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

**Special meeting to observe the seventy-fifth anniversary of
the Nakbah**

Summary record of the 412th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 15 May 2023, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Niang (Senegal)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Statement by the Chair

1. **The Chair** said that the Nakbah in 1948 was at the epicentre of the Palestinian people's tragic history. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians had been displaced or expelled almost overnight, with many fleeing for their lives in the belief that they would be able to return to their homes once the war had ended. Many were killed in the process, and hundreds of villages and communities had been destroyed. Seventy-five years after the General Assembly's decision to partition historic Palestine and over 55 years since the occupation by Israel of the remainder of the Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, in 1967, generations of Palestinians, including Palestine refugees, continued to suffer violations of their basic and inalienable rights, enduring dispossession, displacement, violence and insecurity in what was considered an ongoing Nakbah.

2. The Palestinian people's remarkable resilience and steadfast attachment to their legitimate national aspirations, hope and identity must not absolve the international community of its obligation to deliver justice and assist in the realization of their rights and the attainment of peace and stability for Palestinians, Israelis and the Middle East as a whole.

3. Reminding the world of the Nakbah and the ongoing suffering of the Palestinian people was more necessary than ever; the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem and Gaza, was especially dire, and the Palestine refugee crisis, the longest in history, persisted, with more than 5.9 million Palestine refugees continuing to endure violence, dispossession and illegal occupation. In the continued absence of a just solution for Palestine refugees, in accordance with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions, including General Assembly resolution 194 (III), which affirmed the right of Palestine refugees to return and to receive just compensation, the Committee continued to support the mandate of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to provide vital humanitarian and development support as well as appeals to ensure sufficient and predictable funding for the Agency.

4. Regrettably, the reports of United Nations entities attested to increasingly negative trends on the ground. The dangerous escalation of violence throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in East Jerusalem, amidst increased political tension and a stalled peace process, gave cause for concern. In 2022 and 2023, there had been an increase in deadly military

raids by Israel across the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem; settler-generated violence and attacks; and military assaults against Gaza, killing and injuring Palestinian civilians, including women and children. The Committee condemned the ongoing escalation in Gaza and the loss of civilian lives in the recent Israeli military operation, which had shattered the existing truce, and urged all parties involved to end the hostilities.

5. Violence was not the answer and only made the international consensus on achieving a just peace in the Middle East more elusive. The death of civilians, both Palestinian and Israeli, was unacceptable, and they must be protected. International law and respect for human rights were the way forward to sustainable peace, in Palestine as elsewhere.

6. In 2022, the General Assembly had voted overwhelmingly to request the International Court of Justice to render an advisory opinion regarding the prolonged violation of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination; the legality of the policies and practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including settlement colonization; and the discriminatory practices of Israel against the Palestinian people, deemed to constitute apartheid by many international, Palestinian and Israeli human rights organizations. The request came at a crucial juncture: the Committee was gravely concerned that the occupation by Israel of Palestinian land was not temporary but rather a de facto creeping annexation, as several Special Rapporteurs on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory and others had argued.

7. It was imperative to heed and address the plight of Palestinian families facing expulsion from their homes in East Jerusalem and elsewhere throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Israel must reverse the dispossession and forcible displacement of Palestinians and halt the transfer of its population into occupied land in contravention of international law, the Fourth Geneva Convention and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

8. A just and lasting peace would be achieved only through a just solution to the question of Palestine, an end to the injustice of the Nakbah and the achievement of the two-State solution, bringing an end to the Israeli occupation that had begun in 1967 and realizing the Palestinian people's long-deferred right to self-determination and independence and a just resolution to the plight of Palestine refugees.

Statement by the Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs

9. **Ms. DiCarlo** (Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs) said that, in 2022, the General Assembly had passed resolution [77/23](#), which called for the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Nakbah. While the legacy of that event had spurred efforts to find a peaceful and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the prospects for restarting the political process towards a two-State solution based on United Nations resolutions, international law and previous agreements continued to diminish. Across the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, the rapid expansion of settlements, illegal under international law, was dramatically altering the land envisioned for a Palestinian State. Violence, including settler-related violence, remained pervasive, while evictions, demolitions and seizures of Palestinian property continued unabated, undermining the prospects for a viable, contiguous Palestinian State. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2022 had seen the highest number of Palestinians killed in the occupied West Bank since the Office had begun collecting figures, as well as the highest number of Israeli civilians killed since 2015, and 2023 was on track to match or even surpass that record. Violence taking place in or near the Aqsa Mosque in recent weeks was deeply concerning. The historical status quo should be respected at the holy sites in Jerusalem.

