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Official Records

President: Mr. Francis (Trinidad and Tobago)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Dibba (Gambia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 35 (continued)

Question of Palestine

Report on the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (A/78/35)

Note by the Secretary-General (A/78/303)

Mrs. Narváez Ojeda (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): Chile is grateful for the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People covering the period from 2 September 2022 to 31 August 2023 (A/78/35). The report paints a bleak picture of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, characterized by increasing human rights violations against the Palestinian civilians, including women and children, and an increase in settlement activities and progressive annexation. The picture pales in comparison to the consequences of the recent Israeli military operation in Gaza initiated on 7 October.

Clearly, the exercise of force in the context of legitimate self-defence by a State that has been attacked must be guided by international humanitarian law. That requirement has not been met, since there has been bombing of civilian housing, public infrastructure, education and health centres, including the premises

of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) themselves. However, we note with hope the recent humanitarian pause that has allowed Israeli civilians held hostage to return to their homes.

We raise our voice to call for a permanent ceasefire, the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages and the implementation without delay of the 10-point proposal of the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Martin Griffiths.

We also note with deep concern the report of 20 October of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 (see A/78/545), Francesca Albanese, who noted that since 1967, more than 800,000 Palestinians, including children as young as 12 years old, have been arrested and detained under authoritarian rules enacted, enforced and judged by the Israeli military. We encourage continued dialogue leading to the release of all hostages held by Hamas and the release of Palestinian prisoners.

We welcome the announcement of the extension of the humanitarian pause. However, that fragile situation requires ongoing efforts to allow for a greater and steady inflow of urgently needed assistance to the Gaza Strip. We urgently call on the parties to the conflict to turn the humanitarian pause into a permanent ceasefire and put an end to the suffering of Palestinian civilians.

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It is paradoxical and demoralizing that, as we approach the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was written in a world devastated by war and the recent memory of the Holocaust, we must witness today the cruel situation in the Middle East. Rapid and unimpeded humanitarian access to Gaza is of the utmost urgency, as the continuation of the current situation will lead only to further loss of life. The situation in shelters remains dire, with extremely limited assistance available and no additional space to accommodate the growing number of internally displaced persons, who are sheltering in nearly 150 UNRWA facilities throughout the Gaza Strip, while facing deteriorating humanitarian conditions. We are concerned that, if a definitive ceasefire cannot be agreed, the cycle of violence will resume and there will be further loss of human lives, most of them women and children, as has already been the case. Chile will be actively involved in all efforts to seek and obtain justice. We call for an investigation based on all facts by the competent international agencies to determine and eventually demand accountability for those responsible.

We feel a sense of responsibility in these times. Chile will not remain indifferent to the current situation and the pain of the Palestinian people. We must all work to create the conditions to end the war and begin a process of meaningful and productive dialogue that will allow us to move towards two States, while acknowledging the right of Israel and Palestine to coexist in peace, within secure, mutually agreed and internationally recognized secure borders, in accordance with the provisions of the relevant United Nations resolutions.

Mr. Alwasil (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to sincerely thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this meeting. I also thank His Excellency the Secretary-General for his note (A/78/303) and the Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for the report before us regarding the agenda item under consideration (A/78/35).

I align myself with the statement delivered by the representative of the Sultanate of Oman on behalf of the States members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (see A/78/PV.39).

Gaza is witnessing brutal crimes against innocent civilians and the destruction of facilities and infrastructure, including health-care facilities and places of worship. That requires the need for collective efforts

to end the daily escalating humanitarian crisis and find a definitive solution. We reaffirm our categorical rejection of the actions that have killed thousands of children, women and elderly people. We call for an immediate end to military operations and the provision of humanitarian corridors to relieve civilian suffering and enable international humanitarian organizations to play their role.

The Kingdom has made tireless efforts since the onset of the recent events to help and protect civilians in the Gaza Strip. We have provided humanitarian assistance and relief by air and sea and launched urgent public fundraising campaigns, which, to date, have raised more than half a billion Saudi riyals.

The Kingdom also called for the convening in Riyadh on 11 November of the Joint Arab Islamic Extraordinary Summit on Israeli Aggression against the Palestinian People, which adopted a resolution condemning Israel's aggression against the Gaza Strip and rejecting its justification under any pretext. The resolutions calls for an immediate entry of humanitarian aid convoys, including food, medicine and fuel, into the Strip. It rejects the forcible displacement of the Palestinian people and condemns Israel's destruction of hospitals in the Gaza Strip. It calls for immediate action, on behalf of all member States of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the League of Arab States, regarding the aggression against Gaza. It presses for the launching of a serious political process to achieve a durable and comprehensive peace, in accordance with the adopted international terms of reference.

With regard to the efforts aimed at de-escalation, the protection of civilians and the delivery of humanitarian assistance to our Palestinian brothers in the Gaza Strip, the Kingdom welcomes the humanitarian truce, which began last Friday. We commend the Qatari, Egyptian and United States efforts to that end, and we reiterate the call for a comprehensive cessation of military operations to ensure the protection of and assistance to civilians and the release of detainees and prisoners.

We call for the full implementation of Security Council resolution 2712 (2023), adopted on 15 November, which calls for pauses and humanitarian corridors to save what can be saved, especially children. We also highlight resolution ES-10/21, adopted on 27 October, which calls for an immediate ceasefire and the delivery of assistance. We call for the immediate implementation of those resolutions without any conditions.

My country strongly condemns the ongoing Israeli crimes against the Palestinian people, including the use of internationally prohibited weapons. We call upon the international community to hold the Israeli occupation authority accountable for those inhumane crimes, which constitute a blatant violation of international humanitarian law. We warn against double standards and selectivity in the implementation of United Nations rules and resolutions, which have serious consequences beyond this crisis and undermine the legitimacy of the norms of international law and order, which in turn reflects negatively on our ability to maintain international peace and security.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reiterates its firm rejection and denunciation of any attempt by Israel to annex the settlements in the West Bank, which represents a blatant violation of the Charter of the United Nations, the principles of international law and the relevant international resolutions, including Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), the 2004 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice and the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949.

