



# Security Council

Seventy-eighth year

**9246**<sup>th</sup> meeting

Wednesday, 18 January 2023, 3 p.m.

New York

*Provisional*

*President:* Mr. Ishikane . . . . . (Japan)

*Members:*

Albania . . . . .	Mr. Stastoli
Brazil . . . . .	Mrs. Espeschit Maia
China . . . . .	Mr. Tian Bingxu
Ecuador . . . . .	Mr. Montalvo Sosa
France . . . . .	Mrs. Morghad
Gabon . . . . .	Ms. Bouanga Ayoune
Ghana . . . . .	Mr. Nyarku
Malta . . . . .	Mr. Camilleri
Mozambique . . . . .	Mr. Irachande Gouveia
Russian Federation . . . . .	Mr. Glukhov
Switzerland . . . . .	Mr. Hauri
United Arab Emirates . . . . .	Mr. Almazrouei
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . . . . .	Mr. Gibbon
United States of America . . . . .	Ms. Postel

## Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (<http://documents.un.org>).



*The meeting resumed at 3 p.m.*

**The President:** I would like to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than three minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Flashing lights on the collars of the microphones will prompt speakers to bring their remarks to a close after three minutes.

I now give the floor to the representative of Tunisia.

**Mr. Ladeb** (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to sincerely congratulate you, Mr. President, on Japan's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month and to wish you every success. I thank the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Mr. Tor Wennesland, for his valuable briefing. I would also like to express our appreciation for the efforts of the Secretary-General to revive the Middle East peace process.

The occupying Power continues its disregard for international law and Security Council resolutions through its measures of imposing, de facto on the ground, its settlement policy, the forced displacement of Palestinians and the confiscation of their homes and land, while trying to change the historical, demographic and legal status of the city of Jerusalem. Tunisia categorically condemns and rejects those practices and the repeated violations of the holy sites in Jerusalem. We also call for preserving the status quo of Al-Haram Al-Sharif, and we reiterate the primacy of the Hashemite custodianship over the holy sites of Muslims and Christians in Jerusalem. We furthermore call on the international community to assume its legal and historical responsibilities related to supporting the Palestinian people and acting swiftly and effectively to provide them with protection and to decisively address Israel's provocative practices, such as the storming of Al-Haram Al-Sharif courtyard by the Minister of National Security. Such practices threaten to further destabilize the region and prolong the cycle of violence.

The occupying Power's persistence in collectively punishing the Palestinian people once again reflects its efforts to evade its commitments under international law and international humanitarian law. In that context, we express our rejection and condemnation of the Israeli Government's decision to impose further collective punitive measures on the Palestinians and their leadership and civil society following the adoption of General Assembly resolution 77/247, which requested

the International Court of Justice to render an advisory opinion. We reaffirm the Palestinians' right to resort to United Nations entities.

The impasse in the peace process, the continued deteriorating situation in the occupied Palestinian territories and the limited international response to addressing the repeated cycles of violence without focusing on their root cause — namely, the occupation — will lead only to further escalation and complications in the region and will increase the suffering of the Palestinian people. In that regard, we reaffirm that security and stability in the Middle East must be achieved through a fair, comprehensive and lasting solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, based on international law and United Nations resolutions. Accordingly, we call for urgent and immediate action to explore ways to launch meaningful and effective negotiations within a specific time frame in order to reach a lasting, comprehensive and fair settlement in the Middle East based on resolutions of international legitimacy.

In conclusion, Tunisia reiterates its firm and principled support for the Palestinians' rights, above all their right to self-determination, ending the occupation and the establishment of their own independent sovereign State along the 4 June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Saudi Arabia.

**Mr. Alwasil** (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to begin by thanking Japan for convening this important debate. I also thank Mr. Tor Wennesland, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, for his valuable briefing. We appreciate his pivotal role and constructive efforts in that regard.

This meeting is being held in the context of the sensitive and critical situation faced by the brotherly Palestinian people and the entire region as a result of the continued actions taken by the Israeli occupying Power against the unarmed Palestinian people, who have suffered for decades from the consequences of the Israeli occupation of their territories. The Israeli occupying Power continues its daily aggression against the Palestinian people and their holy sites and property, the most recent of which was the provocative act of storming the Al-Aqsa Mosque complex, which has enraged Muslims around the world and which the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has condemned in the strongest

terms. That was a clear violation of all international laws and norms. In addition, acts of aggression by extremist settlers have been directed against unarmed Palestinians, while at the same time hate and discriminatory speech continues with disregard for human values, international law and relevant international resolutions. That represents a challenge for the international community, as long as the aggression against the occupied Palestinian territories continues.

Such Israeli measures will necessarily lead to undermining the possibility for peace in the Middle East. A lasting and just peace will be achieved only through a two-State solution, not through continued settlement activities, displacements and confiscations of property. Peace and security will be achieved for all through a two-State solution, based on the establishment of an independent sovereign Palestinian State within the 4 June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with international and Security Council resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative, which the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia introduced in 2002.

We therefore call on the Security Council once again to shoulder its responsibilities and implement its resolutions to end all unilateral, illegal and provocative measures; all continued Israeli violations related to the building and expanding of Israel's illegal settlements; the targeting of Palestinian residents in Jerusalem; attempts to alter the legal and demographic status of Jerusalem; and the special measures taken against Muslim holy sites in order to place them under Israeli control. We urgently call for international protection for the Palestinian people in line with the proposals of the Secretary-General, which the General Assembly has endorsed. The Israeli Government must immediately reverse its unilateral punitive measures against the Palestinian people, their leadership and civil society following the adoption of General Assembly resolution 77/247, which requests the International Court of Justice to render an advisory opinion.

In conclusion, we call on the newly elected Israeli Government to heed the calls for peace and act seriously to settle the conflict with the Palestinians. Resolving the conflict will serve the interests of the entire region, including Israel. We call on Israel to commit to meaningful negotiations in good faith in order to achieve peace on the basis of a two-State solution and to ensure stability in the region. We call for guaranteeing the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and reiterate

the need for the international community to address the conflict in a manner that fulfils all the legitimate rights of the brotherly Palestinian people.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Qatar.

**Mr. Al-Maawda (Qatar)** (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, let me thank you, Mr. President, for holding this important meeting. We also thank Mr. Tor Wennesland, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, for his thorough and comprehensive briefing.

This open debate on the Palestinian question is being held soon after the end of 2022, a year that saw an increase in violence and indiscriminate fatal attacks by Israeli forces and extremist settlers against Palestinian civilians, which resulted in the greatest number of fatalities and injured people in many years. Today's meeting is also taking place against the backdrop of continued escalation by the Israeli Government and about two weeks after the Minister of National Security, together with other Israeli occupying forces, stormed Al-Haram Al-Sharif. The State of Qatar has condemned and denounced that measure as a flagrant violation by the occupying Power of the Charter of the United Nations, international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions. It was a blatant attack against Palestinian rights and a provocation of Muslim sentiment around the world. The State of Qatar also strongly condemns and denounces any attempt to expand the Jewish character over the occupied city of Jerusalem and alter its Arab Muslim and Christian identity. We stress the need to respect the current legal and historical status of Al-Haram Al-Sharif in its entirety. We reject any attempt to partition it spatially or temporally. We also underline the Jordanian custodianship of the Muslim and Christian holy sites.

The continued escalation and provocation by the Israeli occupying Power shows a disregard for international law and international legitimacy and will lead to further escalation that threatens regional and international peace and security. That will also undermine international efforts to achieve the two-State solution, which represents the consensus of the international community and has been determined to be the only means to a settlement for the Palestinian question. The independent, contiguous and viable Palestinian State must be established along 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital, in line with relevant Security Council resolutions and the Arab Peace

Initiative. Similarly, the Israeli occupation of Arab territories, including the Syrian Golan, and Lebanese land must end. Immediate and complete settlement activities must end. And the Palestinian people must achieve their legitimate rights, foremost of which their right to self-determination and the return of refugees.

We must undertake everything possible to change the situation on the ground, which will not lead to the two-State solution. The State of Qatar therefore calls for urgent action to end the Israeli aggression, provide protection for the Palestinian people and get Israel to commit to ending its settlement policies and annexation of land and to implement the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, including resolution 2334 (2016), which calls for an end both to violence against civilians and settlement activity, as well as for supporting dispute settlement based on the two-State solution.