10. Despite steps to improve movement and access in Gaza, closures continued to exacerbate the humanitarian situation. Recurring violent escalations between Israel and armed factions, including the indiscriminate launching of rockets towards Israel, continued to take a toll on civilians. In the previous week, Israeli air strikes had led to the loss of 33 Palestinian lives. In addition, one Israeli civilian had been killed by rocket fire. Both sides were urged to uphold the current ceasefire.

11. The Palestinian refugee crisis had prompted the creation of UNRWA, which continued to deliver vital services to some six million Palestinian refugees in the Middle East, work that was critical to regional stability. Member States were urged to ensure sufficient and predictable funding for the Agency as it struggled with an unprecedented financial crisis.

12. The question of Palestine was intimately linked to the history and Charter of the United Nations. Respect for international law, human rights, self-determination and the peaceful resolution of conflicts constituted the Organization's *raison d'être*. The position of the United Nations was clear: the occupation must end and a two-State solution must be achieved, in line with

international law, United Nations resolutions and previous agreements. An independent Palestine, living side-by-side with Israel, with Jerusalem as the capital of both States, was desired.

Statement by the President of the State of Palestine

13. **Mr. Abbas** (President of the Observer State of Palestine) said that the Organization's historic decision to commemorate on 15 May the Nakbah perpetrated by Israel 75 years earlier – after the date had gone ignored for many years – constituted a recognition of the historic oppression and injustice endured by the Palestinian people ever since. By acknowledging the Nakbah, the United Nations was in effect repudiating the Zionist Israeli narrative and its denial of the Nakbah. He was confident that the Organization would spare no effort to rehabilitate the Palestinian people and mitigate the impact of the tragedy by adopting a resolution enshrining the annual commemoration of the Nakbah – which had truly been a tragedy for all humankind – and working to realize the Palestinian people's rights to self-determination and an independent State, as well as the right of Palestine refugees to return to the homes they had been expelled from. Through the efforts of Palestinians and their moral allies worldwide, the international community was becoming increasingly aware of the Palestinian account of the Nakbah and the question of Palestine in general, and discovering the spurious nature of the Israeli version of events. A national monument to commemorate the Nakbah was being built in Palestine, and a Palestinian law on the annual commemoration of the Nakbah had been enacted.

14. As long as Israel, the occupying Power, persisted in its aggression against the Palestinian people and its rejection of internationally recognized resolutions calling for the return of Palestine refugees to their homes, the Nakbah would not end. Israel also continued to occupy the land belonging to the State of Palestine, which the General Assembly had admitted as an observer State; build Jewish settlements on confiscated Palestinian land; and impose an apartheid regime both inside Israel and in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967.

15. Though a staggering one thousand resolutions recognizing the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people had been adopted by the United Nations over the years, not a single one had been implemented in all that time. The resolutions included General Assembly resolution [181 \(II\)](#), which provided for the establishment of an Arab State for the Palestinian people on 44 per cent of the land of historic Palestine, alongside the State of Israel, and resolution [194 \(III\)](#), which provided for the return home of Palestine refugees. While Israel should

be compelled to implement those resolutions as a condition for membership in the Organization, certain Member States had deliberately hindered their implementation, thereby opposing justice and morality and increasing the Palestinian people's suffering. He therefore called on the United Nations to either compel Israel to abide by those resolutions or suspend its membership in the Organization. A letter addressed to the United Nations in 1948 from Moshe Sharett, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Israel at the time, contained a pledge to implement General Assembly resolutions [181 \(II\)](#) and [194 \(III\)](#). If Israel failed to uphold its obligations – and indeed it had yet to do so – it should not be allowed to remain a Member State.

16. Certain major Powers enabled the occupying Power to remain above the law, shielding it from accountability for its aggression, its destruction of the two-State solution and its violation of the historical legal status quo in the Haram al-Sharif. The double standard being applied and the obstruction of implementation of United Nations resolutions were inexplicable. The United Kingdom and the United States of America were politically and morally responsible for the Nakbah, having taken the decision to implant a foreign entity in the historic Palestinian homeland in service of their colonial aim, uncritically accepting the claim that Palestine had been a land without a people.

