished. And the people of Palestine continue to suffer alongside their Israeli counterparts.

The vision of a two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders, with Palestinians and Israelis living peacefully side by side, remains elusive. Countless General Assembly resolutions have affirmed the importance of resolving the situation of Palestinian refugees to achieve a just and lasting peace in the region. However, Palestinians' aspirations for self-determination and sovereignty continue to go unfulfilled. Scattered across the Middle East and beyond, Palestinian families uprooted in 1948 are losing hope of ever returning to their original homes, especially as illegal settlements outside Israel's demarcated borders proliferate. Palestinians in the Gaza Strip continue to live in appalling conditions, with limited access to basic amenities and services, including running water, electricity, medicine and education. They are trapped in a cycle of unemployment, limited economic opportunity and poverty — a dynamic that has been severely exacerbated by the coronavirus disease pandemic. Deprived of statehood, they cannot even advocate on their own behalf as a peer member of the global community. We must do much better. We owe it to the people of the region to guarantee them their safety and security. They deserve better than abject conditions. They deserve to have their aspirations for sovereignty and self-determination recognized and met.

We must continue to support Palestinians and Israelis in resolving the conflict, based on Security Council resolution 242 (1967) and other relevant resolutions, within the parameters of international law

and the ongoing Middle East peace process. Throughout the efforts, we should never forget the human worth of the suffering inhabitants of that region. We must do all we can to ensure that they live a life of dignity. I commend the ongoing work by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). UNRWA provides vital education, health and social services, helping to meet the needs of 5.6 million Palestinian refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and the occupied Palestinian territories. I also welcome the resumption this year of crucial funding to UNRWA, though I note that it is not yet enough to comprehensively meet the current needs. Once again, UNRWA does not have the funds to continue operations until the end of the year. That puts several important areas in jeopardy, including girls' education, vaccination roll-outs and humanitarian assistance. I urge the international community to ensure sufficient and reliable financing to ensure that Palestinian refugees receive adequate assistance. I also urge the international community not merely to reflect on all the ways that we have failed to do right for the people of Palestine, but to earnestly work to grant them what they have been yearning for decades — statehood, self-determination, respect and dignity.

As President of the General Assembly and someone who has steadfastly called for peace across the Middle East throughout my career, I will continue to advocate on behalf of the Palestinian people. I will continue to stand up for their rights. I will continue to hope for a settlement that will allow Israelis and Palestinians to live in harmony with one another. Let us come together as an international community and finally make that vision a reality.

**The Chair:** I thank Mr. Abdulla Shahid, President of the General Assembly, for his important statement. Our Committee is grateful for his stewardship of the Assembly in dealing with the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory and the Middle East as a whole. I now have the honour to give the floor to Mr. Juan Ramón de la Fuente Ramírez, President of the Security Council.

**Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez** (Mexico), President of the Security Council (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for inviting me to address this meeting in my capacity as President of the Security Council.

Thirty years ago, an international conference took place in Madrid where for the first time Israeli leaders sat across the table from Arab leaders, including Palestinians, Lebanese, Jordanians and Syrians. The meeting marked the starting point of an array of bilateral and multilateral peace negotiations. The Madrid Peace Conference reminds us that a just, lasting and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict can only be achieved by peaceful means. The support of the international community has always been and will continue to be crucial to a sustainable peace settlement.

During the past year, the Security Council has remained seized of the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. The Council has continued to receive monthly briefings from the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, and to hold open debates on the issue on a quarterly basis. The Security Council convened additional meetings in May (see S/PV.8782) in response to the situation in Gaza and East Jerusalem, issuing a press statement on the matter (SC/14527). The Council has continued to receive the Secretary-General's reports on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016) in briefings by the Special Coordinator every three months, as well as in written form every six months, most recently in June 2021 (see S/PV.8804).

The situation in the Middle East remains a central concern of the Security Council, especially regarding the lack of progress in finding a just and lasting solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The status quo is not sustainable and significant steps to reverse the negative trends on the ground are urgently needed. The Council remains fully committed to pursuing a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East, in line with international law, in particular the Charter of the United Nations, international human rights law and international humanitarian law, and consistent with the relevant Council resolutions, which represent a cornerstone of peace and security in the region. That should be achieved through direct negotiations on final-status issues between the parties, leading to a two-State solution whereby two democratic States, Israel and a sovereign and independent Palestine, live side by side in peace within secure and recognized borders, in line with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions, as well as taking account of internationally agreed parameters.

The Council members continue to be concerned about the deteriorating situation on the ground and call for an immediate end to actions that undermine trust between the parties and threaten the viability of a two-State solution. That includes the construction of settlements, the demolition and confiscation of Palestinian property and evictions of Palestinians in East Jerusalem, settlers' attacks across the occupied Palestinian territory and incitement to violence and terrorism. The members of the Security Council condemn violence and indiscriminate attacks on civilians, whether Israeli or Palestinian, and stress the importance of ensuring the protection of civilians.

The Security Council continues to be concerned about the dire economic and humanitarian situation in Gaza and calls on all relevant actors to take steps to improve it immediately and in the longer term and to strengthen the ceasefire reached in May. We stress the need to ensure full, unhindered humanitarian access to Gaza and call on the parties to work actively for the sustained and regular opening of the crossing points. We welcome the efforts of Egypt, the other countries of the region, the United Nations, the Middle East Quartet and other international parties in that regard, and encourage progress on intra-Palestinian reconciliation and the effective functioning of the Palestinian Authority, including in the Gaza Strip.

The Security Council continues to carefully monitor the acute fiscal and financial situation facing the Palestinian Authority and stresses the importance of addressing it, including by providing support to efforts to strengthen its institutions. The members of the Council recognize the essential role that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East plays, thanks to the life-saving support and services it provides for millions of refugees in the region. Similarly, we note with great concern the Agency's recurring funding crisis and thank donors for their timely contributions, while inviting others to contribute as well.

The Security Council will continue to closely follow the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, pursue the implementation of its relevant resolutions and foster and support efforts to achieve an environment conducive to achieving peace, prosperity, and security for both Israelis and Palestinians, including through the efforts of the Quartet. Building on the spirit of the Madrid Conference, only through a negotiated and committed process with international involvement



can real peace and reconciliation among Israelis and Palestinians be achieved. Only through dialogue and diplomacy can both the Israeli and Palestinian peoples attain equal measures of the freedoms, security, dignity and prosperity they rightly deserve.