Humanitarian and economic support for the Palestinian people must be provided within a political context that helps both sides to achieve progress towards a lasting, comprehensive and fair solution. The State of Qatar continues its efforts aimed at helping to improve the living conditions of the brotherly Palestinian people in cooperation with the United Nations, including a grant of nearly \$360 million in 2022 that was directed towards ensuring electricity in the Gaza Strip and providing financial assistance through salary disbursements to public-sector employees in Gaza, where more than 2 million people have effectively been living under an unjust siege for more than 15 years. That grant was in addition to our ongoing support for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, which provides support to millions of Palestinian refugees.

In conclusion, notwithstanding the grave incidents that happened last year and the beginning of this year, the State of Qatar is still hopeful that a comprehensive peace is possible, provided that there is a will and commitment.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Türkiye.

**Mrs. Özgür (Türkiye):** We thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's open debate and also thank Special Coordinator Wennesland for his briefing.

Today's meeting takes place at a critical juncture. The challenges facing the State of Palestine and the Palestinian people have grown immensely. We note with deep regret and concern that 2022 was the deadliest

year since the United Nations started recording civilian fatalities in the occupied Palestinian territory, in 2005. Israel's unilateral steps, namely, the expansion of illegal settlements, demolitions, forced evictions and increased loss of life in the occupied Palestinian territory, are serious cause for concern and continue to undermine the prospects for a two-State solution to the conflict. The international community cannot turn a blind eye to this alarming situation. The additional punitive measures by the Israeli officials against the Palestinian people and leadership do not help to solve any issues. We call on Israel to reconsider this policy.

Continuing violations against the sanctity and status of Al-Haram Al-Sharif, including the provocation earlier this month at Al-Aqsa Mosque, are unacceptable and add to the serious concerns about what lies ahead. Türkiye condemns this blatant act of violation. The status of Al-Haram Al-Sharif must remain above domestic political considerations.

The lack of interest by the international community in finding a just, lasting and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian question is deeply frustrating. The situation in the occupied territory is not sustainable, and it is also a major source of destabilization in the wider region. There cannot be lasting peace in the Middle East without an independent and sovereign State of Palestine on the basis of 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital. Until and unless Israel's unilateral acts come to an end, tension and imminent risk of escalation will continue to be present.

Ending the occupation is a prerequisite for, and key to, finding a solution. A genuine peace deal to end the occupation should be the objective for all parties concerned. Similarly, in order to contain tensions, the international community should collectively prioritize the preservation of the sanctity and status of Al-Haram Al-Sharif. In all those efforts, the Security Council and its members have a special responsibility that they cannot abdicate.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) plays a vital role in delivering on our joint responsibility as the international community to provide assistance to the Palestine refugees until a just solution is found to their problems. We welcome the General Assembly's renewal last month of the Agency's mandate until June 2026. Equally significant is to ensure the Agency's financial stability so that its lifeline services for millions of

Palestine refugees can continue. We strongly encourage everyone to provide generous financial support to UNRWA.

For its part, in 2022 Türkiye continued its annual contribution of \$10 million and provided 26 tons of flour as in-kind contribution. We also look forward to the Secretary-General's proposals for consideration by the relevant General Assembly committees at the Assembly's seventy-eighth session, with a view to a gradual increase in the United Nations regular budget allocation to the Agency.

Let me conclude by reiterating Türkiye's continued support for all efforts aimed at finding a comprehensive and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Türkiye's support for the Palestinian people reaching fulfilment of their long-delayed rights to live in their own sovereign and independent State is unwavering.

**The President:** I now give the floor to Mr. Abdelaziz.

**Mr. Abdelaziz** (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me to begin, Mr. President, by congratulating you and Japan on your election as a new non-permanent member of the Security Council and on presiding over the Council this month.

I also thank Mr. Tor Wennesland for his briefing today.

There is no doubt that the Palestinian situation is currently experiencing one of its worst phases, at the same time as international liquidity is constrained by multiple international crises and sudden changes in the political inclinations of the world's major Powers for reasons unrelated to our region. Such circumstances are negatively affecting prospects for achieving justice, enforcing the rule of law and ensuring accountability. That situation is also negatively affecting the credibility of the United Nations, especially the Security Council, as the organ mandated to uphold international legitimacy and maintain international peace and security.

Despite the legal foundations established by the Council and by the international community to address the Palestinian question on the basis of a two-State solution, including the principle of land for peace, the Oslo Accords, the Madrid terms of reference, the Arab Peace Initiative and resolution 2334 (2016), the initial statements made by the new extremist Israeli Government have shocked the international community. It has destroyed all prospects for achieving a just and comprehensive solution to the situation in the

Middle East, at the heart of which lies the Palestinian question, which is a central issue for the League of Arab States and the entire Arab world. The new Israeli Government has dashed all hopes for peace by asserting its intention to expand settlement activities in stark violation of resolution 2334 (2016), which will include forced displacement and the demolition of homes and communities and expulsion of refugees, in an effort to alter the historic and actual status quo on the ground and tighten Israeli control over all the occupied Palestinian territories. Such acts will effectively eliminate the prospects for a two-State solution and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital within the borders of 4 June 1967.

The League of Arab States, along with the rest of the world, was shocked by the recent grave Israeli violations in the occupied city of Jerusalem, in particular the storming of the Al-Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram Al-Sharif by a minister in the new Israeli Government on the morning of 3 January under the guard and protection of the occupying Power's military and police forces. That provocative step constituted a flagrant violation of international law, as well as of the historic and legal status quo in Jerusalem and its holy sites. It also demonstrates blatant disrespect for the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan's custodianship of the holy sites. The Arab Ministerial Committee mandated to address the illegal Israeli policies and measures in the occupied city of Jerusalem condemned those violations in the strongest terms. The Secretary-General of the League of Arab States also condemned them strongly, as did all stakeholders advocating peace, the two-State solution and a just and comprehensive settlement of the Palestinian question, including the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and other individual or groups of States from all over the world.

Despite the international calls addressed to the entire international community, particularly the Security Council, to deal with those violations through effective measures that would oblige the new Israeli Government, as the occupying Power, to adjust its course, reverse its aggressive policies and cease its attacks on the Palestinian people and its violations of international law and international humanitarian law — as well as to ensure that it does not take any additional provocative steps in Al-Quds Al-Sharif that would cause great distress to millions of Muslims

around the world and threaten security and stability in the region — the Security Council has failed to respond in any way to those violations. There was no response after the emergency meeting convened by the Japanese presidency at the request of the Arab League with a number of Council members on 5 January (see S/PV.9236), at which we witnessed a feverish attempt by the Israeli representative to distort the steadfast historical and legal facts. All of that has encouraged the extremist Israeli Government to adopt, the day after that meeting, further unjust punitive and provocative measures against the Palestinian people and their leadership, including by confiscating millions of dollars due to the Palestinian Authority, placing a ban on granting travel permits to senior officials of the Palestinian Authority and even prohibiting the raising of the Palestinian flag. As declared by the Israeli Government itself, the aim is to punish the Palestinian Authority for its political and legal resistance in resorting to the Security Council and in the recent adoption of a General Assembly resolution requesting that the International Court of Justice render an advisory opinion on the legality of the Israeli occupation of the State of Palestine (General Assembly resolution 77/247).

Israel's deliberate actions and wilful violation of the sanctity of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, as well as its frantic endeavour to alter the historic status quo in Jerusalem and its persistent arbitrary punishment of the Palestinian Authority, is considered by the League of Arab States as a punishment aimed against the entire United Nations system, including the Security Council, the General Assembly and the International Court of Justice itself. The League of Arab States also considers all of those actions as a sign of disrespect of the United Nations Charter, the international rules and values which underpin the multilateral international community and the democratic decision-making approach. Meanwhile, Israel claims falsely to be the biggest democracy in the region.

It is shameful and deplorable that Israel has committed all of those violations despite receiving repeated warnings, including the open letter from more than 300 American rabbis stating that the new Israeli Government's practices have caused irreparable damage to Israeli relations with the Jews in the diaspora, and the open letter from 100 Israeli ambassadors and former officials in the Israeli Foreign Ministry to Prime Minister Netanyahu in *Le Monde* newspaper on 9 January expressing their grave concern about

the new Government's practices, which constitute a flagrant violation of the democratic identity claimed by Israel. Those violations have proved that the Israeli Government is not, unfortunately, sincere in their claims. In Tel Aviv on 15 January, 80,000 Israelis protested against the plans of the extreme right-wing Government to introduce legal amendments that make it easier for the Parliament to cancel rulings issued by the Supreme Court, thereby undermining the independence of the judiciary and supporting corruption. It is clear that such amendments contradict the most basic values of democracy and accountability.