We also condemn the fact that Israel continues to build settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories. We urge the international community to put pressure on the Israeli authorities to end settlements and implement the relevant international laws and resolutions. The Kingdom also condemns the repeated incursions into the sacred Al-Aqsa Mosque compound by settlers and Israeli officials supported and protected by Israeli occupation forces. The incursions constitute a grave violation of international law, the status quo of Jerusalem and its holy sites, and the sanctity of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, and a provocation of Muslims throughout the world.

We categorically reject all Israeli practices aimed at changing the legal and historical status quo of the Al-Aqsa Mosque or encouraging its partition. We stress that those ongoing violations and attacks against the holy sites increase tensions, undermine peace efforts and lead to an ongoing cycle of violence.

In conclusion, the position of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has been that security and stability in Palestine will be achieved only through the implementation of international resolutions aimed at implementing the two-State solution so that the Palestinian people can enjoy their legitimate rights and establish an independent and sovereign Palestinian State, within

the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. We commend all future efforts, especially by the permanent members of the Security Council, to reach a just peace for all. We also commend the role and efforts of the international community, represented by the General Assembly, to help the brotherly Palestinian people through supporting the political and legal efforts of the State of Palestine to achieve independence and self-determination on their occupied land. We reaffirm the need for the Israeli occupation authorities to heed the calls for peace, foremost among which is the Arab Peace Initiative, and to engage in meaningful and good faith negotiations to achieve peace based on the two-State solution, which would guarantee security and stability in that vital region of the world.

Ms. Brattsted (Norway): It remains Norway's firm position that only a negotiated two-State solution based on the internationally agreed parameters can lead to durable peace. The period after 7 October has clearly illustrated that lasting stability between Israel and Palestine, let alone in the region, cannot be achieved without addressing the question of Palestine.

More than seven weeks of hostilities in Gaza and Israel have led to a scale of human suffering that is unprecedented and has shocked the world. That includes the heinous terrorist attack by Hamas on 7 October, which Norway has condemned, and Israel's military operations in Gaza, which are not compatible with the protection of civilians required by international humanitarian law. It has gone too far. We reiterate our call for a durable and sustained humanitarian ceasefire.

We condemn the attacks against civilians and United Nations workers, and we pay tribute to the heroic efforts of Palestinian humanitarian and health workers, who are risking their lives in order to alleviate the suffering of others.

Norway has been clear about Israel's right to self-defence within the limitations of international law, and that all military operations must be in line with international humanitarian law. We have particularly emphasized that both parties to the conflict must protect civilians affected by the hostilities and humanitarian workers.

In the past four or five days, the world has witnessed what can be achieved when the guns are silenced. Norway welcomes the steps taken by the parties in recent days to commit to a temporary humanitarian pause and to release hostages. We thank Qatar, Egypt, the United

States and the International Committee of the Red Cross for their efforts to facilitate the agreement. The pause in the fighting has allowed the United Nations and partners to scale up the delivery of humanitarian assistance to Gaza, including to the northern parts. We urge all parties to further extend the agreement beyond the current pause, to release the remaining hostages and to cease hostilities.

Access must be dramatically improved and sustained. Humanitarians cannot be the main provider of all goods to Gaza. We need to discuss how commercial goods can start crossing over to Gaza and how to re-establish local markets.

The current situation is unbearable. It leads to unacceptable human suffering, it increases regional tensions, and it undermines diplomacy and prospects for a durable solution. We urge Israeli and Palestinian leaders to commit to a process that could constitute a peaceful path towards a lasting settlement. The international community must continue to support Palestinian institution-building and the unification of all of Palestine under one legitimate authority. Israel must stop policies and actions that weaken the Palestinian Authority. If the critical financial situation does not improve, it could lead to the further destabilization of the West Bank and, in the worst case, a collapse of Palestinian Authority institutions.

We have repeatedly expressed our deep concern over the continuing expansion of illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. The settlements, as well as the violence perpetrated by settlers, have reached an unprecedented scale and must stop.

Norway will continue its efforts to stabilize and strengthen Palestinian institutions in its capacity as Chair of the donor group to Palestine, the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians.

Finally, to reiterate our core message, only a negotiated two-State solution can achieve lasting and durable peace between Israel and Palestine and in the region.

Mr. Vongnorkeo (Lao People's Democratic Republic): My delegation appreciates the work carried out by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. We express our sincere gratitude to Secretary-General António Guterres for his relentless efforts to address that long-standing issue.

The question of Palestine has been the unresolved issue on the agenda of the United Nations for the longest period. Over the past seven decades, the United Nations has adopted numerous resolutions with the objective to ensure that the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people are fully respected. Yet the Palestinian people's goal, in their legitimate quest for dignity, justice and their inalienable right to self-determination in their independent and viable State of Palestine, has not been realized.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic is deeply concerned by the ongoing deteriorating security situation and humanitarian crisis in Gaza. We express our sincere condolences following the heavy loss of life and property exacerbated by the current violent hostilities. In that regard, the Lao People's Democratic Republic joins the international community in its urgent call for an immediate, durable and sustained humanitarian ceasefire in order for all essential assistance to swiftly and safely reach all civilians in Gaza, as stipulated in the General Assembly resolution adopted on 27 October (resolution ES-10/21). We continue our persistent call for the resumption of diplomatic negotiations. All actions must fully comply with obligations under international law, especially international humanitarian law. All civilians must be protected, with rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian assistance to prevent another major catastrophe.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic firmly believes that a lasting peace in the Middle East remains vital, not only for the region, but also for the world at large. In that connection, we reaffirm our consistent support for the global collective efforts aimed at pursuing a just and peaceful solution to the protracted Israeli-Palestinian conflict. To that end, it is vital to ensure that all parties concerned live up to their commitments and refrain from taking any further actions that will jeopardize the peace process.