**The Chair:** I thank Mr. Juan Ramón de la Fuente Ramírez, Permanent Representative of Mexico, for his valuable statement, which confirms that the Security Council remains fully committed to a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East based on a vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. His statement also reaffirms Mexico's long-standing and unwavering support for the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

I now have the honour to give the floor to Ms. Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, Chef de Cabinet, speaking on behalf of the Secretary-General.

**Ms. Ribeiro Viotti:** I bring special greetings from the Secretary-General, who has asked me to share with the Committee his message to mark the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People:

“On this International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, continues to pose a significant challenge to international peace and security. Persistent violations of the rights of Palestinians, along with the expansion of settlements, risk eroding the prospects for a two-State solution. As the international community strives to restart the Israeli-Palestinian dialogue, I am encouraged by recent engagements between senior Israeli and Palestinian officials. However, containing the situation is not sufficient. The overall goal remains that of two States living side by side in peace and security, fulfilling the legitimate national aspirations of both peoples, with borders based on the 1967 lines and Jerusalem as the capital of both States.

“I call on the parties to avoid unilateral steps that would undermine the chances for a peaceful resolution of the conflict based on international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions. I further call on the parties to engage constructively to end the closure of Gaza and improve the living conditions of the Palestinians under occupation.

“I commend the generous donors who support the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and call for Member States to provide timely and predictable funding to allow the Agency to conduct its vital work. Together, let us reaffirm our unwavering commitment to the Palestinian people in their quest to achieve their inalienable rights and build a future of peace, justice, security and dignity for both Palestinians and Israelis.”

I would now like to add a few words of my own.

The United Nations is committed to supporting Palestinians and Israelis in resolving the conflict. The overall situation remains volatile as a result of continued unilateral actions, violence, military operations and the threat of escalation. Settlements in the occupied West Bank continue to expand, including in East Jerusalem and areas crucial to the contiguity of a future Palestinian State. The ongoing construction undermines the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and sovereignty and increases the risk of violent confrontation. It is illegal and must stop. Human rights violations against Palestinians — including the confiscation of land, the use of extended administrative detention, the excessive use of force, severe restrictions on freedom of movement and mounting settler violence — significantly impede Palestinians' ability to live in security and develop their communities and economy.

We are also concerned about the situation in East Jerusalem, including the recurring tensions in and around the holy sites and the persistent threat of evictions of Palestinian inhabitants from their homes. All the parties must act to preserve the status quo in the holy sites, halt unilateral actions and avoid inflaming an already precarious situation. Egypt and other key partners, as well as the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, are working to sustain the fragile ceasefire in Gaza.

Ultimately, genuine and sustainable progress can be realized only by establishing a legitimate political horizon. The peace process must be relaunched to achieve the long-sought goal of ending the occupation and realizing a two-State solution, with an independent Palestine living side by side with Israel in peace and security, with Jerusalem as the capital of both States. We urge all parties to take concrete steps to improve

the prospects for a negotiated two-State solution and the achievement of a just and lasting peace. *(spoke in Arabic)*

The efforts of civil society are an important aspect of bridging the divides between Israelis and Palestinians. International donors and other Member States have therefore expressed concern about Israel's recent actions against six Palestinian civil-society organizations and have called on Israel to provide further information. The United Nations will continue to engage with the Israeli authorities on the matter to ensure space for activities under international law.

While we are working on restarting negotiations, we also have the immediate imperative of addressing Palestinians' economic and humanitarian needs. The United Nations humanitarian flash appeal for Gaza has received vital support, but more must be done to increase sustainable economic development and employment opportunities. In addition, the occupied West Bank needs economic revitalization to advance recovery and reduce poverty. Without the additional generosity of donors, it will not be feasible to expand the urgently needed assistance to the Palestinian people.

On this International Day of Solidarity, let us reinforce our shared commitment to the Palestinian people in their quest to achieve their inalienable rights and build a future of peace, justice, security and dignity.

**The Chair:** I thank Ms. Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, Chef de Cabinet, for delivering the important statement of the Secretary-General and for her own constructive comments. I would like to express the Committee's sincere appreciation for the personal efforts of the Secretary-General aimed at advancing the two-State solution and promoting a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine.

I now give the floor to Mr. Riyad Mansour, Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations, who will read out a message from His Excellency Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine.

**Mr. Mansour (Palestine):** I have the honour to read a statement by President Mahmoud Abbas on this occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. An English translation is being sent to missions electronically as we speak.

“At the outset, in my own name and on behalf of the Palestinian people, I would like to express my thanks and gratitude to all those around the world who believe in our just and historic cause and its centrality, and to all the peoples that have expressed their solidarity with the Palestinian people and supported their legitimate struggle, bearing witness to their resilience and steadfastness in the occupied Palestinian territory, with Jerusalem at its heart. The world has also witnessed the struggle and suffering of our people in the refugee camps in our homeland and in the diaspora. We also want to express our sincere gratitude to the overwhelming majority of States that have reiterated their support for the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and their commitment to international law and international legitimacy. The steadfastness of our Palestinian people in their land and throughout the world, and the unwavering solidarity with our people, are what have kept the question of Palestine alive and present over time and across generations.

“Decades ago, the international community determined a vision for peace, which is a two-State solution based on the 1967 borders. That vision was enshrined in the resolutions of this Organization, which have included terms of reference and a basis for a solution and its mechanisms within a defined time frame, including through the adoption of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), which is aimed primarily at salvaging a two-State solution based on the 1967 borders. Those resolutions have also determined the obligations of the parties, as well as those of States, to refrain from recognizing illegal unilateral actions or assisting them in any way, to distinguish in their dealings with Israel between the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, and the territory of the Israeli occupying Power, to ensure respect for international law and to provide international protection for our defenceless people.

“We should remind the States that have established trade or diplomatic offices in Jerusalem, and those that have concluded agreements with companies or education institutions operating in settlements or that buy products from those settlements, that all such actions are in violation of international law and simply encourage the Israeli

occupation authorities to persist in perpetrating crimes against the Palestinian people. We want those States to know that they are increasing our people's suffering through those actions, because they entrench the occupation of our land and do not contribute to peace, security and stability in the region.