The League of Arab States aligns itself with the call made by the Secretary-General during the high-level open debate of the Security Council on the subject of the rule of law (see S/PV.9241). Respecting the rule of law when addressing the Palestinian question at the United Nations is inevitable, as is ensuring respect for the international legitimacy established in this Organization; justly and honestly implementing the two-State solution; and refraining from altering the situation on the ground through unilateral measures. Only negotiations between the Palestinian and Israeli sides can lead to a solution.

From that standpoint, the League of Arab States calls on the Security Council to assume its full responsibilities in defending international legitimacy and the rule of law and confronting the grave violations of the new Israeli Government in Al-Aqsa Mosque, while ensuring that they do not reoccur. We also call on all United Nations organs, including the General Assembly and the International Court of Justice, to fulfil the roles entrusted to them by the Charter in accordance with the rule of law, including by addressing the apartheid practiced by Israel in the occupied Palestinian territories based on the law of the Jewish State, which we reject legally and morally, along with other discriminatory measures against the Palestinian people who defend their land and the two-State solution established by General Assembly resolution 181 (II), which must remain the governing framework for all settlement efforts.

In conclusion, I reiterate the Arab League's warnings of the disastrous consequences of the continued absence of any political horizon for a peaceful settlement of the Palestinian question. We underscore the importance of reviving the role of the Middle East Quartet in order to prepare for convening the international peace conference that has long been called for by Palestinian

President Mahmoud Abbas before the Council and the General Assembly. It is necessary to launch an integrated negotiations process between the Palestinian and Israeli parties on all five final-status issues while maintaining the full commitment not to seek to alter the status quo on the ground in any way until a final political settlement is reached.

I also reiterate the commitment of the League of Arab States to ending the Israeli occupation of the occupied Syrian Arab Golan, in accordance with the relevant international terms of reference, and to maintaining regional peace and territorial integrity in Syria and Lebanon. The League of Arab States stands ready to work with the Security Council to achieve peace, security and stability in the Middle East.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

**Mr. Jalil Irvani** (Islamic Republic of Iran): Last year was a deadly year in the occupied Palestinian territory, as the Israeli regime's oppressive, expansionist and apartheid practices against Palestinians continued unabated. As a result, the Palestinian people, in particular women and children, have suffered severe deprivation and violations of their fundamental rights. Owing to the inhumane blockades, Gaza has become the world's largest open-air prison.

The Israeli regime's recent incursion into Al-Aqsa Mosque on 3 January violated the Mosque's sanctity and worship rites and was a brazen provocation of Muslim feelings. Such illegality and recklessness has serious consequences that should not be underestimated. If not addressed properly, it could further destabilize an already fragile situation, endangering regional and international peace and security.

For more than 70 years, the Israeli regime has committed such atrocities without being held accountable or facing any consequences. Apartheid is still in effect, and the occupation has not ended. In the meantime, the viability of establishing a Palestinian State is difficult and even meaningless owing to the Israeli regime's ongoing settlement activities, which are explicitly prohibited by international law and pertinent United Nations resolutions.

We believe that the conflict in the occupied Palestinian territory can be resolved only if the occupation is ended and the Palestinian people's inalienable right to self-determination is fully

recognized, upheld and protected. That will result in the full restoration of Palestinian sovereignty over the entire Palestinian territory. But as long as the Security Council remains silent, that is impossible to do. The Council's current position has done nothing except strengthen and encourage the Israeli regime to carry out its brutal occupation and crimes against the Palestinian people.

What threshold must the Israeli regime cross, as the Permanent Representative of Palestine rightly asked, for the Security Council to emerge from its hibernation and carry out its duties under the Charter of the United Nations? As we have repeatedly stated, if the international community, in particular the Security Council, remains entirely silent about the Israeli regime's ongoing aggressions, it will be encouraged to commit more atrocities and aggression.

The Security Council must act immediately and in a decisive manner to support the Palestinian people. Sympathy alone is not enough. All war crimes, acts of State terrorism and persistent violations of human rights committed against the Palestinian people by the Israeli regime must be held accountable and prosecuted. Those atrocities are well documented and irrefutable. Therefore, the Security Council is obligated to uphold its mandate to maintain international peace and security, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, and to hold the Israeli regime accountable for its crimes using the legal means at its disposal.

The Islamic Republic of Iran welcomes the General Assembly's request to the International Court of Justice in resolution 77/247, adopted on 30 December 2022, for an advisory opinion on the legal consequences of Israel's ongoing violation of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination, as well as its prolonged occupation, settlement and annexation of Palestinian territory. We believe that action could contribute to the liberation of all Palestinian territories.

The Islamic Republic of Iran recognizes as its duty the protection of the legitimate right of the Palestinian people to resist the oppression and violence of the apartheid regime, in accordance with their right to self-determination. That will continue to be our steadfast position until the end of the occupation.

Finally, in keeping with the Israeli regime's usual standard practice, the regime's representative again veered off the Council's topic of discussion and tried to abuse this Chamber by lying and falsely accusing

Iran of being responsible for the nefarious activities that the Israeli regime is committing in the region and elsewhere. Iran strongly denies such absurd claims. Those unfounded allegations have one clear objective: to deflect attention from the main issue, namely, the atrocities committed by the apartheid regime against the Palestinian people, as well as its systematic and deliberate violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in the Palestinian-occupied territories.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of South Africa.

**Mr. Mabhongo** (South Africa): We thank you, Sir, for convening this meeting.

Every year, month and day that the illegal Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands continues results in a more elusive peace. The monthly Security Council briefings present a bleaker picture month by month.

Since we last met (see S/PV.9236), the situation has become even more precarious for Palestinians. Increased settler violence, apartheid-like conditions, attacks on civilians, extrajudicial killings and attacks on holy sites are some of the examples of the worsening situation. Four children have been killed by the Israeli security forces this year and the first month of this year is not yet over.

That situation cannot be allowed to continue. If nothing is done, we will meet again in a month's time and lament even more violence and deaths. Is that why the United Nations was created — we ask ourselves — to receive reports on violations of human rights and international law, increased violence and civilians being killed without attempting to say or do anything?

The international community has acknowledged that the only solution to the Palestinian-Israeli matter is a two-State solution whereby Palestinians and Israelis live side by side. That has been the consistent United Nations approach since the General Assembly adopted resolution 181 (II) in 1947. Yet today Palestinians continue to live under occupation and be deprived of their right to self-determination. We cannot sit in this Chamber and lament the non-implementation of United Nations resolutions if we continue to condone the non-implementation of resolutions adopted 75 years ago. Let us be clear: the continued occupation perpetuates violence and increases violations of Palestinian rights. It is also disconcerting that sacred, holy sites

have again become proxy grounds for incitement and provocation. Those actions distance us further from a two-State solution.

As the international community, we must be resolute in upholding international law, international humanitarian law and international human rights law in order to ensure the maintenance of peace and security. General Assembly resolution 77/247, which was adopted a few weeks ago, in accordance with Article 96 of the Charter of the United Nations, requests the International Court of Justice to render an advisory opinion on the legal consequences arising from Israel's ongoing violation of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, from its prolonged occupation, settlement and annexation of the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including measures aimed at altering the demographic composition, character and status of the Holy City of Jerusalem, and from its adoption of related discriminatory legislation and measures.

In conclusion, South Africa will continue to advocate for a solution premised on a just settlement with just laws that are rights-based. We, as the international community, must seek a solution that facilitates equality and equity for all who have the right to live in the territories of Israel and Palestine. In the absence of that, security, dignity and prosperity will not be achieved.

**The President:** I now give the floor the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

**Mr. Sabbagh** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): At a time when the world was celebrating the New Year and looking forward to a year in which crises will be fewer and peace, prosperity and stability will prevail, the Israeli occupation authorities have undermined the aspirations of our Arab people in Palestine and Syria by adding new attacks to their full record of acts of aggression and violations of international law and the Charter of the United Nations. That proves one thing only, which is that Israel continues to escalate its aggression, and that it is undermining peace and security in the Middle East region.

On 2 January, the Israeli occupation forces committed another act of aggression against Syria's sovereignty by targeting the Damascus International Airport with a barrage of missiles, which led to people martyred and injured, caused material losses and led the airport to be out of service for some time.



On 3 January, the Minister of National Security of the Israeli occupation authorities carried out a provocative and escalatory act by storming the courtyard of Al-Quds Al-Sharif, disgracing an Islamic holy site without respect for the feelings of Palestinians and Muslims around the world and ignoring the repercussions of that act at various levels.