In commemorating the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People this year, the Lao People's Democratic Republic reaffirms its long-standing support for the independence and sovereignty of the State of Palestine and for a peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that respects the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination. We support the State of Palestine's full membership in the United Nations.

In conclusion, the Lao People's Democratic Republic commends the continued efforts by the international community, especially all United Nations personnel and non-governmental organizations who continue to risk their lives working tirelessly in conflict areas in order to provide necessary assistance and prevent further humanitarian crises. We must strive to build the foundation of hope for the Palestinian people.

Mr. Ochoa Martínez (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): On the eve of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, I will focus my remarks on the main points of the message by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mexico, Alicia Bárcena Ibarra, to mark the Day.

Given the current situation on the Gaza Strip, which arose from the reprehensible attacks on 7 October, Mexico reiterates its strong call for a lasting cessation of hostilities. Mexico recognizes Qatar's mediation efforts, as well as those of Egypt and the United States, which, in recent days, have made possible the release of some of the hostages held by Hamas and a four-day humanitarian truce, which has been extended by 48 hours.

We reiterate our call for the release of all persons being held hostage by Hamas, including two Mexican citizens, and for strict respect for international humanitarian law. In particular, indiscriminate attacks and violence against civilians, both by the Israeli army and by Hamas and other extremist organizations in Gaza, must end, in order to lift the state of siege on the population of the Strip and thus prevent a further deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the region.

Mexico reiterates its support for all efforts aimed at establishing a fair and lasting peace in the region. Peace must be based on mutual respect and strict adherence to international law. Mexico will continue to support the international community's efforts in the quest for a comprehensive and definitive solution to the conflict, on the basis of two States, which would allow for the consolidation of a politically and economically viable Palestinian State, living side by side with Israel, within secure and internationally recognized borders, in line with international law and the relevant resolutions of the United Nations.

Moreover, cognizant of the grave humanitarian situation in the region, I have the pleasure to share that this year, the Government of Mexico will increase its voluntary contributions to the United Nations Relief and

Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, in recognition of its humanitarian work, which today is more necessary than ever before to assist and protect some 6 million Palestinian refugees in the region.

We urge all parties to the conflict to prioritize peace and focus their efforts on achieving a permanent cessation of hostilities. A viable solution to this long and complex conflict will emerge only through dialogue and political commitment. It is crucial to put an end to the current spiral of violence threatening the entire region and to take advantage of every opportunity that presents itself to launch a political process that meets Palestine's legitimate aspirations and guarantees Israel's security.

Mr. Gaouaoui (Algeria): We convene once again at our annual meeting to address the Palestinian question. As highlighted in the report transmitted by the Secretary-General (A/78/303), the plight of the Palestinian people was already an issue prior to 7 October. We have witnessed heightened attacks on Palestinians in the West Bank by occupation forces and settlers alike, the desecration of holy sites in Jerusalem and a siege on the beleaguered Gaza Strip. The Palestinian people endure continued suffering under occupation, and their predicament remains unalleviated. Regrettably, there is a lack of proactive initiatives to ameliorate their situation, compounded by the international community's failure to enforce United Nations resolutions and fulfil its legal and moral obligations.

Recently, we witnessed an unprecedented assault by occupation forces, resulting in more than 15,000 casualties, with a staggering 70 per cent of them being children and women. My country unequivocally condemns those attacks and implores the international community to intervene and bring an end to the violence.

We express gratitude for resolution ES-10/21 and Security Council resolution 2712 (2023), which represent an initial step towards ending the bloodshed faced by the Palestinian people. The resolutions underscore the imperative to uphold international humanitarian law, protect civilians and establish a lasting ceasefire, which is essential for the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip.

It is paramount not to divert our attention from the West Bank, where occupation forces continue to wreak havoc, causing numerous casualties and detaining hundreds. We strongly denounce the approval of a new settlement plan by the occupation authorities — a blatant violation of resolution 2334 (2016) — that escalates tensions in the region.

Algeria reiterates its unwavering support for the Palestinian people's inalienable rights, including the right to self-determination and the establishment of an independent sovereign State, with Jerusalem as its capital. We emphasize the preservation of Jerusalem's legal and historical status, including its Islamic and Christian holy sites, such as the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

Algeria supports the Palestinian quest for full United Nations membership, viewing it as a catalyst for achieving an acceptable political settlement, in accordance with international legitimacy.

In conclusion, Palestinian issues hold unique significance for the region's peoples, and the prolonged deadlock poses a severe threat to international peace and security. It is imperative to address the root causes comprehensively by ending the occupation of Palestinian territories, empowering the Palestinian people and ensuring their inalienable right to self-determination for the establishment of their independent State, with Jerusalem as its capital.

Mr. Dang (Viet Nam): The latest outbreak of violence in Gaza and the West Bank only demonstrates the continued volatility of the situation, which has been on the agenda of the General Assembly for many years. Regarding the current situation in the Middle East, Viet Nam takes note of the recent announcement extending the humanitarian pause in Gaza and the ongoing release of hostages. The scaling-up of the delivery of humanitarian aid in and across Gaza by the United Nations and other partners is also noted.

It is critical that safe access and the continuous flow of humanitarian aid is delivered to alleviate the dire need of all those in need. We remain deeply concerned about the ongoing cycle of violence and tensions and strongly condemn all indiscriminate attacks targeting civilians, humanitarian personnel, essential civilian infrastructure and crucial services for the survival of the population. Alongside the international community, we urgently call for a cessation of hostilities, maximum restraint, respect for international humanitarian law and the application of all necessary measures to protect human lives, including ensuring the safety and immediate release of hostages. The only path ahead should be an immediate and long-standing ceasefire and a return to negotiations that builds on current progress.