“The international community has long rejected Israel's policies of colonial annexation and settlement expansion on our land and its violation of the rights of our people and aggression against our Christian and Islamic holy sites. That supportive international stance needs to be accompanied by practical measures that translate the international consensus into action on the ground and enable our people to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination, realize their freedom and independence on their land and achieve a just and comprehensive peace in the region. In that regard, we urge all States that believe in a two-State solution and have recognized Israel to recognize the State of Palestine as well.

“Israel's blatant rejection of a two-State solution and its insistence on entrenching rather than ending its occupation, combined with the continuing wait for the parties to be ready for dialogue and the achievement of peace, in practical terms mean that Israel, the occupying Power, is being allowed to finalize its annexation through its illegal actions and by altering the facts on the ground, which only renders the situation more complex and the achievement of a two-State solution more difficult if not impossible. That is why we put forward alternatives and proposals in our speech in the Assembly's general debate (see A/76/PV.12). The occupation authorities are jeopardizing the possibility of a two-State solution and entrenching racial discrimination, while their military forces control our Palestinian people, which we cannot accept. They therefore have to choose between a two-State solution in accordance with international legitimacy or a one-State solution for all, as we cannot tolerate occupation forever.

“This is a defining moment. Either the will of the international community will prevail with a two-State solution, or the possibility of a two-State solution will be left hostage to the will of the occupying Power, which means that it will be abandoned. No one can reasonably wait for

the Israeli occupying Power — which supports settlements and the violence of settlers and persists in its aggression against our people in Jerusalem, in the Old City in Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan, and against our holy sites, and which is besieging our people in the Gaza Strip, killing and torturing our prisoners and holding the corpses of our loved ones, destroying our homes and displacing our children — to awaken one day and choose peace on its own, without intensive, serious international efforts with deterrent measures that put an end to such policies and crimes.

“Thirty years after the Madrid Peace Conference, we are more convinced than ever that international sponsorship is a necessity if we are to achieve peace. Some may consider that the time is not yet ripe to launch ambitious international initiatives for peace or to revive the peace process, because of the rejection of one of the parties. That compromises the prospects for a solution. These are the questions I have. What prospects were there for peace before the Madrid Peace Conference? How far apart were the parties at the time? How long did the international community have to wait until the parties were ready for a dialogue?

“We are ready to work with the international community, including the Middle East Quartet and the Security Council, to salvage a two-State solution, based on the 1967 borders, before it is too late. We reiterate here that we continue to extend our hand for a just and comprehensive peace and stress once again the importance of convening an international conference under the auspices of the Quartet, as a mechanism mandated by the Security Council for this very purpose, with the participation of all the parties concerned, to engage in a genuine peace process guided by the decisions of international legitimacy with the objective of ending the occupation and resolving all final-status issues, while establishing a package of guarantees to ensure the implementation of what is to be agreed on within a defined time frame. The ultimate goal here is to achieve a just and comprehensive peace that ends the occupation and realizes the freedom of the Palestinian people and their independence within their own State, based on the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

“For our part, we will spare no effort in upholding our commitments under international

law. We will continue working to unite our land and people, to hold presidential and legislative elections as soon as they can be held in Jerusalem and to form a national unity Government all of whose parties believe in the parameters of international legitimacy. We will make greater efforts to put our Palestinian house in order, achieve reconciliation and end division, consecrate the rule of law and human rights, democratic principles and the freedom of expression, empower women and young people and revive our national economy. We will pursue all this in partnership with civil-society institutions and the private sector. We will continue to uphold our commitments under international law.

“Israel seeks to devour the maximum amount of Palestinian land, leaving a minimum Palestinian demography, at a time when around 13.5 million people — half or more of whom are Palestinians and the other half Israeli Jews — live in historical Palestine from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River. Today more than ever, as President Jimmy Carter stated, the choice is clear and unequivocal — peace or apartheid. Can the world tolerate a new apartheid? The Palestinian people will not tolerate oppression and injustice and will continue their legitimate struggle against the colonial occupation of our land and people. We will not abandon the culture of peace deeply rooted within us. We will continue our approach of peaceful popular resistance. We will not accept a future of walls, blockade, racial discrimination, oppression, hatred and colonialism.

“The question of Palestine will remain witness to the credibility of the international community and the effectiveness of the order that it has established for upholding international law, maintaining international peace and security, prohibiting the acquisition of territory by force and supporting the right of peoples to self-determination, according to the promises and pledges undertaken in its resolutions and international treaties. Our people do not ask for more than what international legitimacy has granted other peoples of the world, but they will not accept less. The destiny and fate of our people is to live in freedom and dignity on their land of Palestine, and there is no power on Earth that can stop them from achieving that goal.”

**The Chair:** I would like to convey our sincere thanks and greetings to His Excellency Mr. Mahmoud

Abbas, President of the State of Palestine, for his very important message. I also want to assure President Abbas, and through him the Palestinian people, of our Committee’s firm vow to continue its efforts, as mandated by the General Assembly, with a view to promoting a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine, in the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to self-determination as an independent State of Palestine.

We will now show messages of solidarity, featuring Her Excellency Ms. Tarja Halonen, former President of Finland and former co-Chair of the International Women’s Commission for a Just and Sustainable Palestinian-Israeli Peace; Ms. Malala Yousafzai, Nobel Peace Prize laureate; Ms. Hanan Al-Hroub, Palestinian winner of the Global Teacher Prize; and Ms. Agnès Callamard, Secretary-General of Amnesty International. Immediately after showing the video, we will give the floor to Mr. Mohammed El-Kurd, a Palestinian activist, who has been invited as a special guest by the Committee and who will deliver a message.

*A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall.*

**The Chair:** The messages we have just heard by female representatives from different countries and every sector of society remind us once again of the strong voices of women as well as their critical role in supporting the positive change that can lead to a just, lasting and peaceful solution.

I now have the pleasure to give the floor to Mr. Mohammed El-Kurd, our special guest. He is a Palestinian activist, a native of Sheikh Jarrah in East Jerusalem and a Palestinian writer and poet. He pursued a master’s degree in the United States and has gained prominence for speaking out and documenting forced evictions of Palestinians in Sheikh Jarrah. Mr. El-Kurd was the main subject of the 2013 documentary film *My Neighbourhood*, by Julia Bacha and Rebekah Wingert-Jabi. Together with his twin sister Muna, he has campaigned for the rights of Palestinians via social media channels, and in 2021 he was included on *Time* magazine’s annual list of the 100 most influential people in the world. It is a pleasure to have him here.