The Israeli occupation authorities also announced collective punitive measures against the Palestinian people after the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 77/247, by which it rightfully requests an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice on the legal consequences arising from Israel's continued violation of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and on how the policies and practices of Israel affect the legal status of the occupation.

The Syrian Arab Republic condemns in the strongest terms all the violent incursions by the Israeli occupation entity and considers those provocative practices part of its systematic and aggressive policy of occupation. Syria holds the Israeli entity and the countries that support it fully responsible for the ongoing escalation and its repercussions. We call upon the United Nations to condemn those violations, work to stop them and ensure that they do not recur, as well as to implement the resolutions of international legitimacy related to the Palestinian question in order to enable the Palestinians to enjoy their legitimate and inalienable national rights to establish an independent State, with Jerusalem as its capital.

Syria also condemns the decision of the Israeli occupation authorities to impose more illegal and inhuman collective punitive measures against the Palestinian people and stresses its support for their legitimate struggle to liberate their land, restore their rights and protect their holy sites.

On behalf of my country's Government, I sent a letter dated 2 January addressed to you, Mr. President, and to the Secretary-General (S/2023/4) regarding the Israeli occupation authorities' continuing military aggression against Syrian territories and targeting of civilian infrastructure, the most recent of which was the attack on Damascus International Airport. Syria also emphasized that Israel's deliberate aggression against civilian facilities and infrastructure was not the first of its kind. The Israeli occupation forces had previously targeted the international Damascus and Aleppo

airports and the commercial port of Latakia, causing severe damage to those structures and disrupting the Air Transport Service of the United Nations, designated for humanitarian work, which affected the provision of necessary humanitarian aid to the Syrian people. We also called on the Security Council to take the necessary measures to stop Israel's repeated attacks on Syria's sovereignty and to hold the occupation authorities accountable for all of their violations and aggressive practices.

Moreover, Israel, the occupying Power in the Syrian Golan, has continued its aggressive policies against the Syrian people for more than five decades, in stark violation of international law and international humanitarian law, including through the arrest, killing and displacement of Syrians. Israel feverishly implements its systematic policy of expanding settlements in the occupied Golan with the aim of entrenching occupation, increasing the number of settlers and imposing demographic change, and steals the natural resources of the Golan, confiscating its lands and establishing projects on them that will have catastrophic effects on the lives of Syrians in the Golan.

Such Israeli crimes would not have continued had the successive United States administrations and their allies not guaranteed impunity for Israel, which has led to the unprecedented levels of tension and instability in the region.

The Syrian Arab Republic holds the countries that support Israel responsible for the continuation of Israel's occupation of the Golan and its continued attacks on Syria's sovereignty, as well as its repercussions on regional and international peace and security. Syria calls on the Security Council to break its silence and to urgently shoulder its responsibilities to bring an end to Israel's occupation of the Arab territories occupied since 1967 and to implement the relevant resolutions of the United Nations, foremost among which are resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), as well as resolution 497 (1981), which considers Israel's decision to annex the Golan null and void and of no legal effect.

Before I conclude my statement, I would like to express my delegation's disapproval of the insistence of the European Union delegation on including issues related to Syria in its statement, as these issues have nothing to do with the topic of today's open debate. It has done so in order to divert attention away from the main objective of our discussion. In order to use

the Council's time wisely, and out of our commitment to today's topic, I am not going to respond to the political lies in that statement. However, I would like to remind the delegation of the European Union that it deliberately turned a blind eye in its statement to all of Israel's violations in the occupied Syrian Golan and its continuous attacks on Syria's sovereignty. That is the height of political hypocrisy and demonstrates the double standards that the European Union has been practicing.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Malaysia.

**Mr. Abd Aziz** (Malaysia): At the outset, Malaysia would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's open debate. We also thank Mr. Tor Wennesland for his briefing.

The update that we have heard today is extremely concerning. It mentioned, among others, the continued killing of the Palestinians, the demolition of houses and schools, the expansion of illegal settlements and attacks by illegal settlers. Last year was one of the deadliest, with more than 230 lives lost, including those of innocent children. We are barely in the new year, and already 14 Palestinians have been killed, including 4 children. Malaysia reiterates its condemnation of the continued atrocities and abuses committed against the Palestinians by the Israeli regime.

Malaysia is equally appalled by the recent incursion into Al-Haram Al-Sharif by an Israeli minister on 3 January. This provocative act is simply outrageous and undermines efforts towards the peaceful resolution of the question of Palestine. It is clearly another effort by Israel to assert its sovereignty over the Holy City and change the historical and legal status quo at the holy sites in Jerusalem. Malaysia calls upon the international community to urge Israel to fully respect resolution 2334 (2016), which condemns acts of provocation and incitement.

Such behaviour must not be condoned under any circumstances, as it jeopardizes the long-standing goal of a sovereign Palestinian State, which the international community has been relentlessly pursuing. It is imperative that the Council view that provocative and inflammatory action seriously. Affirmative action by the Council is therefore crucial. It is incumbent upon the Council to ensure the full protection of the Palestinian people. As long as the international community and the Council remain paralysed, the apartheid regime

will continue its dastardly actions against the people of Palestine with impunity. Israel must therefore be held accountable for its horrendous crime and deliberate breach of numerous laws and resolutions.

Malaysia also strongly condemns Israel's retaliatory measures against the Palestinians, including the restriction of movement of Palestinian authorities and other punitive measures. Such unilateral actions not only reaffirm the systematic apartheid practices isolating the Palestinian community, but also reflect Israel's contempt and lack of faith in and respect for the primacy of the United Nations and its judicial organ, the International Court of Justice, as well as for international law and multilateralism. The international community should render its full support to Palestine in its endeavour to obtain an advisory opinion from the Court.

The protracted agony and suffering of the Palestinian people in pursuing their inalienable right to an independent, free and sovereign State has continued for far too long. Like all of us here in this Chamber, the people of Palestine have the right to live in dignity and freedom. They deserve to join the community of nations as citizens of a full Member State of the United Nations, like all of us.

Malaysia will continue to stand with the people of Palestine and expresses its unwavering support to and solidarity with them. We remain convinced that the internationally recognized two-State solution, with East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine, and based on pre-1967 borders, can be realized if the international community, especially members of the Council, exert all efforts to ensure its full implementation.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Iraq.

**Mr. Bahr Aluloom** (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is my pleasure to congratulate Japan on becoming a non-permanent member of the Security Council and on assuming its presidency for this month. We thank Ambassador Ishikane for presiding over this important meeting and wish him every success as he conducts the Council's work in January. We also thank the representative of the Secretary-General and the Special Coordinator, Mr. Tor Wennesland, for his briefing.

The ongoing and escalated Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people cannot continue indefinitely. The solution is the declaration of a fully

sovereign, contiguous and independent Palestinian State, with occupied East Jerusalem as its capital, based on the 4 June 1967 borderlines. That is the only way to bring an end to the conflict and establish just and comprehensive peace.

We call upon the Security Council to shoulder its responsibilities and to implement its relevant resolutions, particularly resolution 2334 (2016), wherein the occupying Power is requested to bring an end to all of its settlement activities, all illegal, unilateral, provocative and escalatory measures and all the violations it is continually carrying out in order to build and expand its illegal settlements.

The occupying Power is killing innocent people. It is constantly invading Palestinian towns and villages. It is confiscating land and property. It is destroying Palestinian homes and facilities and chasing out the Palestinian inhabitants, including in Al-Quds Al-Sharif.

We have seen a recent escalation of tension when a minister of the occupying Israeli Government stormed the courtyard of the Al-Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram Al-Sharif. That act constitutes a message to the international community that the occupying Power is not engaged in efforts for peace and stability. It is doing whatever it wants, contrary to the will of the international community, which seeks peace in that important part of the world. Despite that, we reiterate that we are committed to peace as a strategic choice and that there is a need to find a fair solution to the Palestinian question in line with international law and relevant resolutions and initiatives of international legitimacy.

We call upon the Council to play its role in ending the Israeli occupation and ensuring its full military withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories since 1967, including East Jerusalem. We also call upon the Council to support the accession of the State of Palestine to the United Nations as practical embodiment of its positions and responsibilities to support the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, pursuant to international terms of reference.

Al-Haram Al-Sharif and its surrounding 144 acres is a place of worship. We stress that the Jordanian Administration Department of Awqaf and Al-Aqsa Mosque Affairs is the only authority for managing all Al-Aqsa Mosque affairs under international humanitarian law. We commend the continuous efforts of the sisterly Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to maintain the current historic and legal status of the Muslim and

Christian holy sites, and to address the Israeli measures that target Al-Aqsa Mosque while protecting the Arab Islamic and Christian identity of the holy sites under the Hashemite custodianship.