17. The ill-fated Balfour Declaration issued by the Government of the United Kingdom had characterized the majority of the Palestinian Arab population as “non-Jewish communities” without mentioning them by name, and promised to give them religious and civil rights only, even though they constituted 96 per cent of the total population of Palestine. Contrary to logic, justice and the rule of law, those not in possession of the land had handed it over to those who had no right to it.

18. The colonial Powers, which bore historical responsibility for the Nakbah, also bore a historical responsibility to deliver justice to the Palestinian people and alleviate the suffering they continued to endure, 75 years on. The first and most common Zionist fabrication was that Palestine had been a land without a people and that it should be given to a people without a land. In truth, the historical homeland of Palestine had been inhabited and made to flourish by the Palestinians for thousands of years since the establishment of their civilization by their Canaanite Arab ancestors, a fact attested in the major religious texts, including the Torah. For centuries, the Arab Levant had indeed been the cradle of one of the most advanced human civilizations in the region.

19. Palestinians had not, as was falsely claimed, left their homeland voluntarily in 1948 but had instead returned to defend it, despite their lack of resources and the opposition of the British colonial authorities, which had armed the Zionists while forbidding Palestinians to bear arms and punishing those who did so. The Jewish Brigade of the British Army, which had fought with the Allies in the Second World War, had been brought to Palestine after the war, equipped and trained, to fight the dispossessed Palestinians. As a result, the State of Israel had been established; Israel had committed more than 50 massacres in the process, razing more than 530 Palestinian villages. According to United Nations statistics, no fewer than 957,000 refugees had been displaced, accounting for more than half the Palestinian people. Despite the publication of secret Zionist evidence and documents confirming that Palestinians had resisted their forcible displacement, Israel continued to repeat those fabricated allegations. The documentary film *Tantura*, produced, written and directed by Israelis, provided powerful evidence. The film featured individuals who were the very perpetrators of the crimes of 1948, now in their nineties, admitting to and describing the massacres they had committed.

20. In addition to the Nakbah and all its subsequent crimes, Israel had desecrated Islamic and Christian holy sites in Palestine and denied Palestinians the right to worship freely in the Aqsa Mosque/Haram al-Sharif, which was the exclusive right of Muslims. Islamic and Christian cemeteries had not been spared attacks by terrorist settlers and occupation forces. Israeli occupation authorities had been carrying out illegal excavations in the Aqsa Mosque for 30 years that would support Israeli claims to rights over the site, to no avail, with Israeli historians and archaeologists admitting that no such evidence had been found.

21. Following a thorough investigation of the matter, in which Jewish and Islamic religious authorities had been consulted, a report issued with the approval of the League of Nations ([A/7057/Add.1](#)) in 1930, the year after the Buraq Uprising, had concluded that the sole ownership of and proprietary right to the Buraq Wall and the Haram al-Sharif belonged to the Islamic Waqf.

22. The spurious claim by Israel that its wars against Palestinians and Arabs had been defensive wars was easily debunked. Massacres, the destruction of villages and the displacement of half the population of Palestine in 1948, as well as wars of aggression against and occupation of other countries in the region could hardly be characterized as defensive. Moreover, secret Israeli documents since published had contained admissions by Israeli Army generals that the 1967 war had been planned well in advance. Defensive wars did not

normally involve the annexation of occupied territories, as Israel had done in Jerusalem and the Syrian Golan, in flagrant violation of internationally recognized resolutions that affirmed the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force; nor did they entail the construction of settlements on and the transfer of settlers into occupied land, or the killing of civilians in Palestinian cities. More than 750,000 Israeli settlers currently lived in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, from which Palestinians had been expelled, both acts in contravention of the Third Geneva Convention. The continued Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory and the decades-old blockade against the Gaza Strip were fuelling the continued cycle of violence.

23. Another persistent and specious Zionist claim held that Palestine had been a desert that Israel had made bloom. In fact, before the establishment of the State of Israel, Palestine had been a Mediterranean country covered by fertile plains, rivers and lakes – bodies of water that Israel had caused to dry up – and had exported oranges and other products worldwide.

24. There was much evidence to refute the greatest lie of all, namely, the claim by Israel and its colonial backers that it was the only democratic State in the Middle East. Israel had committed the Nakbah, occupied another country and been classified by international human rights organizations – including the Israeli organization B'Tselem, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International – as an apartheid State. In addition, the International Court of Justice was examining the nature of the occupation by Israel of Palestinian land and the discriminatory legal system under which Jews alone had the right to self-determination.