**Mr. El-Kurd:** I would like to thank the Committee for the groundbreaking speeches. I am sure the occupation authorities are very concerned right now.



My name is Mohammed El-Kurd and I am here to deliver a speech.

When I was 11, I came home from school and saw my furniture scattered across my street in Sheikh Jarrah, a neighbourhood in occupied Jerusalem in occupied Palestine. The street overflowed with soldiers, police and settlers. My neighbours were screaming and protesting. Some of them were taken to hospital. Settlers had invaded our home and taken over half of it. They said it was theirs by divine decree, as if God were a real estate agent. Now, more than a decade later, they are coming to finish what they started. Billionaire-backed settler organizations, protected by the Israeli occupation forces, will likely throw my family out of our home forever. And not only my family, but hundreds, if not thousands, of Palestinians in my neighbourhood and other communities such as Silwan and Al-Isawiyah and Masafer Yatta, in the South Hebron Hills, and elsewhere. The fate of dispossession looms over much of my neighbourhood. Our lives are consumed by the anxiety of living on the brink of homelessness. The United Nations has called that a war crime. More importantly, I know that it is theft. My community, like all Palestinian communities, is no stranger to dispossession. My grandmother was expelled from her home in Haifa in 1948 when hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were displaced in the Nakba. She found refuge in the 1950s after the United Nations and Jordan built a housing project in Sheikh Jarrah, promising that the 28 refugee families would receive legal title to their properties. Then the 1967 war happened.

After Israeli forces illegally annexed Jerusalem, several settler organizations, some of which are headquartered in the United States, have relentlessly attempted to take over the neighbourhood. We have obviously tried to fight the forced expulsion in court. But as my grandmother used to say, if the judge is your enemy, to whom do you complain? Israeli land-grabbing has been rubber-coated with legislation, making it almost impossible to challenge. Even so, the battle over Sheikh Jarrah is not legal in its essence. It is political. It is part of the larger systematic effort to Israelize the entirety of Jerusalem, my native city. My family and our neighbours understand that. We know from first-hand experience that the Israeli judicial system is created by and for those who benefit endlessly from the Israeli settler-colonial regime. As I speak, our family lawyer is attempting to persuade a settler judge to rule against settlements. The word

“apartheid” comes to mind, but saying that there is asymmetry and injustice in the Israeli judicial system is a gross understatement. What we have on our hands is a colonialist, ideologically driven system built by and for colonizers, working exactly as it was intended to. Those unjust laws are not only preferential — serving the demographic and political goals of the Zionist project — they are concealed behind a cloak of quasi-democratic, seemingly disputable legislation.

This summer we took our struggle to the streets. Our efforts to resist the takeover were joined by Palestinians across Jerusalem and the world, in what became known as the Unity Uprising. The situation rapidly escalated into attacks on besieged Gaza. Palestinians mobilized and resisted, and around the world people demonstrated in support of the Palestinian right to liberation and decolonization. But months later, the world’s attention has moved away. The reality for Palestinians, however, has not changed. For three months our neighbourhood was put under a blockade maintained by Israeli forces, with continuing restrictions intended to suffocate the lives of the hundreds of Palestinians who live there. And yet meanwhile, armed Jewish settlers, who have already occupied some of our homes, roam the streets freely, no questions asked. On any given night, a dozen gun-wielding fanatics patrol my street with arrogant impunity. They are protected, even supported by the troops blockading our community.

I have to take a minute to acknowledge the millions under siege in the Gaza Strip, the millions living in an open-air prison. I have to acknowledge the thousands of Palestinian prisoners subjugated in Israeli prisons. I have to acknowledge my neighbour, Murad Attieh, an elementary school teacher who was stolen from his family, put into prison and slapped with trumped-up, fabricated charges only because he dared to say no to ethnic cleansing.

I have to ask what it is that I can say today that has not been said before. How many Palestinians have stood on this rostrum for decades and decried the same broken promises and unfulfilled United Nations resolutions? How many of us have tried to articulate the atrocities that everyone in this body knows very well and still ignores? At a certain point in every Palestinian’s life, we realize that the Nakba is far from over. It continues every time the Israeli occupation revokes Jerusalem residencies. It blares in street signs stripped of Arabic. It punctures us in constant campaigns of dehumanization. If you are not thrown out of your home, it is demolished.

If you are not imprisoned, you are shot in the street. If you are not shot in the street, there is a drone in your sky in the Gaza Strip. If it is not a bomb, it is exile.

I am tired of reporting on the same brutality every day, of thinking of new ways to describe the obvious. The situation in my neighbourhood of Sheikh Jarrah is not hard to understand. It is a perfect microcosm of settler colonialism, the reality that Palestinians across 70 years of Zionist rule have experienced. This vocabulary is not theoretical. It is evident in the attempts to throw us out of our homes so that settlers can occupy them, with the backing of a regime whose forces and policies provide violent support for the transfer of one population in order to install another. I do not care whom this terminology offends. “Colonial” is the correct way to refer to a State whose forces collude in the violence of settlers; whose Government works with settler organizations; whose judicial system uses expansionist laws to claim our homes; whose nation-State law enshrines “Jewish settlement” as a “national value ... to encourage and promote”. The appetite for Palestinian lands without Palestinians has not abated for more than seven decades. I know that because I live it. I have no faith in the Israeli judicial system. It is a part of the settler-colonial State, built by settlers for settlers. Nor do I expect any of the international Governments that have been deeply complicit in the Israeli colonial enterprise to intervene on our behalf. But I do have faith in people around the world — in the citizens of the States represented here — who protest and pressure Governments to end what is essentially unconditional support for Israeli policies of ethnic cleansing.

Impunity and war crimes will not be stopped by statements of condemnation and raised eyebrows. They will not be stopped by tweets of concern. We have repeatedly articulated what kind of transformative political measures must be taken. They are boycotts and State-level sanctions. The problem, again, is not ignorance, it is inaction. The United States has vetoed more than 53 Security Council resolutions critical of Israel. In fact, more than half of the United States’ vetoes have been in support of Israel. How long must we offer Israel impunity for its occupation? Negotiations are not going to bring about peace. Ending impunity will.