Viet Nam reaffirms its consistent position on resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through peaceful means, based on respect for international law

and relevant United Nations resolutions, including the resolution adopted last month at the tenth emergency special session (resolution ES-10/21). That also encompasses the safeguarding of the legitimate interests of all parties involved and the implementation of the two-State solution. The peace process also requires strong commitments by the international community, in particular the relevant partners, in facilitating an environment that is conducive to the cessation of hostilities and de-escalation of tensions, towards a long-lasting solution. All channels of diplomacy, whether bilateral or multilateral, should be utilized. In that connection, we support all initiatives proposed by members of the international community in that direction.

We appreciate the important role and contributions of United Nations agencies, particularly the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, to which we will make a contribution of \$500,000 to support the United Nations endeavours and express our solidarity with the people of Palestine. We also call on the international community to provide further assistance to the Palestinian people to overcome their current hardship.

In anticipation of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, to take place tomorrow, Viet Nam extends its warmest solidarity to the State and people of Palestine and reiterates its strong support to the Palestine people's righteous struggle for independence and freedom. We stand ready to engage in the endeavours of the United Nations and the international community to promote dialogue and seek an enduring, long-term and peaceful resolution of this issue.

Mr. Ladeb (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, my country's delegation would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for convening today's meeting. We express our appreciation for the work of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, and we value its role in helping the Palestinian people to regain their legitimate rights, including their right to self-determination, independence and sovereignty over their land.

The report of the Committee before us today (A/78/35) reflects the continuing Israeli violations and the deteriorating economic, security, social and humanitarian situations in the occupied Palestinian territory. It also reflects the increased suffering

experienced by the Palestinian people as a result of the occupation and the continuing practices by the occupying Power, namely its policies of oppression, expansion and aggression, in the absence of any form of accountability whatsoever.

In the context of commemorating the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the international community is required, now more than ever, to shoulder its political, legal and moral responsibilities to put an end to the violations and crimes committed by the occupation authorities and their systematic acts of genocide against civilians in Palestine in general and the Gaza Strip in particular.

On the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, His Excellency the President of the Republic of Tunisia, Mr. Kaïs Saïed, delivered a statement of solidarity with the brotherly Palestinian people, from which I am honoured to cite the following:

“Tunisia, which stands with all its capacity alongside the Palestinian people, condemns the gross violations of international humanitarian law, met with a suspicious international silence on the one hand and an unprecedented popular awareness of the Palestinians’ rights on the other. We call on the international community to shoulder its responsibility to apply the same standards when dealing with all issues of occupation and aggression.

“Tunisia stresses the need to put an end to the aggression and ensure the swift delivery of humanitarian assistance to those who need it in the Gaza Strip and throughout Palestine, without conditions or hindrances; to provide international protection to Palestinian civilians in accordance with the resolutions of the United Nations; and to put an end to the unjust siege of Palestine and the Gaza Strip and to all forms of collective punishment against the Palestinian people. We also call for the provision of protection and support to the relief teams and humanitarian organizations working on the ground.

“Tunisia reiterates its unequivocal rejection of all forms and attempts of forced displacement of Palestinians, measures aimed at changing the demographic composition, character and status of the occupied Palestinian territory and the desperate attempts to liquidate the just Palestinian question.

“Tunisia is convinced that achieving security and stability in the region remains dependent on ending the occupation of all Palestinian lands and the remaining occupied Arab lands, and on reaching a just, comprehensive and lasting solution that restores to the Palestinian people their stolen rights and that will not be subject to a statute of limitations, within their independent State, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital and with full sovereignty over their land.

“Tunisia calls on the international community to draw lessons from distant and recent history and from past and present tragedies in order to bring about qualitative progress in international efforts, including at the level of the Security Council, with a view to decolonization, to the empowerment of the Palestinian people without further delay, and to the restoration of all their legitimate and internationally recognized rights.

“Tunisia stresses the need to replace the traditional approaches and unfeasible agendas in dealing with the Palestinian question by adopting a new approach, without any discrimination, based on wisdom and foresight, while upholding the universal rights, values and principles of the system of international and humanitarian law for the sake of peace and stability in the region.”

In conclusion, my country reiterates its appreciation to the Secretary-General for his position and to the international and humanitarian organizations for their efforts in dealing with the situation in Gaza and the remaining occupied Palestinian territories. We once again emphasize the need for the international community to assume its moral and legal responsibilities to put an end to the human tragedy in the occupied Palestinian territories and to preserve the credibility and effectiveness of international law and international humanitarian law.

Mr. Alrowaiei (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): My country’s delegation thanks the secretariat of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development for all its efforts in preparing its report entitled “Economic costs of the Israeli occupation for the Palestinian people: the welfare cost of the fragmentation of the occupied West Bank” (A/78/303), which describes a situation in which the economic reality of the Palestinians living under occupation has only worsened.

According to the report, the year 2022 had the highest number of demolitions, including residential buildings, electricity and water networks and other investments and public buildings, leading to the displacement of at least 1,000 Palestinians, half of whom were children. At the same time, as demolitions and the forced displacement of Palestinians continued to take place, the number of settlers exploded from approximately 200,000 settlers in 2000 to 700,000 settlers at the end of last year, which has led to an intensification of the occupation and an increase in its economic, social and political costs, as well as an increased sense of resentment within the international community about the failure to implement the resolutions of the Security Council. Those include resolution 2334 (2016), which reaffirms that the establishment of settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory has no legal validity and constitutes a flagrant violation of international law and a major obstacle to the achievement of the two-State solution and a just and comprehensive peace.