25. Another falsehood propagated by Israel and its supporters was the claim that the Palestinians were wasting another opportunity and that there was no Palestinian partner for peace. The Palestinian people had publicly declared that they would accept a State on a mere 22 per cent of their historic homeland. They had recognized Israel and were prepared to live side by side in security, peace and good neighbourliness. In addition, they had accepted all internationally recognized resolutions, demonstrated their readiness to resolve the conflict with Israel through peaceful negotiations on the basis of those resolutions and accepted the Arab Peace Initiative. It was Israel that had already retracted its agreement to the understandings reached at Aqaba and Sharm al-Shaykh in February and March 2023 and witnessed by representatives of the United States, Egypt and Jordan. Amidst claims that there was no Palestinian partner for peace, Palestinians were left to wonder where the Israeli partner for peace was.

26. Yet another questionable Israeli narrative concerned the seventy-fifth anniversary of its so-called independence. He would like to know what Power had occupied Israel and subsequently granted it independence, given that Israel had been neither annexed nor occupied. Instead, the occupier had brought Israel to the region and granted it independence and statehood.

27. Achieving peace and security in the Middle East would require recognition of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and the independence of their sovereign State within the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital; resolution of the question of Palestine refugees; and the release of Palestinian prisoners from Israeli prisons, some of whom were infirm, children and even pregnant women. He wondered what kind of country could imprison such vulnerable groups and how people could stand idly by before such deeds. The 44 per cent of the land granted to the Palestinian people under General Assembly resolution 181 (II), when they constituted the majority of the population, had since dwindled to 22 per cent, to which they had also agreed; it was unclear what would be asked of them next. Palestine and East Jerusalem would remain Arab until the end of time.

28. The Palestinian people were not and could not be against Judaism or the Jews, as a neighbouring and a fellow monotheistic, believing people. They did, however, oppose all those who, whatever their creed, occupied Palestinian land.

29. In Israel, dangerous extremist voices were denying the existence of the Palestinian people and, inconceivably, openly calling for committing another Nakbah against the Palestinians, in full view of the Israeli Government. The killing and deportation of Palestinians and demolition of their homes were being carried out by the Israeli Government itself, led by its Prime Minister and even more extremist politicians, not to mention the terrifying onslaught of terrorist settler gangs burning down homes and killing the inhabitants of the village of Huwara with the protection of the Israeli Army. The international community must intervene, deter aggression and provide international protection to the Palestinian people. The United Nations had been shamefully derelict in its duty to protect the Palestinian people, who were human and therefore deserving; even animals were regarded as worthy of protection.

30. He paid tribute to the honourable and peace-loving people of the world who had condemned the crimes committed in Huwara, and, in particular, the conscientious, humane Israeli citizens who had gone to

the village to stand in solidarity with its people, given material assistance, protested the killing and destruction and, consequently, been subjected to repression and attack by extremist settlers and occupying Israeli forces.

31. The international community must not remain silent about the false allegations made by Israel or allow it to remain a State above the law. The United Nations, as an esteemed international organization that worked to achieve international peace and security, must maintain its credibility. Furthermore, in order to address the roots of the conflict, the Israeli Government and its partners must assume responsibility for the Nakbah and the crimes perpetrated since 1948, and render due restitution and apology. For their part, the Palestinian people would continue to bring before all forums, especially the International Criminal Court, their demand that their rights be upheld.

32. At the heart of the Palestinian story was the incontrovertible fact that the truth was on the Palestinian people's side, and that they had the right to live freely and with dignity in a free and dignified homeland, as well as to defend themselves and their national rights. It was up to the United Nations to help them achieve their freedom, independence and full membership in the Organization, for which they met all the requirements, as well as to ensure the implementation, at the very least, any one or more of its resolutions, and provide them with international protection, which they sorely lacked.

33. The Palestinian people would preserve national unity by all means, whatever the challenges, within the framework of the Palestine Liberation Organization, their sole legitimate representative, and their steadfast commitment to international law and resolutions that, it appeared, were flouted by all but insisted upon by his people alone. He paid tribute to the resilience of the Palestinian people, a people that, whatever oppression or trials they might face, were determined never to abandon their land again. He proudly saluted Palestinian martyrs and prisoners, who would not be forsaken, and vowed to keep the memory of the Nakbah alive as a guiding light and an incentive for the Palestinian people, in their resolve to end the occupation and achieve freedom and independence. Sooner or later, the occupation would vanish and Palestinian rights would prevail, as would peace in the region and the world.