When we reflect on history’s most horrible and most inhumane atrocities today, we think of them with so much moral clarity — so much moral clarity that we tend to forget that when those atrocities were happening, they were perfectly legal. Not only perfectly

legal, but at the time that they were happening, all of them were controversial and contested. They were too complex. People talked with neutral language, as we do today. We all think that had it been us there back then at that point in time, we would have been on the right side of history. We have the opportunity today to be on the right side of history. I am asking everyone here to be brave. The question of Palestine cannot be resolved without a freed Palestine.

I know that the occupation will end. Like all injustices, it will end. It must. All empires will fall. The Palestinian cause will erupt victorious. I know this. I know that people will look back at the reality we are living through today with so much moral clarity. One day there will be museums honouring us, memorials in our remembrance and statues built in our names. People will stand on our lands and acknowledge the suffering that happened in them. I just hope that such recognition, recourse and reparations happen while Palestinians are still here. We deserve justice and liberation within our lifetime. We deserve our land back.

**The Chair:** I thank Mr. Mohammed El-Kurd warmly for his very strong and insightful statement, which depicts the plight of the Palestinian people very eloquently as well as the need to keep the faith and to stay resolute in the work of realizing the rights of the Palestinian people. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all civil-society organizations active on the question of Palestine throughout the world for their valuable work in support of and in solidarity with the Palestinian people. The Committee vows to continue working with Palestinian and other civil-society organizations to fulfil the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. Once again, I thank Mr. El-Kurd.

We are now concluding the first part of our meeting. I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly, the President of the Security Council and the Chef de Cabinet for their contributions to this important meeting in expression of solidarity with the Palestinian people.

Let me now move to the second part of the meeting. I would now like to introduce the intergovernmental organizations that have supported the Palestinian cause and that over the years have chosen to participate in this special meeting to express their solidarity. We will hear representatives of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied

Territories, the African Union, the League of Arab States, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries. Because of logistical limitations related to the coronavirus disease, I will ask the representatives of those intergovernmental organizations to deliver their statements from their seats.

I would now like to give the floor to Mr. Peter Mohan Maithri Pieris, Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka, to speak as the Chair of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories.

**Mr. Pieris (Sri Lanka):** I would like to thank you, Mr. Chair, for the kind invitation extended to me to address today's special meeting in observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people in my capacity as the Chair of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories.

This date, 29 November, has much significance for the Palestinian people and for all of us. Resolution 181 (II) was adopted on 29 November 1947 with much hope and expectations of peace. Regrettably, 74 years later we have yet to witness a resolution of the question of Palestine. This special meeting to mark the Day of Solidarity, which we have observed for 44 years, remains a stark reminder of the urgent need to find a just and peaceful solution for the Palestinian people, who have been deprived of their inalienable right to an independent, sovereign and united State of Palestine.

Last month the Special Committee presented its fifty-third report (A/76/360), pursuant to General Assembly resolution 75/96. Due to the constraints imposed by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the Committee was not able to conduct its annual consultations with Member States in Geneva or undertake its annual mission to the region. The Committee, like most of the United Nations entities and bodies, therefore resorted to holding online meetings.

The main areas of concern highlighted by the Committee relate to the escalation of hostilities in Gaza in May, the humanitarian situation and the blockade in Gaza, freedom of expression in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, demolitions and forcible evictions, the expansion of settlements and settler violence, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Palestinian rights, the situation of Palestinian

refugees and the situation of human rights in the occupied Syrian Golan.

According to the World Health Organization, as of 27 July there had been a total of 345,030 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip, as well as 3,877 deaths, since the outbreak of the pandemic. Based on the information received, the occupation has weakened health facilities and made the occupied Palestinian territory a vulnerable place where the pandemic could thrive. Data received from the Palestinian Ministry of Health indicated that in the Gaza Strip only 22 per cent of the primary care facilities remained open throughout the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. As of 31 August, only 16 per cent of Palestinians eligible for vaccination had received two doses. On 25 March the Committee issued a press statement raising concerns about reports that Israel had failed to fulfil its international legal responsibility and obligation to ensure the vaccination of the Palestinian population in the occupied Palestinian territory. Those concerns were raised in consequence of reports received indicating that Israel had been donating surplus COVID-19 vaccines overseas while Palestinians remained largely unvaccinated.

The COVID-19 pandemic continued to have a substantial impact on women and girls during the reporting period, as helplines for survivors of gender-based violence reported a 70 per cent increase in calls received. Experts have attributed the increase in part to financial pressures and the restrictions on movement resulting from COVID-19. Pandemic-related restrictions in the occupied Palestinian territory have exacerbated domestic violence, sexual abuse, forced marriage and other domestic burdens on women, including the support they provide to children through online education.

The Committee will appreciate that the right to water, sanitation and hygiene is particularly critical during the COVID-19 pandemic. During the reporting period, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs documented the demolition by Israeli authorities of 93 physical structures and facilities providing water, sanitation and hygiene in the West Bank. The contamination of more than 90 per cent of the drinkable water in Gaza severely impaired the work of hospitals even before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. I would like to acknowledge the work done by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in providing care

and delivering vital human development services and emergency assistance to Palestinian refugees since 1950. The Special Committee was informed that more than 5.7 million Palestinian refugees are registered with UNRWA, while the Agency's funding gaps are growing annually, threatening its ability to deliver essential services.

When we adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we pledged to leave no one behind. Does that not include the Palestinian people, I ask? With the onset of the pandemic, we are working hard to achieve our commitments under the Sustainable Development Goals, but regrettably sustainable development remains an extremely elusive goal for Palestine. We must act swiftly and earnestly to call for much-desired change. We must foster conditions where genuine negotiations are possible and both parties to the conflict actively create an environment necessary to facilitate peace. We must support and encourage mutual confidence-building on both sides in support of efforts to resume dialogue and substantive negotiations. The exceptional solidarity that we are witnessing today validates the support of the international community for the resilience and strength of the Palestinian people over the years, which should reinforce our collective efforts to end their suffering. We reiterate our support for the relevant General Assembly resolutions and their implementation regarding the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to statehood and the attainment of a two-State solution based on the 1967 borders.

As Chair of the Special Committee, I reaffirm its steadfast support to the Palestinian people as they endeavour to achieve their legitimate rights, and we pray — we really pray — for wisdom and prudence to prevail over the considerable challenges facing both parties.

**The Chair:** I thank the representative of Sri Lanka for his important statement. We appreciate the Special Committee's continued contribution to resolving the question of Palestine as well as the active participation of Mr. Pieris's country in our Committee's activities.