Seven weeks have passed since the beginning of the war in the Gaza Strip, in which more than 14,000 Palestinians have been killed, the majority of whom were women and children, as were more than 100 employees of the United Nations, in particular the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), alongside dozens of journalists. The situation in Gaza, according to reports from the United Nations and humanitarian and relief organizations, is an unprecedented disaster by all measures, and the number of child victims in that conflict has exceeded the number of children killed in all other conflicts combined.

Civilian property, infrastructure, medical facilities, places of worship and schools, including those belonging to UNRWA, were also targeted. Hundreds of thousands of civilians took refuge in UNRWA schools. Due to the severe shortage of food, drinking water, medicine, medical supplies and fuel, as well as the siege imposed on the Gaza Strip, life has become unbearable. The ongoing conflict in Gaza threatens security and peace in the region, with a real risk of escalation, especially with increased acts of violence against Palestinians in the West Bank.

In that context, the Kingdom of Bahrain welcomes the agreement to establish a four-day humanitarian truce in the Gaza Strip, as well as the extension of said truce. We also welcome the release of a number of women and children who were hostages and detainees, which will

enable the delivery of humanitarian relief and medical aid, including fuel. We commend the joint mediation efforts of the State of Qatar, the Arab Republic of Egypt and the United States.

In conclusion, my country's delegation reaffirms the unwavering position of the Kingdom of Bahrain in support of the legitimate rights of the fraternal Palestinian people to freedom, self-determination and the establishment of their independent and sovereign State along the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, on the basis of the two-State solution, in accordance with international law, the Arab Peace Initiative and the resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly. That will constitute a genuine guarantee of coexistence between the Palestinian and Israeli peoples and an achievement of lasting peace.

Mr. Muhith (Bangladesh): I thank the President for convening this important meeting on the question of Palestine. I also thank the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for its report (A/78/35).

Once again, we have come to the General Assembly deeply saddened and terribly distressed as more than 15,000 Palestinians civilians have been killed by Israel in only the past 52 days. That includes at least 6,000 children and 4,000 women, comprising nearly 70 per cent of the fatalities, but does not take into account the thousands of Palestinians who remain under the rubble of destroyed buildings. Israel's genocide and war crimes continue under the watch of "the civilized world". And today the World Health Organization issued a stark warning that, if the health and sanitation systems are not repaired, more people in the Gaza Strip could die from disease than from bombings.

As critical infrastructure is attacked, the territory has been crippled by fuel and supply shortages, and targeted attacks on hospitals and United Nations facilities since Israel launched its brutal military strikes on Gaza on 7 October.

The ongoing temporary ceasefire is saving the lives for the time being, but we strongly condemn the threats by Israel to continue its criminal aggression after the end of the truce. We urgently call for a long-term and sustainable humanitarian truce and a permanent resolution to this crisis. In that regard, we reiterate our call for the immediate implementation of resolution ES-10/21 and Security Council resolution 2712 (2023).

We reiterate our utter condemnation of the ruthless and indiscriminate killing and collective punishment of innocent Palestinians and the indiscriminate bombing on protected facilities, such as refugee camps, schools, hospitals and religious sites in Gaza. Israeli occupying forces and extremist settlers continue to carry out provocations, incitements and attacks on Palestinian civilians in the West Bank and on holy sites in Jerusalem, including Al-Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram Al-Sharif.

We are also witnessing the unfortunate and unacceptable killing of humanitarian personnel. So far, 109 personnel of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East have been killed by Israel. Since 7 October, more than 80 per cent of the population has been displaced across the Gaza Strip. Even if we could stop that criminal aggression today, the lives of the Palestinians and its youth will continue to be tormented physically, psychologically and economically for decades and generations to come. Given the devastating situation, this organ should take effective measures against Israel's flagrant violation of international human rights and humanitarian law.

After 7 October, the situation in Palestine has far surpassed anyone's wildest nightmare. In 2022, the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, witnessed the highest number of Palestinian casualties recorded since 2006. As we prepare to commemorate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People tomorrow, I refer to the call of the Committee to the Member States and regional organizations to put pressure upon Israel, the occupying Power, to fulfil its responsibilities to safeguard Palestinian civilians under international law and to engage in a meaningful process of negotiations leading to the establishment of an independent and viable State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living in peace and security within internationally recognized borders.

It is totally unacceptable that Israel has been enjoying impunity despite its war crimes, genocide and violations of international law and United Nations resolutions, with the support of some member States. No country should be allowed to continue to carry out war crimes and killing innocent civilians in the name of its right to self-defence. We urge the international community to ensure accountability and bring Israel to justice. We have joined the referral of the situation in Palestine to the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court. We also recall resolution 77/247, which calls upon the International Court of Justice to provide

an advisory opinion on the prolonged denial of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, on the legality of the occupation of Palestinian territory by Israel and on consequences for third parties.

I reiterate that the permanent solution to the question of Palestine lies in making Israel accountable for its criminal activities and on establishing a sovereign, viable and independent Palestine on the basis of 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Mr. Al-Saadi (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): This meeting is being held in the light of the worst humanitarian catastrophe experienced by the Palestinian people, as a result of the brutal Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip, as well as the dramatic and terrifying increase in the number of civilian casualties. The spread of disease could also kill large numbers of the population of Gaza if they do not receive adequate medical services and supplies. The scale of destruction and massacres committed in the Gaza Strip shows that the frequency of death and killing as a result of the Israeli aggression against the Strip has no precedents in this century.

This aggression is targeting the Palestinian identity and the Palestinian people. It constitutes a war crime, a crime against humanity and a crime of genocide. It must stop. The number of casualties among United Nations staff who have lost their lives as a result of Israel's bombing of Gaza is also unparalleled by any other conflict.