Statement by the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

34. **Mr. Lazzarini** (Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)), speaking via

video link, said that more than 700,000 Palestinians had been displaced by the 1948 war. In recognition of the rights of Palestine refugees to protection and assistance, UNRWA had been established in 1950 to continue the vital work that other relief partners had begun in 1948. The anniversary of the Nakbah was also a day to highlight how, collectively, the United Nations and its partners had made a difference in the lives of Palestine refugees.

35. Over the years, more than two million children had graduated from UNRWA schools. UNRWA had greatly improved basic health, providing universal vaccination and excellent maternal and paediatric health care. United Nations had an obligation to help those impacted by crisis and those in need, including Palestine refugees, who must continue to receive support until a just solution to their plight was found.

36. In addition to providing direct assistance, UNRWA was the custodian of the records of Palestine refugees. UNRWA used an application that gave refugees online access to those records, and anyone could view photos in the UNRWA photographic and film archive.

37. The plight of Palestine refugees was the longest unresolved refugee crisis in the world. The serious financial crisis that UNRWA had faced for more than a decade threatened to undo the progress that had been made for millions of Palestine refugees. Until a political solution was found to the issue of Palestine refugees, there was no alternative to the Agency.

Statements by intergovernmental organizations

38. **Mr. Matug** (Observer for the African Union), speaking on behalf of the Chair of the African Union Commission, said that the situation in the occupied territories was deteriorating significantly. Israeli air strikes on Gaza had claimed dozens of lives, including those of women and children, and had destroyed homes and public buildings. Ongoing tensions had dramatically affected the security situation and had led to the displacement of civilians, many of whom had sought refuge in UNRWA schools and other sites across Gaza. Seventy-five years after the Nakbah, the displacement of civilians was ongoing. Many Palestinians faced displacement from their homes and land, particularly in areas under Israeli occupation, including East Jerusalem and the West Bank, further exacerbating the humanitarian crisis in the occupied territories.

39. The African Union Commission was gravely concerned about the critical situation of the Palestine refugees. The Israeli occupation continued to define every aspect of the daily lives of youth and residents of the camps. Palestine refugees continued to face serious

protection challenges owing to the ongoing occupation, armed conflict and displacement and, in many places, were sinking deeper into poverty and desperation.

40. For decades, Israel had continued its settlement policy in the Occupied Palestinian Territory in clear violation of international norms and standards. Those illegal settlements, which were built on confiscated or stolen Palestinian land, contributed to forced displacement, limited Palestinian access to basic resources and supported a system of segregation and structural inequality between Palestinians and Israelis.

41. All involved must take concrete measures to end the violence and comply strictly with international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Redoubled efforts were required to find a just and lasting solution to the conflict, based on the two-State solution and within the framework of the relevant African Union and United Nations resolutions. The parties were urged to come to the negotiating table in good faith.

42. African support for the Palestinian cause was based on the values of freedom and justice and on humanitarian principles. African States had consistently expressed deep concern at the consequences of the unilateral policies and provocations of Israel, including the ongoing attacks in the Gaza Strip. The continuation of the Israeli occupation and of settlement activities, as well as arrests of civilians, extrajudicial killings of youth and children, the blockade of Gaza, home demolitions, repeated attacks by Israeli settlers on Palestinian people and their properties and provocations against holy places contravened the principles of the United Nations.

43. The African Union Commission continued to call on the international community to assume its responsibilities concerning the question of Palestine and to compel Israel to comply with international law. All stakeholders must commit to relaunching the peace process with a view to establishing a sovereign and viable Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions.

44. **Mr. Alanbar** (Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf), speaking on behalf of the Secretary-General of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, said that the suffering of the Palestinian people continued more than 75 years after Israel had seized their lands and stripped away their inalienable rights. The Israeli occupation continued to expand its settlement campaigns, demolish Palestinian homes, desecrate Palestinian holy places and expose the Palestinians to the worst forms of oppression,

deprivation and economic blockade. All such Israeli actions perpetuated the Nakbah, a traumatic event and a source of international tension and Palestinian and Arab despair. On the anniversary of that event, the Council reaffirmed its firm rejection of the policies of the Israeli occupation, which contravened international law and the principles underpinning the Charter of the United Nations. The Council firmly supported the inalienable and imprescriptible rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to a voluntary and dignified return to their homes, in accordance with General Assembly resolution [194 \(III\)](#) and subsequent related resolutions.