**The President:** I now give the floor to Mr. Iqbal.

**Mr. Iqbal:** I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). At the outset, I would like to extend my warm congratulations to you, Mr. President, on your country's resumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of January and on your able stewardship of the Council's meetings.

International reports reveal that the year 2022 was among the deadliest for the Palestinian people since 2005 in terms of the alarming scale of Israel's violations and crimes, particularly in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. In fact, 230 Palestinian civilians were killed by the Israeli occupying forces, including 61 children, in addition to thousands of others who were injured or detained, while hundreds of homes, civilian properties and structures and agricultural crops were destroyed by the occupying army and settlers.

It has by now become patently clear that Israel's illegal, oppressive and destructive policies aim to further entrench and perpetuate the longest belligerent occupation in modern history, in grave breach of international law. The methods used in that regard have included, inter alia, military aggression against the defenceless Palestinian civilian population, the building of colonial settlements and a wall on confiscated Palestinian land, the transfer of Jewish settlers to the occupied territory, the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from their homes and land, decades of blockade and the arrest and detention of thousands of Palestinian civilians. All those violations are occurring flagrantly, systematically and with the full knowledge of this organ, yet without any consequences for the perpetrators.

Accordingly, it should be reiterated that the lack of accountability has continued to embolden Israel to persist in such illegal policies, which are exacerbating the situation on the ground, causing immense human suffering, deepening the current political impasse and threatening the two-State solution. Moreover, it is widely acknowledged that such prolonged, illegal occupation and impunity have impaired the credibility and authority of the international system, including the Security Council.

The OIC is deeply alarmed by Israel's ongoing acts of aggression, incitement and provocation against Christian and Islamic holy places, including the Al-Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram Al-Sharif. Such actions constitute deliberate, systematic and grave breaches of international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions. In that regard, we strongly condemn and reject the recent deplorable and provocative incursion by Israel's Minister for National Security, Itamar Ben-Gvir, into the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

In line with the relevant OIC resolutions, including resolution No. 1/48-PAL, on the cause of Palestine, adopted by the Council of Foreign Ministers on 23 March 2022, we reaffirm our rejection of all Israeli measures and attempts to alter the historical and legal status quo of the Al-Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram Al-Sharif and reiterate our demand to fully respect the status quo and international law. Time and again, we have cautioned that such provocative and irresponsible Israeli acts offend the feelings of Muslims across the globe, violate their religious rights and eternal attachment to that holy site and jeopardize stability in the region and beyond.

We underscore that the Security Council and all other key actors in the international arena must uphold their responsibilities and obligations towards ensuring Israel's compliance with international law and United Nations resolutions in relation to the question of Jerusalem, the occupied capital of the State of Palestine, which has been enduring endless Israeli attempts at isolation, colonization and subjugation and erasure of the city's Arab, Islamic and Christian character, heritage and presence. All those illegal actions must be halted.

The dire situation in Palestine is becoming even more dangerous owing to the decision by the new Israeli Government, the members of which are known for supremacist ideologies and hateful actions against the Palestinian people, to impose punitive measures on the Palestinian leadership for its legitimate pursuit of accountability for Israel's crimes, including the decision to withhold Palestinian tax revenues. Such an illegal decision is an act of piracy and collective punishment of the Palestinian people, thereby constituting a violation of international law, exacerbating the financial, economic and humanitarian crisis encountered by the Palestinian people and risking further destabilization of the fragile situation.

In conclusion, our Organization reaffirms that, for a just and lasting peace to materialize, an internationally sponsored political process, based on international law, the relevant United Nations resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative, must be launched with a view to ending the Israeli occupation and enabling the Palestinian people to exercise their legitimate and national rights, including to self-determination and the independence of the State of Palestine, on the territory occupied since 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and to find a just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine refugees, in line with General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Kuwait.

**Mr. Albanai** (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your presidency of the Security Council for this month and on the membership of your friendly country in the Security Council. I wish you every success in managing the rest of the Council's work. I also cannot miss the opportunity to congratulate the newly elected members of the Security Council, namely, Ecuador, Malta, Mozambique and Switzerland. I wish them success during their membership over the next two years. In that context, I would like to thank the Member States that concluded their membership in the Council, namely, India, Ireland, Kenya, Mexico and Norway. We appreciate their valuable efforts during their tenure on the Council over the past two years.

Israel, the occupying Power, continues to violate international resolutions in full view of the States members of the Security Council, particularly those of the Security Council. It continues its flagrant violations of the Charter of the United Nations, international law, international humanitarian law, international human rights law, the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and other international treaties and covenants.

We have entered a new year, and the proud Palestinian people unfortunately continue to suffer from the most severe acts of aggression against them by Israel, the occupying Power. Israel continues its series of violations of all the rights of the Palestinian people with no response from the Council or attempt to put an end to such injustices.

The facts before the Security Council are evident. The occupation of Palestinian and other Arab territories has been clear to the Council for decades. The killings

and criminal practices against Palestinians persist, human rights violations against Palestinians continue, and the systematic settlement policy has not stopped.

The new year began with escalation and provocation by the occupying Power in the occupied Palestinian territories. As we heard from Special Coordinator Tor Wennesland in his briefing today, in the past weeks a number of unarmed Palestinians were killed by the occupying forces. We strongly condemn that, and we reiterate the need for accountability for the daily systematic violations committed by the occupying Power in the occupied Palestinian territories.

A few weeks ago, we also witnessed the storming of the Al-Aqsa Mosque courtyard by a minister in the Israeli occupation Government under the protection of the Israeli occupation forces. The State of Kuwait reiterates its strong condemnation and denunciation of that incursion and other repeated violations, since such actions constitute a provocation to the feelings of Muslims and a violation of the relevant resolutions of international legitimacy. The most recent incursion is part of the continued attempts of the Israeli occupation authorities to alter the current legal and historical status of Jerusalem and its holy sites. In addition, in yet another attempt to restrict Palestinians, the Government of the Israeli occupying Power has recently imposed punitive measures on the Palestinian people, their leadership and their civilian institutions in response to the adoption of General Assembly resolution 77/247, which requests the International Court of Justice to render an advisory opinion on the issue of the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories. In that regard, we welcome the joint statement made a few days ago by a significant number of Member States and groups at the United Nations, which rejects the punitive measures imposed on the Palestinian people.

Due to the arrogance of Israel, the occupying Power, and its continued criminal practices in violation of international laws and agreements, the international community is now further away from a political horizon that could lead to a just solution to the Palestinian question, which is the key question for Arabs and Muslims. As we have said before, it is as simple as that. There is no peace, security or safety under a continued occupation. We have seen in recent years systematic steps that take us further from peace by seeking to prolong the illegal occupation through the ongoing illegal building and expansion of settlements,

in flagrant violation of international resolutions, above all resolution 2334 (2016). Those steps undermine the two-State solution.

Given the bitter situation on the ground and the injustice that the brotherly Palestinian people endure, the State of Kuwait once again calls on the international community to take urgent action to provide them with protection. We call upon the Security Council to assume its responsibilities pursuant to the Charter of the United Nations and to hold the Israeli occupation forces fully responsible for the consequences of their crimes and their illegal and provocative practices in Al-Quds and Al-Haram Al-Sharif, as well as the violations against the defenceless Palestinian people on their land and holy sites. The State of Kuwait strongly supports the State of Palestine in its quest for full membership in the United Nations. We also call upon all States that do not recognize Palestine as a State to reconsider their positions and bring them into line with international law. Occupation does not change from one State to another. The legitimate right of self-defence does not change from one State to another. The implementation of resolutions of international legitimacy, especially those of the Security Council, should not differ from one situation to another.

In conclusion, the leadership, the Government and the people of the State of Kuwait reiterate their support for the brotherly Palestinian people, as well as their historical and principled solidarity with the just cause of the Palestinians. Kuwait commends the efforts of the Palestinian people and supports their legitimate struggle to realize all their legitimate political rights in defiance of the occupation. The State of Kuwait upholds the Arab, Islamic and international position that peace is the strategic option and that a lasting, comprehensive and just solution must be based on a two-State solution, in line with the agreed upon terms of reference, including the relevant Security Council resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative. That will lead to realizing all the political legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and their establishment of an independent State on their territory, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of the Maldives.

**Mr. Zuhuree** (Maldives): I wish to thank Japan for convening today's debate. I would also like to thank Mr. Wennesland for his briefing.