We reiterate our strongest condemnation of the barbaric Israeli aggression against the Gaza Strip and the cities of the West Bank, as well as the targeting of civilians, most of whom are women and children. We also strongly condemn the targeting of humanitarian workers, medical teams, hospitals, infrastructure, places of worship, and schools and facilities related to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

The Israeli entity is reassured that international stances are nothing more than ink on paper, emboldening it to target Palestinian civilians, especially women and children. There must be legal and criminal accountability for every Palestinian civilian victim of the Israeli aggression and for every crime committed. We reiterate our rejection of all forms of selectivity in the implementation of international legal and moral standards and of overlooking the heinous crimes committed by the Israeli occupation forces against the people of Palestine in the Gaza Strip and the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

We strongly condemn the repeated insults and immoral and unacceptable attacks by officials and representatives of the Israeli occupation against United Nations senior officials, staff and agencies, in particular His Excellency Secretary-General António Guterres, simply because they are carrying out their work with great competence and professionalism. The insults only seek to hinder the work of the United Nations and undermine its activity in the light of the exceptional circumstances. This is unprecedented. The attack must cease immediately in order to protect the integrity of the Organization and its effectiveness in carrying out its critical and important role.

The Republic of Yemen welcomes the humanitarian truce agreement in the Gaza Strip, and we highly appreciate the efforts of our sisterly State of Qatar, sisterly Arab Republic of Egypt and friendly United States of America in reaching an extendable truce and building upon it in order to achieve a full and lasting ceasefire and an end to the war. The aim is to save more civilian lives, including women and children, and to allow more humanitarian assistance to enter. We also recall resolution ES-10/21, which explicitly states that the humanitarian truce should lead to a cessation of hostilities. The resolution was adopted by an overwhelming majority of the international community. We call upon the Security Council to uphold its responsibility in maintaining and safeguarding international peace and security in order to avoid the attempts of certain regional extremist Powers and their affiliates in the region to add fuel to the fire and increase the scope of the conflict in order to undermine security and stability in the region and jeopardize international navigation in the Red Sea.

We reaffirm the need for the Israeli occupation authorities to respect the legal and historical status of the holy Al-Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram Al-Sharif, which includes respecting the status of the Al-Haram Al-Sharif as a place of worship exclusively for Muslims. They also need to respect the role of the Jordanian administration of the Jerusalem Awqaf and Al-Aqsa Mosque Affairs Department as the only body that is entitled to manage the affairs of Al-Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram Al-Sharif and regulate entry into it. We also emphasize the right of the State of Palestine to exercise sovereignty over the occupied city of East Jerusalem as its capital, including its holy sites. The Israeli entity, as the occupying Power, has no right or sovereignty over the occupied city of Jerusalem and its Islamic and Christian holy sites.

We emphasize that a just, lasting and comprehensive peace, which constitutes a strategic option, is the only way to ensure security and stability for all peoples in the region and to protect them from the cycles of violence and war. That will only happen if the Israeli occupation is brought to an end, the Palestinian people enjoy their legitimate and inalienable rights and an independent sovereign Palestinian State is established in line with the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the resolutions of international legitimacy and the Arab Peace Initiative. Israel and the countries of the region will not enjoy peace and security unless Palestinians can enjoy them and unless all their stolen rights are restored. The continued Israeli occupation is a threat to regional security and stability and to international peace and security.

In conclusion, we reaffirm that any attempt or threat to evict or forcibly displace our Palestinian brothers from their homeland is a crime worthy of condemnation and rejection, and is a grave violation of international law and the fourth Geneva Convention. We reiterate our call on the international community, including the Security Council, to take action and assume responsibilities now to put an end to the inhumane acts being carried out by the Israeli occupation against the Palestinian people; to take effective international action to stop the war and the serious humanitarian disaster; to commit to protecting civilians; and to ensure the implementation of international law and international humanitarian law.

Mr. Henzel (United States of America): We are now on the fifth day of a complete pause in the fighting in Gaza, the first since the recent conflict began. A hostage deal has brought hostages home to their loved ones after more than 50 days.

We welcome the announcement yesterday by Qatar that the humanitarian pause in Gaza will be extended by two days, as Hamas committed to releasing another 20 women and children over these two days. We would like to thank our Israeli, Qatari and Egyptian partners for their commitment to this process and for reaching the agreement for an extension in the pause for 48 additional hours. Of course, we have taken maximum advantage of the pause for the hostage releases to also move as much additional humanitarian aid as we can and to increase volumes as much as we can. When this current phase of hostage releases is over, we have made very clear that this level, or increased levels, of movement of aid must ideally be sustained.

The pause has enabled a significant surge in humanitarian assistance to the innocent civilians suffering throughout the Gaza Strip. The United States has led the humanitarian response in Gaza, building on years of work as the largest funder of humanitarian assistance for the Palestinian people. We are taking full advantage of the pause in fighting to increase the amount of humanitarian aid moving into Gaza. We hope to see the pause extended further. Israel has been very clear that it is prepared, as part of the deal, to continue the pause in fighting for every day that Hamas releases an additional 10 hostages. The ball is in Hamas's court.

With regard to the draft resolution on which the General Assembly will take action today (A/78/L.10), as we have stated before, one-sided resolutions, whether put forward in the Security Council or here in the General Assembly, will not help to advance peace — not when they ignore facts on the ground. One-sided resolutions only perpetuate long-standing lines of division at a moment when we urgently need to work together.

With respect to the current crisis, as Secretary Blinken has said, the United States supports Israel's right to self-defence and believes that Gaza must never again be used as a platform for terrorism or other violent attacks. There must be no forcible displacement of Palestinians from Gaza — not now, and not after the war — no reoccupation of Gaza after the conflict ends, no attempt to blockade or besiege Gaza and no reduction in the territory of Gaza. We must also ensure that no terrorist threats can emanate from the West Bank.