45. The international community and international and regional organizations must take action to put an end to repeated provocations in the Palestinian territories, including the brutal and arbitrary killing of civilians, among them women and children, and encroachments on the Aqsa Mosque and the Islamic and Christian holy places, which were grave violations of international law, the principles of international humanitarian law and the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, and which contributed to frustration and despair and shattered the currently fragile status quo, rendering peace even more elusive. An end to the conflict and the achievement of just and comprehensive peace, stability and development for the peoples of the Middle East would remain out of reach as long as Israel continued to shirk its duties and persisted in its grave violations. Israel should reconsider its settlement policies and implement the rights of the Palestinian people in line with resolutions of international legitimacy. The international community must hold Israel accountable in order to move forward with the political process and save the two-State solution.

46. The Arab States of the Gulf hoped that commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Nakbah would reaffirm the principles necessary for a solution to the question of Palestine, including those of the Arab Peace Initiative, based on United Nations resolutions. The only way to achieve freedom, justice, equality and dignity for the Palestinians was through a return to their homes and the establishment of an internationally recognized and independent State within the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

47. **Mr. Peñalver Portal** (Cuba), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Group remained deeply concerned about the further decline of the social and economic conditions of the Palestinian people as a result of illegal Israeli practices, including the continuing colonization of Palestinian land, in grave breach of international humanitarian law. The Group demanded a halt to the confiscation by Israel of

Palestinian property, the construction and expansion of Israeli settlements and the wall, the demolition of Palestinian homes, the mass dispossession and forced displacement of Palestinian civilians and all annexation measures. The Group called for full respect for international law and all relevant resolutions.

48. The Group was greatly concerned that the Palestinians continued to face severe restrictions on construction and access to natural resources. Nearly 99 percent of Palestinian building permit applications had been rejected, which meant that it was extremely challenging for Palestinians to develop their communities on their own land. In Gaza, the illegal Israeli blockade and repeated military aggressions had made development goals ever more elusive. According to a recent report (A/77/90-E/2022/66), the Gaza blockade and closures limited Palestinian access to materials and technologies that could promote the efficient use of energy, water and other natural resources.

49. The Group reaffirmed the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and of the population of the occupied Syrian Golan over their land, water and energy resources. Israel, the occupying Power, must cease the exploitation, damage, cause of loss and endangerment of natural resources in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan, which constituted violations of international law and severely undermined sustainable development.

50. The international community must shoulder its responsibilities to provide international protection to the Palestinian people, in accordance with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions, and to exert pressure on Israel to cease its repeated attacks on innocent civilians and infrastructure. Multilateral efforts were needed to preserve the prospects for a just and lasting two-State solution based on the recognized pre-1967 borders.

51. **Mr. Abdelaziz** (Observer for the League of Arab States) said that the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Nakbah was a painful memory for the Palestinian and Arab peoples and free peoples throughout the world. The tragedy that had befallen the Palestinian people as a result of the occupation of their land was an injustice and an act of aggression and terrorism. The Palestinian people had continued to suffer in the absence of justice for more than seven decades.

52. In 1948, in one of the worst tragedies to afflict humankind, more than 800,000 Palestinians had been expelled from their homes, 531 settlements had been completely destroyed and Zionist groups had committed

more than 70 massacres of Palestinians, leading to the loss of more than 15,000 lives. From 1948 to date, approximately 100,000 Palestinians had been killed as the Nakbah had continued through the 1967 occupation and its attendant crimes, including settlements, the theft of land and resources and the displacement of the population. Killings, detentions, the demolition of homes and facilities and the desecration of holy places had continued, and all aspects of Palestinian life had been destroyed in a futile attempt to undermine the resolve of the Palestinian people and to rob them of their rights and freedoms.

53. The League, in commemorating the Nakbah, recalled the sacrifices and achievements of the Palestinian people. The League also drew attention to the suffering of more than 5,000 people including older persons, women, children and sick people, detained in extreme conditions in Israeli occupation prisons and deprived of the most basic legal rights.