On 3 January, Itamar Ben-Gvir, the recently appointed Israeli National Security Minister, stormed the courtyards of Al-Aqsa Mosque, with a large contingent of forces. The Maldivian Government denounces that highly provocative action. That forceful entry violates all norms, escalates tensions around the holy sites, provokes violence and threatens to change the identity and legal and historical status quo of Al-Haram Al-Sharif. It is not in the region's interest or in anyone's interest. Allow me to highlight a few reasons why the Israeli actions in the occupied territories violate international law and international humanitarian law and threaten the peace and security of the Middle East.

First, the Maldives recalls General Assembly resolutions 476 (1980) and 478 (1980), which declare null and void all legislative and administrative measures and actions taken by Israel that have altered or purport to alter the character and status of the holy city of Jerusalem. Resolution 2334 (2016) calls upon all States to distinguish in their relevant dealings between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories occupied since 1967. The Security Council, which is mandated by the Charter of the United Nations to maintain international peace and security, must ensure that its own decisions are upheld and respected by all countries. Its very credibility depends on that.

Secondly, the people of Palestine have been suffering under Israeli occupation for 50 years despite several Security Council resolutions and broad international condemnation. The most recent report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016) (S/2022/945) states that 2022 has been the deadliest year for Palestinians in the West Bank since 2005. The report further notes the continuation of settlement activities, as well as the seizures and demolitions of Palestinian-owned civilian structures by Israel, including schools and houses. Settler violence continues to undermine the rights and the dignity of the Palestinian people.

Finally, the Maldives wishes to reiterate that the rule of law should be applied equally to all countries. It is critical that perpetrators of blatant violations of international law and international humanitarian law be held accountable for their actions. The Council is mandated under the United Nations Charter with the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. But when the Council fails, the international community has no choice but to find other avenues for justice. For that reason, the

Maldives supported General Assembly resolution 77/247, which requested the International Court of Justice to render an advisory opinion on the legal consequences arising from the ongoing violation by Israel of the rights of the Palestinian people.

The Maldives reiterates its steadfast support for any resolution that outlines the formation of an independent and sovereign State of Palestine, established on the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. We firmly believe that is the only viable solution to ensure an end to the conflict so that the people of both Palestine and Israel can enjoy meaningful and enduring peace and live side by side with dignity.

Since the start of the conflict in Syria, hundreds of thousands of people have been killed, millions have been displaced and entire cities have been destroyed. From 1 October 2022 to 22 November 2022 alone, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights recorded 136 civilian deaths in the north-west of the country, including many women and children. The Maldives urges the Council and the international community to undertake urgent efforts to resolve that conflict.

The Maldives reaffirms its commitment to working with the Council and Member States to find long-term solutions to improve stability across the region and lay the foundation for lasting peace in the Middle East.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Bangladesh.

**Mr. Muhith** (Bangladesh): I thank you, Mr. President, for giving me the floor. I would like to commend the presidency of Japan for its able and dynamic stewardship of the work of the Security Council in January 2023. I also thank all the briefers for their comprehensive briefings.

We have just experienced another unfortunate and gruesome year of aggressive and deadly activities against our Palestinian brothers and sisters by the Israeli occupying forces. The year 2022 was the deadliest for the people of Palestine in nearly two decades since 2005, when the United Nations began recording fatalities in a systemic manner. A total of 230 Palestinians, including 61 children, were killed by Israel, in addition to the injuring and detention of thousands of other innocent Palestinians. There have been repeated calls by the international community, including through the adoption of numerous General Assembly and Security

Council resolutions, to stop the brutal and inhumane acts. Yet the new year has not brought with it any good news. The Israeli occupation forces have continued the blockade of the Gaza Strip, the indiscriminate killing of women and children, the expansion of illegal settlements, the demolition of Palestinian homes and the forcible transfer of Palestinian civilians throughout the occupied Palestinian territory. It is a shame on all of us that, in the first two weeks of this year, 15 Palestinians, including four children, were killed by Israel.

Moreover, at the very beginning of the year, we saw provocative and illegal actions by Israel on 3 January in grossly violating the historic and legal status quo at the Al-Aqsa Mosque on the Al-Haram Al-Sharif. Those illegal policies and activities clearly demonstrate the unwillingness of Israel to respect the decisions of the United Nations and the international community. Such actions are designed to make the solution to the crisis more elusive and will make the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory more vulnerable. It is also a demonstration of sheer disrespect for, and insolence with regard to, the unanimous decision by the international community to reach a two-State solution. In this alarming and dangerous situation, I would like to reiterate a number of points that we have raised on numerous occasions in the Council.

First, the Council should take stern action against Israel and make it accountable for the grave injustice and violence against the people of Palestine and the repeated violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law in the occupied territory — and that should be done immediately. We urge the Council to take concrete actions to implement its own resolutions, including resolution 2334 (2016), in order to achieve the two-State solution, with East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine, which is the only solution to the crisis.

Secondly, it is equally important to respect the sole authority of the Islamic Waqf Administration and the custodianship of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan with regard to the Muslim and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem.

Thirdly, we reiterate our grave concern about the dire humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territory. Furthermore, the 15-year-long sea, land and air blockade of the Gaza Strip and the discriminatory lack of access of Palestinians to basic services, such as education, health care and access to water, sanitation

and electricity infrastructure, among other resources, must be ended without delay in order to prevent the further deterioration of the humanitarian situation. We are equally concerned about discriminatory practices such as the lack of access to justice, the attacks on innocent people, the evictions, the demolition of property and the detention of Palestinians, including children, as well as all other discriminatory policies and practices undertaken by Israel.

Regrettably, we have been having the same discussion decade after decade and the question of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people remains unresolved. The existence of this issue calls into question the credibility of the work of this organ. In this situation, let me reiterate that the only way to ensure the rights of the people of Palestine is the establishment of an independent, viable and sovereign Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, based on a two-State solution and the pre-1967 borders. I reiterate Bangladesh's unwavering and steadfast support for that.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Norway.

**Mr. Kvalheim** (Norway): Norway thanks Special Coordinator Tor Wennesland for his briefing. My statement today will focus on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I will also briefly address the situations in Syria and Yemen.

Throughout Norway's membership of the Security Council for the term from 2021 to 2022, we regularly stated our clear positions on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the Middle East peace process. We worked to bring the parties together, encouraged de-escalation and called for the resumption of direct negotiations. We are troubled by the lack of progress towards peace that we saw during the past year. We are deeply concerned about the tense situation in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the large number of civilians killed last year and already this year, including many young people. Violence against civilians must end. The status quo of the holy sites in Jerusalem must be upheld and respected.

We are also concerned about the Israeli Government's recent announcements of punitive measures against the Palestinian Authority. Israel's withholding and seizure of funds belonging to the Palestinians will weaken Palestinian institutions and place additional strains on the Palestinian economy. Ultimately, that will bring harm to ordinary Palestinians. We strongly urge Israel

to respect signed agreements and transfer all funds belonging to the Palestinians. Israel's announcement of a moratorium on Palestinian construction in Area C in the West Bank is also unacceptable. It violates Palestinians' right to use and develop their land and further limits economic growth. We also reject the Israeli announcement of measures against organizations that carry out humanitarian work in the West Bank. Civil society organizations and humanitarian actors must be allowed to work freely. Further limiting the freedom of movement of the representatives of the Palestinian Authority is also unacceptable and will impair Palestinians' ability to carry out their international activities. We believe that the Israeli Government's decision to impose punitive measures against the Palestinian people following the General Assembly's request for an advisory opinion by the International Court of Justice is unacceptable and must be reversed.

The path out of the conflict and towards peace does not lie in the denial of the rights and legitimacy of others. It is not found in illegal unilateral steps that change the demographic composition or the status of the occupied areas. The path is not created through the use of violence. A solution to the conflict will come about only through dialogue, trust-building and cooperation. We encourage the members of the Negev Forum to use the spirit of regional cooperation, which was most recently demonstrated in Abu Dhabi on 9 and 10 January, to contribute to a more constructive path towards a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I once again reiterate our firm belief that a negotiated two-State solution based on the 1967 borders, relevant United Nations resolutions and international parameters is the best way to achieve lasting peace and ensure the rights, safety and independence of both Israelis and Palestinians.

I now turn to the situation in Syria. An important file during our tenure in the Security Council involved our co-penholdership with Ireland on extending cross-border humanitarian assistance to north-west Syria. We are very pleased that the mandate was extended many times over the past two years, most recently via resolution 2672 (2023), adopted unanimously on 9 January, which is crucial for the more than 4 million people in north-west Syria who are dependent on humanitarian assistance.