The United States continues to believe the most viable path — indeed, the only path — to peace is through the creation of a Palestinian State. That is the only guarantor of a secure and democratic Israel, the only guarantor of Palestinians realizing their legitimate aspirations to live in a State of their own, enjoying equal measures of security and prosperity, and the only way to end this violence once and for all. Getting there will require concerted efforts by all of us — Israelis, Palestinians, regional partners and global leaders — to put us on the path to peace. The United States will continue to work with all Member States to chart a future in which Israelis and Palestinians have equal measures of security, freedom, justice, opportunity and dignity and a future in which Palestinians realize their legitimate right to self-determination and aspirations for a State of their own.

Ms. Habib (Libya) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to express my thanks and appreciation for all the commendable efforts made by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and all its members.

My country, Libya, reiterates its condemnation of the ongoing brutal Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip and other occupied Palestinian territories, which has claimed the lives of thousands of innocent martyrs, mostly women, children, the sick, medical staff, journalists and United Nations staff. We consider that to be a horrific crime against humanity and a new round in the series of genocidal acts to which the Palestinian people are being subjected.

The Palestinian question remains the main concern of my country, Libya, and the grave violations against the Palestinian people persist, despite the statements we write and the facts we report in international forums. Countries continue to condemn the events and resolutions are adopted but not implemented. Peace will not be achieved as long as the occupying Power continues to violate international law, usurp land, establish settlements and impose its unjust and unprecedented blockade on the Gaza Strip.

It is high time for the international conscience to act and end the worst and most violent occupation known to humanity. The continuation of the occupation and the increase in violations and repression dash any hope for any peaceful solution to the question. Attempts to forcibly displace Palestinians and to transfer the crisis to neighbouring countries will not be a solution and will further exacerbate the crisis. We will not wait for a new Nakba.

In conclusion, Libya affirms that it will continue to fully and unwaveringly support the struggle of the Palestinian people until they are able to exercise all their inalienable rights, foremost among which is their right to self-determination and the establishment of their independent and sovereign State, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

Mr. Alenezi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, my country's delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the delegation of the sisterly Sultanate of Oman on behalf of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf. I would also like to extend my sincere appreciation to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Chair of the

Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People on the reports before us on the agenda item under discussion (A/78/35 and A/78/303).

My country reaffirms the common Gulf position, which calls for an end to the brutal aggression launched by the Israeli occupation forces against the Gaza Strip. In recent weeks, we have followed the worrisome developments and the dangerous escalation taking place in the occupied Palestinian territories, particularly the Gaza Strip. As a result of the systematic crimes and assaults perpetrated by Israel, the occupying Power, against the brotherly Palestinian people, they continue to be subjected to repeated violations, both by the Israeli occupation forces and by outlaw settlers.

The State of Kuwait reiterates its strong condemnation and denunciation of those aggressive practices, which represent a provocation to the feelings of Muslims all over the world and a flagrant violation of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, in addition to being one more link in the chain of flagrant violations of all international charters and resolutions, an element that undermines the pillars of stability in the region and a catalyst of hateful sentiments, extremism and violence. We call on the international community to take immediate and urgent action to provide protection to the brotherly Palestinian people. We also call upon the international community, and specifically the Security Council, to assume its responsibilities under the Charter of the United Nations.

The Israeli occupation forces must be held fully responsible for the consequences of their crimes and illegal and provocative practices in Jerusalem and Al-Haram Al-Sharif, as well as violations against the defenceless Palestinian people on their land and in their own holy places. How long will the Israeli killing machine continue to claim the lives of defenceless Palestinians without deterrence or accountability from the international community? How far will the Israeli occupation forces go in perpetrating their numerous violations in plain view of all? How long will the Security Council allow Israel, the occupying Power, to continue committing such acts, practices and violations as if it were above the law?

The acts of aggression and crimes committed by the Israeli occupation forces are among a series of violations of the relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolutions 476 (1980), 478 (1980) and 2334 (2016), which underscore the inviolable special status of

Jerusalem and declare any action aimed at changing its demographic nature to be null and void. The occupying Power must respect the historical and legal status quo at Al-Haram Al-Sharif.

In the absence of accountability for the daily and systematic violations by the occupation Power inside the occupied Palestinian territories, and in the light of the occupation Power's exploitation of that reality to deprive the Palestinian people of their legitimate rights and to seize their land, wealth and sources of livelihood, undermining the chances of reaching a just peace, it has become urgent to stop acting as if the rights of the Palestinian people are excluded from the rules and provisions of international law. We stress the need to ensure accountability and justice for the defenceless Palestinian people.

The State of Kuwait fully supports the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), as we believe the Agency has a vital and important role in alleviating the suffering of Palestinian refugees in its five areas of operation. We call on the international community to continue to support UNRWA as it continues to provide health, education and relief services.

The State of Kuwait also condemns in the strongest terms the continuous incursions and brutal attacks of the Israeli occupation authorities on the Gaza Strip and other Palestinian territories over the past seven weeks, which have led to the martyrdom and injury of thousands of Palestinian brethren. We warn of the consequences of that dangerous military escalation, the responsibility for which will be borne by the Israeli occupation authorities, and which threaten security and stability in the region.

My country welcomes Security Council resolution 2712 (2023), adopted on 15 November, which calls for a mandatory ceasefire in order to save those who can be saved, especially children. My country also supports the General Assembly resolution adopted during the emergency special session on 27 October (ES-10/21), which provided for an immediate ceasefire and the entry of aid.

My country calls for the immediate implementation of those resolutions without conditions and firmly rejects any attempts to forcibly displace the Palestinian people from their territories. In that context, my country welcomes the announcement by the sisterly State of Qatar of the successful mediation efforts in reaching

a humanitarian truce in the Gaza Strip, in partnership with the Arab Republic of Egypt and the United States. That agreement has allowed, and will consecutively allow, for the release of a number of Palestinian women and children who are detained in the Israeli occupation prisons in return for the release of a number of women and children detained in the Gaza Strip. It will also allow for a temporary ceasefire and the entry of humanitarian convoys loaded with assistance and basic humanitarian needs to relieve the civilian population in Gaza. The State of Kuwait reaffirms that it will maintain the air bridge under the guidance of His Highness the Amir of the State of Kuwait to support our brothers in Palestine.