I now have the pleasure to give the floor to Ms. Fatima Kyari Mohammed, Permanent Observer of the African Union, who will read a message from Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chair of the African Union Commission.

**Ms. Mohammed** (African Union): It gives me great pleasure to be with you today, and I thank the

Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for the kind invitation to attend this special meeting and to deliver a message on behalf of His Excellency Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the African Union Commission, who unfortunately could not be here today.

“The annual observance is an opportunity for the African Union to renew its shared solidarity with the people of Palestine. We continue to recognize and salute the valour and resolve of the Palestinian people in their struggle against occupation and in support of their legitimate desire for the establishment of an independent Palestinian State, a land where they can be free and live in peace; a land where women and children can live their daily lives without the fear of the unknown; a land where youth can thrive and society can become whole again.

“This year in particular the Palestinian people have endured many hardships that have resulted in devastating human and material destruction, setting back the already fragile development of vulnerable communities. We watched as violence escalated between brothers while the casualties of the confrontation continued to be those who are most innocent and most defenceless. Incessant attacks on and violations of the human rights of innocent people under any guise are condemnable, and the international community should fully assume its responsibility for protecting innocent citizens by urging those responsible to comply with international law.

“At the African Union we continue to call for the implementation of all the Security Council resolutions on Palestine adopted since 1947, including resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 2334 (2016), on ending all armed conflicts and the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories and upholding the human rights of Palestinian refugees and prisoners to humanitarian assistance, as well as those recognizing that Israel's establishment of settlements in Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, has no legal validity and constitutes a flagrant violation under international law.

“The conflict between the two States has been a cause of great concern for the international community. Various regional and international



actors have taken part in the quest for a lasting peace between the two nations. While noting that a lasting solution is required to ensure that the two nations can coexist in order to allow their people to live in a state of peace and stability, we must re-emphasize that the path to long-lasting peace and stability requires that the peace process and the solutions sought must not only be acceptable but must guarantee the rights of all parties.

“In the almost 60-year history of Africa’s continental organization, from its formation as the Organization of African Unity and its relaunch as the African Union, the Union has been very clear on its position on the issue of Palestine and Israel. A two-State solution is essential to peaceful coexistence. We also recall the Declaration adopted by the Heads of State and Government of the African Union that among other things called on member States of the African Union that have recognized and are maintaining relations with the State of Israel to openly declare that their recognition was based on the 1967 borders, reiterate their recognition of the State of Palestine within those borders, refrain from any action that could undermine the basis of a final two-State solution and urge member States to take into account, in any cooperation with the State of Israel, that such cooperation does not support the Israeli occupation at the expense of African support for the Palestinian cause, in line with the noble ideals and the noble foundation on which the African Union is established, the first of which is the right of peoples to self-determination.

“The message is clear, and we must find a way to go beyond declarations and put our words into action while we urge for dialogue and negotiations for a peaceful resolution of the conflict. Let us continue to promote a message of peace and urge all the parties involved in this conflict to desist from unilateral policies, actions and provocations that could exacerbate the security situation and the tense atmosphere in the Middle East. All parties must recognize that there is no military solution to this long-lasting conflict. A just, peaceful and lasting solution to the conflict can be achieved only through established principles based on the existence of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and harmony within the framework of the relevant United Nations resolutions.

“Finally, I would like to conclude by reiterating our commitment to working jointly with the international community to support the achievement of a peaceful settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. We must recognize that progress cannot be made if both parties do not agree on a way forward together based on the relevant United Nations resolutions, international law and joint agreements. That is the only way that the two States can look to a future where both sides can live in peace and stability.”

**The Chair:** I thank Ms. Fatima Kyari Mohammed for her powerful statement on behalf of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, as well as for her personal attention and dedication to the question of Palestine.

I now have the pleasure to give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Maged Abdelaziz, Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States to the United Nations, who will be reading out a message from Mr. Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States.

**Mr. Abdelaziz** (League of Arab States) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is my honour to read out a statement by His Excellency Mr. Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

“I convey my greetings to all present on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, which the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People commemorates every year in order to reiterate our commitment to the Palestinian people and their just cause, as well as to reaffirm our full support for their legitimate and inalienable rights, foremost of which is their right to self-determination and the establishment of an independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital.

“On this day we stand in respect and appreciation for the will and struggle of this resilient people and send them a message of solidarity and hope. Recent developments have made the world more aware of the legitimate struggle of the Palestinian people and of the circumstances surrounding the racist occupation that they confront courageously and untiringly in their steadfast belief in their just cause. As a result of that struggle, we have heard for the first time phrases such as “racial segregation” and “forced displacement” used repeatedly in the

international media and various forums to refer to the horrors taking place in occupied Palestine, whether in East Jerusalem, Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan or other Palestinian neighbourhoods, as well as occupied Gaza. In May, a destructive military campaign was launched against Gaza, resulting in the martyrdom of 259 Palestinians, including 66 children. The *New York Times* published photos of those horrors on its front page.

“The population of Gaza continues to suffer from an inhuman and unjust Israeli siege. We are confronting an Israeli Government that incarnates the most racist and brutal aspects of right-wing concepts. It does not believe in a two-State solution or the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. Its main programme is aimed at expanding settlements, promoting Judaization and oppressing and torturing Palestinians. Unfortunately, the overwhelming international support for a two-State solution as the only basis for a final settlement has been unable to be translated into a negotiated, tangible reality between the Palestinian and Israeli parties. The Israeli Government has therefore been left free to impose its notions of right-wing extremism and ideological intransigence.

“A policy that blocks the way for Palestinians who want peace and peaceful coexistence will have serious repercussions for the future of this region and the opportunities there for lasting peace and stability. The belief that the status quo can last for ever is an illusion. The opportunity to achieve a two-State solution will not last forever, especially considering that the grounds for such a solution are being eroded. The occupation authorities undermine them on a daily basis by chipping away at the land and Judaizing it. The occupying Power will end up putting itself in a major ethical and existential impasse whose seriousness it does not understand.

“It is high time to move from conflict management and temporary solutions to a final settlement and a lasting solution. Here I would like to commend the words of President Mahmoud Abbas of the State of Palestine in his address to the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session (see A/76/PV.12). He reiterated the importance of achieving peace through a road map, which if ignored will have repercussions that we have warned

the world about. His significant statement made clear the international community’s responsibility for implementing the resolutions of international legitimacy and saving the opportunity that remains to achieve a two-State solution.