With regard to the situation in Yemen, we continue to be concerned about the dire humanitarian situation. It is crucial to ensure unhindered humanitarian access to Yemenis in need. All actors must refrain from actions that could lead to the escalation of the armed conflict and

close the window for dialogue. We hope to see a renewal of the truce, and we support all actors in their efforts to find a solution to the conflict. The Special Envoy of the Secretary-General has Norway's full support.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Cuba.

**Mr. Pedroso Cuesta** (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Cuba supports the statement to be made by the Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

On 27 October, the Chair of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel presented to the General Assembly her most recent report, which explicitly calls on the Security Council to take measures to put an end to the illegal situation resulting from the permanent occupation imposed by Israel. Regrettably, despite the systematic appeals of the international community, the subjugation of the Palestinian people continues, and the Security Council has been incapable of stopping one of the greatest outrages committed against an entire people in the last century, with total impunity on the part of its perpetrators.

The aforementioned Commission, created at the request of the United Nations Human Rights Council, has concluded that the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory is contrary to international law because of its permanent nature and because of the measures adopted by Israel to expand both its de facto and de jure annexation of parts of the Palestinian territory. These violations of international humanitarian law being suffered by the Palestinian people are scandalous.

Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention prohibits an occupying Power from transferring part of its own population to occupied territories for political or racial reasons or to colonize those territories. However, in the area of East Jerusalem alone, more than one third of the Palestinian land there has been expropriated to build Israeli settlements, which constitutes a practice of segregation tantamount to apartheid.

The impact on Palestinian families living in a climate of constant harassment and intimidation is immeasurable. These effects are much greater on such vulnerable sectors of the population as women and children. It has been documented that, since 1967, thousands of children have experienced forced



displacement and relocation as a result of the demolition of 28,000 Palestinian homes. The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia has estimated that the participation rate of Palestinian women in the labour force is among the 10 lowest in the world, mainly owing to the limitations imposed by the advancing Israeli colonization. The blockade of the Gaza Strip and plans for annexation of Palestinian territories in the Jordan Valley and other parts of the West Bank and East Jerusalem also remain ongoing. Violence, detention, imprisonment, human rights violations and killings of Palestinian civilians in the occupied territories continue.

This reality is not new. For decades, the international community has demanded an end to Israel's illegal occupation of Palestine. However, the situation on the ground continues to deteriorate, as the Secretary-General's Special Coordinator for Middle East Peace Process has reported to the Security Council (see S/PV.9246). We condemn the double standards and the political selectivity and manipulation that damage the cause of international peace and security and undermine the legitimacy of the Security Council.

The United States, a self-proclaimed defender of the principles of the United Nations Charter and international peace and security, is covering up the heinous crimes committed against the Palestinian people by Israel on a daily basis. We cannot forget the repeated obstruction by the United States of the Security Council's action to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as well as the impunity it has guaranteed for Israel.

We reiterate once again our condemnation of the unilateral decisions of the Government of the United States to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and establish its diplomatic representation there, ignoring its historical status, as well as to recognize the sovereignty of Israel over the Syrian Golan. These constitute serious violations of the Charter of the United Nations, international law and the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, contravene the legitimate interests of the Arab nations and make the possibility of a solution to the conflict even more remote.

We reaffirm our strong support for a two-State solution that allows the Palestinian people to exercise their right to self-determination and have their own independent and sovereign State within the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and where

the right of return of refugees is also guaranteed. We will continue to support the entry of the State of Palestine into the United Nations as a full member. We support its President's call for an international peace conference.

We reiterate our demand for the total and unconditional withdrawal of Israel from the Syrian Golan and all of the occupied Arab territories. We demand the cessation of external interference in Syria and full respect for its sovereignty and territorial integrity, while supporting the search for a peaceful and negotiated solution to the situation being imposed on that sister Arab nation.

We affirm our support for the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) with Iran and for the inalienable right of States to the peaceful use of nuclear energy. We reiterate our rejection of the unilateral withdrawal of the United States from the JCPOA.

In conclusion, we call once again for an immediate and unconditional end to the arbitrary and illegal unilateral coercive measures imposed by the United States on sovereign nations in the Middle East.

**The President:** I now give the floor to Mr. Niang.

**Mr. Niang:** On behalf of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, I would like to congratulate Japan for its able presidency of the Security Council this month.

The Committee would also like to congratulate Ecuador, Malta, Mozambique and Switzerland — in addition to Japan — upon assuming their membership in the Council.

Allow me also to thank Mr. Tor Wennesland, the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, for his efforts and commitment to bringing about a just and lasting solution, based on international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions, which would fulfil the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and finally see Israelis and Palestinians living side by side in peace and security.

The Committee expresses its deep concern and dismay at the recent provocations at the holy sites in Jerusalem, the first such incursion by an Israeli Minister since 2017. On 3 January, Israel's Minister of National Security, accompanied by a heavy security presence and without having coordinated with the Jordanian Waqf, entered the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound in

occupied East Jerusalem. Such violations of the historical and legal status quo and repeated provocative actions at this sensitive holy site have sparked outrage among Palestinians, the Muslim community and the international community.

We commend Japan for convening the Security Council emergency meeting on 5 January to discuss this worrisome situation (see S/PV.9236). The long history of this conflict reveals that the cost of such violations of the historical status quo, breaches of international law, and unilateral measures and provocations is very high and is the primary cause of the rising levels of violence and instability. Such illegal actions have repeatedly undermined efforts to find a just and peaceful solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and are subverting the viability of the two-State solution.

The Committee stands firmly for preserving the historical status quo at the holy sites in Jerusalem. Any unilateral actions that undercut the historical status quo are unacceptable, as are any violations of Israel's obligations under international humanitarian law, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention, which prohibits an occupying Power from altering the character, status and demography of an occupied territory.

The Committee also remains concerned at the high levels of violence we continue to witness throughout the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, including clashes, protests, attacks, settler-related violence and Israeli security operations, which continue to cause civilian casualties, including among children. The Special Coordinator reported that in 2022 more than 150 Palestinian children and more than 20 Israelis were killed in the West Bank and Israel — the highest number of fatalities in years. The violence, provocations, incitement and spreading of inflammatory rhetoric must stop and all perpetrators must be held accountable.

Despite the Security Council's repeated affirmations that settlements constitute a flagrant violation of the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions and international law and despite repeated calls for their cessation, Israel's settlement expansion in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, continues unabated. Those illegal actions, which systematically erode the possibility of establishing a contiguous, independent, viable and sovereign Palestinian State, must cease immediately and there must be accountability.

In February 2023, the Committee will finalize its independent legal study on the legality of the Israeli occupation of the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, which was commissioned in 2021. The study addresses whether Israel's de facto and de jure annexation measures, its continued settlement activities and its protracted occupation of Palestinian territory — the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip — render the occupation illegal under international law and the implications of that action. The study is timely, following the General Assembly's adoption of resolution 77/247 and the request to the International Court of Justice for an advisory opinion. The Committee supports the General Assembly decision and urges the Secretary-General to take the necessary follow-up action.

The Committee is also deeply concerned about Israel's punitive actions against the Palestinian people, leadership and civil society in retaliation for the adoption by the General Assembly of a resolution requesting that the International Court of Justice render an advisory opinion. We reject punitive measures in response to a peaceful, multilateral request for an advisory opinion or in retaliation for any General Assembly resolution and call for the immediate reversal of those deplorable actions.

Equally troubling are the continued demolitions and seizures of Palestinian homes and structures in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. The Committee calls on Israel, as the occupying Power, to stop such practices in line with its obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law. In that regard, we also consider that the proposed dangerous judicial reforms by the Israeli Government are further undermining the possibility of legal recourse for Palestinians on violations of their rights, including the right to land and property.

The Committee also remains increasingly concerned by the political and security dynamics and rising tensions. In the Gaza Strip, the situation remains fragile, and the risk of escalation persists, despite the commendable efforts by the United Nations and regional and international partners, including Egypt and the State of Qatar, to alleviate the deprivation and suffering caused by the Israeli blockade, now nearing its sixteenth year. We recognize that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

remains indispensable and a key stabilizing element in the lives of thousands of Palestinians, and we call once again for its sufficient and predictable funding.

The deepening occupation and the increased violence, as well as the absence of a political horizon, have empowered extremists and are eroding hopes among Palestinians and Israelis alike that a just resolution of the conflict is achievable. The situation is unsustainable and needs immediate corrective action. Our responsibilities obligate us, under the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant resolutions, including those of the Council, to respond. The Committee welcomes the Special Coordinator's call for Israelis and Palestinians, along with the States of the region and the broader international community, to take concrete steps to change the negative trajectory on the ground, as called for in resolution 2334 (2016).