54. The League welcomed General Assembly resolution 77/23 on the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Nakbah. The support of Member States for that resolution affirmed the importance of redoubled international efforts for ending that historical injustice. Peace-loving States and organizations should continue to advance their position by submitting pleadings and testimony in the matter before the International Court of Justice concerning the legal consequences arising from the occupation of the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

55. The international community had a responsibility to confront the extremism of the right-wing Israeli Government, which never missed an opportunity to inflame the situation in the occupied territories. The Israeli Government constantly worked to undermine the two-State solution through its settlement projects and incursions into the Aqsa Mosque. All peace-loving forces must stand as one to put a stop to those extremist practices.

56. The crimes committed by Israel were not subject to a statute of limitations. International justice mechanisms must be pressed into action to prosecute Israeli officials for those crimes and ensure accountability. The International Criminal Court should initiate procedures to end impunity. The Security Council must uphold its responsibility to implement its resolutions, to end the Israeli occupation and to establish an independent Palestinian State within the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

57. The League commended the Palestinian people for their steadfastness in the struggle to end five decades of continued suffering. The occupation might control the

land, but it could never obliterate memory or suppress historical truth. The memory of the Nakbah would persist over the generations and the Israeli occupation, like others in history, would vanish.

58. **Mr. Opeloyeru** (Observer for the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)), speaking on behalf of the Secretary-General of OIC, said that the Nakbah was a crime against the Palestinian people. The systematic State terrorism, forcible mass displacement, ethnic cleansing, confiscation of the land and property of the Indigenous Palestinian people and the denial of legitimate Palestinian national rights that had accompanied the establishment of Israel, the colonial occupying Power, had been a setback for freedom and justice.

59. OIC expressed its admiration for the Palestinian people, who, despite the repercussions of that painful catastrophe, provided an example of steadfastness, sacrifice, faith in the justice of their cause and the miracle of rebirth and survival. The Palestinians had proven that they could establish and protect their national identity, assert their legitimate rights, defend their land and attain recognition of their existence and their State.

60. The commemoration of the Nakbah reminded the international community of its political, legal, humanitarian and moral responsibilities to end the Israeli occupation and to hold Israel, the occupying Power, accountable for its crimes against humanity. The international community must correct the historical injustice that continued to befall the Palestinian people and find a just, comprehensive and lasting solution to their cause in accordance with the relevant resolutions of international legitimacy and the Arab Peace Initiative. The international community must intervene not only to address the mistakes and silence of the past, but also to help the Palestinian people to achieve their hopes for peace, freedom, justice, equality, development and self-determination.

61. OIC appreciated the role of UNRWA in protecting the rights of the Palestine refugees and meeting their growing needs until their right to return and compensation was fulfilled in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions. OIC stressed the need to support the political, legal and humanitarian mandate of the Agency and its role as the living international witness to the tragedy of the refugees.

62. The right of the Palestinian people to return to their homeland and property was an imprescriptible and vested right, as had been reflected in relevant resolutions of international legitimacy. Furthermore, that right was inalienable and organically linked to the

right to self-determination. OIC called for intensified international efforts to force Israel, the occupying Power, to assume its political and legal responsibility under the relevant United Nations resolutions, especially General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

63. The extremist Israeli Government had continued to escalate its policies of colonial settlement-building, terrorism, incitement and violence. Key international actors should engage in a multilateral peace process aimed at ending the Israeli occupation and achieving a just and lasting peace, in line with international law, United Nations resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative.

64. OIC reaffirmed its unwavering support for the Palestinian people in their just struggle to exercise their national rights, most notably the right to return and the right to establish an independent State based on the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. The Organization also called on Member States to support the inalienable rights of the Palestinians and to recognize the State of Palestine as a full State Member of the United Nations.

65. **Ms. Novruz** (Azerbaijan), speaking on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, said that the Movement reaffirmed its unwavering solidarity with the Palestinian people and its support for their inalienable human rights, including the rights to self-determination and independence. The Movement reiterated its commitment to a fair and lasting solution to the question of Palestine, including the plight of the Palestine refugees, and to genuine peace and security in the Middle East on the basis of international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions. The Movement reiterated its longstanding calls for intensified efforts to bring an end to the injustice and to advance a peaceful and just solution. The international community must uphold its responsibilities and obligations with respect to the Palestine question until it was justly resolved.