“We urge the international community to provide every possible support in enabling the Quartet to regain its pioneer role and carry out its task regarding this cause, which is linked to international peace and security. We call for an international peace conference that can embody the international resolve and global conscience rejecting humankind’s last colonial regime, leading to an end to the Israeli occupation and establishing an independent and sovereign Palestinian State within the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in line with the established international terms of reference, United Nations resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative.

“The League of Arab States expresses its appreciation to all the free peoples of the world standing in solidarity with the Palestinian people and supporting their just cause. We pay tribute to the struggling Palestinian people, wherever they are and especially in the occupied Palestinian territories, for their resilience and steadfast resolve, as well as for standing up courageously in the face of occupation, aggression and terrorism. The just Palestinian cause will remain a cause of all the free peoples of the world until the Palestinian people’s freedom and independence are restored.”

**The Chair:** I thank Mr. Abdelaziz for his important statement on behalf of the League of Arab States, which is an active partner of our Committee.

I now give the floor to Mr. Agshin Mehdiyev, Permanent Observer of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to the United Nations, who will be reading out a message from Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

**Mr. Mehdiyev** (Organization of Islamic Cooperation): I am delivering this statement on behalf of Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

“At the outset, I am pleased to express my deep and sincere gratitude to the United Nations and its

organs, particularly the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the members of its Bureau, for their effective efforts and initiatives in support of the Palestinian cause and the promotion of international solidarity with the Palestinian people in their struggle to recover their legitimate rights.

“This year our observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People comes at a critical juncture for the Palestinian cause, given the continued practices of Israel, the occupying Power, designed to perpetuate its colonial occupation of Palestinian land through its policies, which are based on aggression, forced displacement, ethnic cleansing, settlements, Judaization, the confiscation of land and destruction of property and the denial of the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people. Today I reiterate the OIC’s rejection and condemnation of Israel’s occupation measures and illegal practices aimed at imposing new facts on the ground, altering the demographic character of the occupied city of Al-Quds Al-Sharif, obliterating Arab and Islamic identities, expelling Palestinian citizens from their homes in the neighbourhoods of Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan, desecrating sacred sites, violating freedom of worship in them and attempting to isolate the city of Al-Quds Al-Sharif from its Palestinian surroundings. It is therefore vital to put an end to those Israeli practices, which constitute a flagrant violation of the resolutions of international legitimacy, fuelling violence, extremism and racism and igniting a religious conflict with unpredictable repercussions.

“In the same context, I would also like to emphasize that the principle of State sovereignty should not be a pretext for Israel to consolidate its colonial occupation and legitimize its policies, which violate international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolution 2334 (2016). In that regard, we call on States that have opened their diplomatic or consular missions in Al-Quds Al-Sharif, or have moved them there, to respect their obligations and align their positions with the provisions of international law and resolutions of international legality regarding the city.

“Israel, the occupying Power, continues to defy the will of the international community by

implementing its policy of building and expanding settlements in the Palestinian territories occupied in 1967. It has thereby undermined and continues to undermine efforts and opportunities to achieve peace and the possibility of implementing the vision of a two-State solution. Furthermore, its conduct constitutes a flagrant violation of international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions. The plight of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli detention centres continues to be an issue of the denial of justice and a crime embodied in the heinous, inhuman and unjust practices committed by the Israeli occupation against Palestinian prisoners. I would like to emphasize in that regard that the continued impunity of Israel, the occupying Power, has entrenched the absence of justice and emboldened Israel to commit more documented crimes and violations of the rights of the Palestinian people. In that regard I call on the United Nations to assume its responsibilities in holding Israel accountable for its crimes and continued violations of international law and ending its occupation of Palestinian land.

“While today we renew our call to the States of the world that have not yet recognized the State of Palestine to do so promptly as a contribution to achieving peace, we also stress the need for engaging the international community, in particular the Middle East Quartet, and sponsoring a political solution based on the agreed terms of reference, including the principles of international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

“In conclusion, we renew the OIC’s support and solidarity with the Palestinian people in their quest to restore their inalienable national rights, including the right to self-determination and the establishment of an independent State based on the 1967 borders, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, and to find a just solution to the issue of Palestinian refugees, in accordance with United Nations resolution 194 (III).”

**The Chair:** I thank Mr. Mehdiyev for his statement, and I would like to emphasize the Committee’s appreciation for his important message, for the strong support of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) for our Committee’s activities and for the excellent spirit of collaboration and cooperation between the OIC and the Committee on the question of Palestine.

I now give the floor to Mr. Yashar Aliyev, Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations, who will make a statement on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

**Mr. Aliyev (Azerbaijan):** I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (NAM). In this solemn observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the Non-Aligned Movement reaffirms its unwavering solidarity with the Palestinian people and its support for their inalienable human rights, including self-determination and independence. We renew our abiding commitment to the efforts to achieve a fair and lasting solution to the question of Palestine and genuine peace and security in the Middle East, on a basis of international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

The Non-Aligned Movement reaffirms its appreciation to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and to the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat of the United Nations for their important work and valued assistance in that regard, in line with their General Assembly mandates. Similarly, the Movement once again commends the efforts of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in providing essential humanitarian development and emergency assistance and protection to the 5.7 million Palestinian refugees in all its fields of operation. We also sincerely appreciate all of the United Nations agencies with special programmes providing needed support to the Palestinian people, including women and children. In the light of the grave financial situation that UNRWA is currently facing, the Non-Aligned Movement reiterates its appeal to all States to provide predictable and sufficient financial support to ensure the continuity of UNRWA's vital assistance programmes at a time of increasing need and in view of the tangible contribution it makes to regional stability.

Regrettably, this year we marked the fifty-fourth anniversary of the illegal Israeli military occupation in 1967 of the Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem and other Arab territories. This year is also the seventy-fifth anniversary of the General Assembly's adoption of resolution 181 (II), the mandate to partition Palestine, and in May we saw the seventy-third anniversary of the tragic Nakba that befell the Palestinian people in 1948. Those solemn occasions

prompt the Non-Aligned Movement to reiterate its long-standing calls for intensifying all the efforts needed to bring an end to this injustice and advance a peaceful and just solution. The international community is called on to act forthwith to uphold its responsibilities and obligations regarding the Palestinian question until it is justly resolved.