The Committee stands ready to help garner the support needed to advance the peace process towards ending the Israeli occupation that began in 1967. It appreciates Member States' messages of solidarity at the annual commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People on 29 November and their unwavering support for the four General Assembly resolutions on the question of Palestine. The Committee commits to implementing the renewed General Assembly mandate and will commemorate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Nakba with a high-level event to be held on 15 May 2023. We call on the Security Council and all Member States to join the commemoration and our efforts to promote the realization of a just solution to that historic injustice.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Argentina.

**Ms. Squeff** (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Argentina continues to believe that a solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict can be achieved only through negotiations between the two sides aimed at reaching an agreement on the final-status issues identified in the Oslo Accords — namely, Jerusalem, the refugees, the settlements, the borders and security measures. My delegation supports a peaceful, final and comprehensive settlement of the Palestinian question on the basis of a two-State solution within the 1967 borders and in line with whatever the parties determine in the course of negotiations, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly. We reaffirm our support for international

law and the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to establish an independent and viable State, recognized by all nations, as well as the right of the State of Israel to live in peace alongside its neighbours within secure and internationally recognized borders.

We reiterate our concern at the persistent and continuing growth of illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories and call for a halt to their expansion. The gravity of the situation was recognized by the Security Council in resolution 2334 (2016), the terms of which we fully subscribe to. Argentina also condemns the indiscriminate firing of rockets from Gaza against civilians in Israel, as well as all violent actions by Hamas and other armed groups. The Palestinian leadership needs to sincerely address Israeli security concerns. In that context, we recognize Israel's right to exercise self-defence, while emphasizing the importance that, in taking such actions, Israel fully respect its obligations under international humanitarian law, in particular with regard to the principles of distinction and proportionality.

With regard to the situation in East Jerusalem, Argentina reaffirms the special status of Jerusalem in accordance with the relevant resolutions, including resolution 478 (1980). In that regard, we reject any unilateral attempt to alter that status quo, in particular with regard to the Old City, which has a special significance for the three great monotheistic religions. My country believes that the Old City must be a peaceful meeting place and that Jews, Muslims and Christians must be guaranteed free access to the holy sites. Any attempt to deny or minimize the historic link and profound significance of those sites for any of the three monotheistic religions is completely unacceptable. That will not contribute to the objective of finding a solution to the conflict, but instead will reinforce prejudices and mistrust between the parties. Argentina considers the final status of Jerusalem to be an issue that should be defined by the parties in bilateral negotiations.

With regard to the Syrian Golan, Argentina maintains a principled position on the illegality of the acquisition of territory 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

the aim of ending the occupation of the Golan Heights as soon as possible, in accordance with resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the principle of land for peace.

Argentina has taken note with particular concern of the recent measures adopted by the Government of Israel against the Palestinian National Authority as a result of the General Assembly's recent adoption of resolution 77/247, which requests the International Court of Justice to render an advisory opinion. My country voted in favour of that resolution. Israel's use of that request for an advisory opinion to the International Court of Justice as an argument to support the sanctions against Palestine is questionable.

Indeed, the Statute of the International Court of Justice establishes, in Article 65, that the Court may give an advisory opinion. At the same time, the Charter of the United Nations establishes, in Article 96, that the General Assembly may request the International Court of Justice to give an advisory opinion on any legal issue. General Assembly resolution 77/247 was adopted in accordance with international law. Therefore, it is not appropriate for a State Member of the United Nations — even if it disagrees with a decision — to establish unilateral sanctions or other types of measures of that nature against another State based on what has been legitimately decided by that organ. An action of that nature affects not only the country against which such measures are taken but also the entire international community, including those States that did not vote in favour of that decision, since it jeopardizes the very mechanism available to countries to seek solutions by peaceful means in their international relations.

Argentina believes that it is crucially important to respect international law in general and United Nations resolutions in particular. Consequently, Argentina believes that the General Assembly's decision as expressed in resolution 77/247 must be respected. We also believe that we must bear in mind that the legal decisions issued in advisory opinions do not have less weight or authority than those issued in judgments of the International Court of Justice. The international community should take into account what the Court decides in accordance with the advisory opinion requested.

In conclusion, Argentina wishes to once again urge the Palestinians and Israelis to resume peace talks, in good faith, with flexibility and in accordance with

international law and relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, in order to seek an agreement on outstanding issues relating to the final status of Palestine in all its aspects.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Brunei Darussalam.

**Ms. Sulaiman** (Brunei Darussalam): At the outset, I would like to congratulate Japan on its presidency of the Security Council for the month of January. I would also like to thank Mr. Tor Wennesland, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, for his comprehensive briefing.

The question of Palestine is as old as the United Nations itself, and unfortunately that issue remains unresolved. Decades after it was first addressed by the United Nations, Palestinians continue to live under hardship and duress, with daily struggles under the occupying Power, and they continue to be deprived of their inalienable rights to self-determination and independence. Despite the various calls, debates and resolutions in this Chamber, many have turned a blind eye. That cannot continue.

As members of the international community, we have the responsibility to help the Palestinians in their long struggle for peace and justice. As the guarantor of international peace and security, the Council has a duty to uphold the Charter of the United Nations and an obligation to ensure the implementation of its resolutions, including those on the realization of the two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders. In that regard, Brunei Darussalam respects the integrity of the Security Council resolutions on Palestine, in particular resolution 2334 (2016), which provides an effective and viable path to peace, and we call for that resolution to be fully respected and upheld.

We deeply condemn in the strongest terms the recent incursion into the Al-Aqsa Mosque and its courtyard led by the authorities and military forces of the occupying Power. That deliberate provocation and aggression clearly violated international law with the intention of changing the status quo of Jerusalem and Al-Haram Al-Sharif. We see that blatant action as affecting the sanctity of the holy site, which is sacred to many faiths. We are also deeply concerned that such an act has the potential to exacerbate tensions and provoke violence, which may result in the loss of innocent lives.

Brunei Darussalam also strongly rejects and condemns the continued annexation by the occupying Power through its ongoing illegal settlement activities, which have forced the displacement of Palestinian families from their rightful homes and lands. Those continued acts of provocation and aggression and systematic violations of basic human rights violate international law, accelerate the further deterioration of the situation in Palestine and further diminish the prospect of peace. Therefore, we once again call upon the occupying Power to cease all acts of provocation and aggression and fully comply with its obligations under international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention.

In that regard, Brunei Darussalam reiterates its full support for all international efforts aimed at achieving a comprehensive and lasting peace and security in the Middle East, in accordance with the rule of law as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and all relevant United Nations resolutions. We reaffirm our commitment to a two-State solution, based on the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Palestine, and remain steadfast in our support for the full membership of Palestine at the United Nations as a step towards its recognition as a sovereign independent State.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of the Republic of Korea.

**Mr. Kim Dongjoon** (Republic of Korea): I would first like to thank the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Mr. Tor Wennesland, for his briefing.

At the outset, the Republic of Korea expresses deep concern about the recent rising tensions around the holy sites in Jerusalem, as well as the Israeli Government's recent decision to take several measures against Palestine in response to General Assembly

resolution 77/247, which requests the International Court of Justice to render an advisory opinion relating to the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory. Notwithstanding my delegation's position to abstain in the voting on that resolution, such measures are not conducive to a two-State solution, in accordance with relevant Security Council resolutions, international law and bilateral agreements, which Korea continues to support. Against that backdrop, my delegation believes that measures that undermine relevant parties' efforts to create an environment in which to resume peace talks should be reversed.

My delegation also takes this opportunity to reiterate its position that the status quo of the holy sites in Jerusalem must be respected. We call upon all sides to exercise restraint and refrain from any actions that would erode the likelihood of a two-State solution. My delegation is deeply concerned about Israeli's ongoing settlement expansion, demolitions and evictions in the occupied West Bank, in violation of relevant Security Council resolutions and international law. Such actions will not help address the root causes of the conflict but will only exacerbate tensions and undermine the foundation for a political solution.

My delegation also expresses serious concern at the rising number of civilian casualties over the past year. We condemn all terrorist attacks in the strongest terms and reiterate that any violence against civilians can in no way be justified. We furthermore remain concerned about the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip due to chronic political instability, as well as the recent hike in commodity and energy prices. The Republic of Korea expresses its strong support for the ongoing efforts of the international community to meet the humanitarian and development needs of the Palestinian people and reaffirms its continued humanitarian support.

*The meeting rose at 5 p.m.*