66. During the ministerial meeting of the Movement held on the sidelines of the high-level week of the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session, the Ministers had adopted a political declaration, stressing that a just, lasting and peaceful solution to the question of Palestine in all its aspects must remain a priority for the Movement and a permanent responsibility of the United Nations until it was satisfactorily resolved in accordance with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions. It was deeply regrettable that, despite a proven commitment by the Palestinian people to the two-State solution for peace and despite painful compromises, its plight had worsened, with millions still suffering continued oppression,

displacement and hardship. The political horizon for the realization of a just solution remained absent.

67. The Movement also reiterated its demand for the full and immediate lifting by Israel of its illegal blockade of the Gaza Strip, which continued to severely impair all aspects of civilian Palestinian life in Gaza. The Movement's member States were gravely concerned about the lack of accountability for violations committed by Israel, the occupying Power, including the killing and injuring of defenceless Palestinian civilians and the arbitrary detention and imprisonment of thousands of Palestinians, among them children and women. The absence of justice led to greater impunity and instability, diminishing the prospects for peace. The Movement continued to call for international action to ensure the cessation of, and accountability for, systematic Israeli violations against the Palestinian people.

68. International solidarity with the just Palestinian cause must be directed towards support for the rights of the Palestinian people and for the independence and sovereignty of the State of Palestine in all Palestinian territory occupied by Israel in 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the relevant resolutions, and a just solution to the plight of the Palestine refugees, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III). The international community must commit to assisting the Palestinian people, including the Palestine refugees, through support for UNRWA.

Statement by civil society

69. *At the invitation of the Chair, Mr. Fort (Columbia University) took a place at the Committee table.*

70. **Mr. Fort** (Columbia University) said that his introduction to the struggle for justice in Palestine had begun in 2014 in Ferguson, Missouri, in the United States, when people from across the country had flooded the streets to protest the killing by a white police officer of an unarmed Black teenager. As a Black man who had witnessed the ongoing legacy of white supremacy and racial capitalism, from the spectacular violence of police killings to the slow violence of mass incarceration, Black infant mortality, evictions, the racial wealth gap and environmental racism, he could not sleep at night knowing that people who looked like him were living a nightmare in the United States.

71. One year later, he had visited Palestine with the Dream Defenders, a Black-led multiracial organization. On that visit, he had borne witness to the ongoing reality of the Palestinian Nakbah. He had seen Israeli soldiers harassing and humiliating Palestinians at checkpoints.

He had seen a Jim Crow-style road system that had separated Israeli and Palestinian communities, an Israeli shopping mall built on top of a Palestinian graveyard and a 25-foot high apartheid wall that confined Palestinians to the poorest regions of their own land. He had listened to the stories of Palestinians who had resisted extrajudicial executions, mass imprisonment, land confiscation, house demolitions, restrictions on water and movement and the pernicious lie that their lives were less valuable than those of others. He had thought about how millions of people in the United States, most of them Black, brown, poor, immigrants, Indigenous, disabled, queer or transgender, were in prison or lived under some form of carceral control. The prisons in both places had been built by the same imperial colonial racist capitalist apparatus and had been funded by his tax dollars. There was a moral responsibility to address the political misery of Israeli apartheid.

72. Member States must end all aid and military cooperation with the State of Israel. An embargo was needed on arms sales to and from Israel. Just as the United Nations had done in the case of South Africa, it should take steps to document the human rights violations of Israel and isolate its Government. The United Nations should reopen the Special Committee against Apartheid, which had played a key role in the struggle against apartheid in southern Africa and which still had the responsibility to respond to apartheid policies anywhere in the world, including in Israel-Palestine. The United Nations must help to end violations of human rights and international law by voting to end the blockade of Gaza, which punished two million people, half of whom were children.

73. *Mr. Fort (Columbia University) withdrew.*

Closing remarks by the Chair of the Committee

74. **The Chair** said that the Committee had received messages of support and solidarity from the Heads of the following States: Algeria, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Jordan, Kuwait, Qatar, Senegal, Tunisia, Türkiye and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).

75. Messages had been received from the Heads of Government of the following States: Bangladesh, Cuba, Guyana, Lebanon, Malaysia and Namibia.

76. Messages had been received from the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the following States: Bahrain, China, Nicaragua, South Africa, Syrian Arab Republic and United Arab Emirates.

77. Messages had been received from the following organizations: the African Union, the League of Arab States and the Cooperation Council of the Arab States of the Gulf.

78. The messages would be posted on the website of the Division for Palestinian Rights.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.