In October 2019 the Ministerial Committee of the Non-Aligned Movement on Palestine convened in Baku to review the latest developments in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. Regrettably, the situation there remains critical and unsustainable. The Ministers underscored their deep regret that the Palestinian people continue to suffer under Israel's brutal military occupation, blockade and oppression and to be deprived of their fundamental human rights. Those rights are being deliberately and systematically violated by the occupying Power as it continues its settlement colonization of the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and its collective punishment of defenceless and innocent Palestinian children, women and men. It continues to perpetrate grave human rights violations, many of which may amount to war crimes. That is causing deep trauma and suffering among the Palestinian civilian population, especially in the Gaza Strip, where the humanitarian situation is dire and becoming untenable and unliveable. In its unanimously adopted political declaration, among other things the Ministerial Committee renewed the Movement's call for a cessation of all those violations of international law, including humanitarian and human rights law, as well as for compliance with international law and all the relevant United Nations resolutions. The Ministerial Committee also reaffirmed its abiding solidarity with the Palestinian people and its unwavering support for their inalienable rights and just cause.

NAM stresses that a just, lasting and comprehensive solution to the question of Palestine remains a permanent responsibility of the United Nations until it is justly and satisfactorily resolved in all its aspects. The Movement emphasizes the need for the urgent mobilization of multilateral efforts to advance a credible political horizon and a just solution on a basis of international law, as well as for efforts to alleviate the humanitarian and socioeconomic hardships that the people of Palestine are enduring.

On this day the Movement is compelled to express its deep regret that despite decades of the Palestinian



people's participation in peace efforts in good faith, their proven commitment to a two-State solution for peace, their adherence to international law and the painful compromises they have made, the fact is that their plight has worsened and a just solution remains elusive. As the Security Council remains paralysed on this issue, in spite of its duties under the Charter of the United Nations, the situation only continues to deteriorate and is becoming increasingly destabilized. That must be a cause of great concern for the international community and should prompt urgent action to hold Israel accountable for its violations and to bring them to a halt, including all illegal settlement and annexation activities in all parts of the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. That is the only action that can salvage the prospects for peace, put an end to the Israeli occupation and realize a two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid principles and the Arab Peace Initiative. All the relevant Security Council resolutions and the obligations under international law, including the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention and humanitarian and human rights law, must be implemented.

Today the Non-Aligned Movement also reiterates its demand for a full and immediate lifting of Israel's illegal blockade of the Gaza Strip, which continues to severely impair all aspects of the Palestinian civilian population's life in Gaza, imposing a dire humanitarian crisis on them that is being further exacerbated by the current coronavirus disease pandemic and that constitutes a massive collective punishment. We also reiterate our grave concern about the lack of accountability for Israel's countless violations, including the killing and injury of innocent and defenceless Palestinian civilians, among them children and women. That lack of accountability continues to fuel a culture of impunity and destabilizes the situation on the ground, while diminishing the prospects for peace. Urgent action is required from the international community to address those grave violations and bring an end to this unjust situation.

The solidarity of the international community with the just Palestinian cause must be directed to all the relevant efforts and support for the realization of the rights of the Palestinian people and the independence and sovereignty of the State of Palestine in all of the Palestinian territory occupied by Israel in 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the

relevant resolutions and in support of the admission of Palestine to the United Nations as a full Member State.

In conclusion, on this important day the Non-Aligned Movement reiterates its unwavering commitment to a just, lasting, comprehensive and peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which is at the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict. That peaceful solution remains a long-standing objective of the Movement. In that regard the Non-Aligned Movement today reaffirms its unwavering commitment to the restoration of the inalienable right of the heroic Palestinian people to self-determination, including the right to independence, a democratic and viable State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital, and a just solution to the plight of Palestinian refugees on the basis of General Assembly resolution 194 (III), the pillars of a just and lasting peace.

**The Chair:** I thank Mr. Aliyev for the very important message of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and through him I would like to reiterate our appreciation for the unwavering support of the Movement to the cause of the Palestinian people.

It is now my honour to announce that our Committee has received messages of support and solidarity from many Heads of State and Government, Ministers for Foreign Affairs, Governments and organizations. I would like to read out the list of the officials who have sent them, in the order in which they were received.

We have received messages from the Heads of State of the following countries: the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Senegal, Egypt, China, Nicaragua, Viet Nam, Morocco, Jordan, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Turkey, Lebanon, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Brunei Darussalam, the Maldives and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

We have received messages from the Heads of Government of the following countries: India, Thailand, Malta, Japan, South Africa, Bangladesh and Malaysia.

The Committee has also received messages from the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the following countries: Kazakhstan, the Philippines, Cuba, the Syrian Arab Republic, Argentina, Bahrain, the Plurinational State of Bolivia and Saudi Arabia.

We have received messages from the following Governments: Algeria, Guyana and Namibia.

The Committee has also received messages from the following intergovernmental organizations: the European Union and the League of Arab States.

All the messages of solidarity received will be posted on the website on the question of Palestine maintained by the Division for Palestinian Rights, [unispal.un.org](http://unispal.un.org). The list will be duly updated as new messages are received, including from civil-society organizations.

On behalf of the Committee, I would like to express our sincere appreciation to the Heads of State and Government, Ministers for Foreign Affairs, Governments and organizations that I have just mentioned, and to all participants for their persistent efforts through the 54 years of the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territory to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine, and for the support they have always given to the mandated activities of the Committee.

Before adjourning this special meeting, I would like to thank everyone who has made it possible, in particular the staff of the Division for Palestinian Rights of the

Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, the Department of Public Information and the Office of Central Support Services, the interpreters and everyone who worked behind the scenes.

On 1 December at 10 a.m., the General Assembly will begin its debate on the agenda item entitled “Question of Palestine”, during which Mr. Neville Gertze, Permanent Representative of Namibia and Vice-Chair of the Committee, will introduce this year’s draft resolution under this agenda item (A/76/L.14) and present the annual report of the Committee for 2021 (A/76/35). Member States may recall that other annual resolutions have been biennialized and will not be voted on until the seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly. We strongly encourage Member States to attend and provide support, with the traditional overwhelming majority, to the only draft resolution, entitled “Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine”, to be considered on the afternoon of 1 December and introduced by my friend Mr. Gertze.

*The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.*