It is regrettable that the Israeli occupation authorities have no real desire to reach peace in the Middle East. While those authorities are releasing some of the Palestinian detainees, owing to the mediation efforts, they are at the same time arresting the same number of Palestinian children and youth in the West Bank. We have also witnessed the hostile conduct of the extremists, be it the extremist Israeli Government or the settlers who are killing defenceless Palestinian people on a daily basis without any accountability.

In conclusion, tomorrow, 29 November, we will celebrate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. Allow me to take this opportunity to reaffirm the support of the State of Kuwait, its leadership, Government and people to the brotherly Palestinian people and our historical and principled solidarity with their just question. Kuwait salutes the steadfastness of the fraternal Palestinian people and supports their legitimate struggle against occupation in order to attain their full legitimate political rights. We reiterate our commitment to the Arab, Islamic and international position reaffirming that peace is the strategic choice and that a just, comprehensive and sustainable solution is based on the two-State solution pursuant to the agreed terms of reference, in particular the relevant Security Council resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative. That would allow the Palestinian people to attain all their legitimate political rights and to establish their independent State on their land, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

From this rostrum, which we have always used to defend the rights of peoples, and which has borne witness to justice throughout history, I would like to tell our brothers in Palestine that we will not let them down. We will spare no effort to make their voice heard and to see a free Palestine restored to its past prosperity.

Ms. Baimarro (Sierra Leone): I thank the President for convening this meeting. At the outset, let me thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/78/303), and I am also grateful for the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (A/78/35).

Sierra Leone commends the Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian people, His Excellency Mr. Cheikh Niang, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Senegal, and other Bureau members for their steadfast devotion to the work of the Committee over the years in line with the General Assembly mandate. We welcome with appreciation the series of efforts undertaken by the Committee focused on the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, in particular their right to self-determination.

The question of Palestine is a long-standing issue on the agenda of the United Nations, and as time elapses, we have witnessed a deterioration of the situation and an escalation of the conflict that have led to increased civilian casualties, dispossession of Palestinians' rights to their land and development, displacements and destruction of civilian infrastructure. Therefore, it is imperative for Member States and the international community to explore all possible diplomatic and political avenues that will lead to a peace process geared towards achieving a two-State solution, with Israel and Palestine living side-by-side in peace.

My delegation acknowledges the plight of the Palestinian refugees in all fields of operation, namely, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and the occupied Palestinian territory, and reiterates the need for continued humanitarian and socioeconomic assistance to the most vulnerable, especially the aged, women, children and youth, through the recognized United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations and other international humanitarian organizations that will enable them to enjoy their right to life, freedom and prosperity.

Regrettably, we are saddened by the escalation of violence in the Gaza Strip, especially since the 7 October 2023, and the worsening humanitarian situation, which has intensified the suffering of the people. To ameliorate that, Sierra Leone reiterates its support for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and calls for an immediate comprehensive humanitarian ceasefire. We also call for the release of all hostages without condition

and a scaled-up supply of aid into the Gaza Strip. In that regard we welcome the agreement brokered by Qatar, Egypt and the United States to have four days and an additional two days of humanitarian pause in fighting, and to allow for the release of hostages and the supply of humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip. While we hope for a complete de-escalation of the situation due to continued bilateral and multilateral engagements, we invite parties to the conflict to comply with international law, in particular international humanitarian law relative to the protection of civilians in time of armed conflict. We stress the need for the Committee to continue its work to advocate and raise awareness on the plight of the Palestinian people and to mobilize efforts aimed at achieving a just and comprehensive solution to question of Palestine.

In conclusion, we pay tribute to the humanitarian, medical and front-line personnel who have lost their lives in the course of duty, bringing hope and rescuing humankind from the scourge of destruction.

Mrs. Zalabata Torres (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): As a nation committed to promoting peace and respect for human rights, Colombia joins its voice to that of the majority of Member States in condemning the violence and barbarism against the civilian population, which has been escalating since the beginning of last October. That violence has been disproportionately affecting women and children, and we are horrified to note that more children have died in Gaza during this time than in all conflicts around the world in recent years.

Colombia has experienced first-hand the devastating cost of violence and conflict. Our history has taught us that military solutions as such do not exist and that insisting on dialogue in the midst of differences is the only way to achieve lasting peace, which is a right that all individuals and societies deserve to enjoy and which the United Nations is obliged to defend.

In keeping with this, we reaffirm our historic support for a peaceful, definitive and comprehensive solution to the question of Palestine, based on the solution of two States living side by side, within safe and internationally recognized borders, in accordance the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council. My country also reiterates its call for compliance and full implementation of the relevant United Nations resolutions and the importance of respect for human rights and international humanitarian law by all parties involved.

Colombia urges this Organization and its Member States to redouble their efforts to achieve a definitive cessation of hostilities with a view to halting the unprecedented loss of innocent lives, forced displacement and the destruction of vital infrastructure for providing essential services to the civilian population. We express our support for the efforts of various countries to achieve a truce between the parties to stop the violence and ensure the delivery of humanitarian assistance to those in urgent need.

Finally, we call for expediting the necessary measures to achieve a definitive solution that implies the recognition of Palestine as a sovereign and free State, the right to self-determination and the protection of the human rights of its people.

Mr. Romero Puentes (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation has the honour to speak on agenda item 34, "The situation in the Middle East", and on agenda item 35, "Question of Palestine".

The world is today facing a humanitarian catastrophe of extreme proportions in the occupied Palestinian territory of the Gaza Strip.

We reiterate our deep concern about the escalation of violence in Palestine, which is a consequence of 75 years of Israeli practices of illegal occupation and colonization, in flagrant violation of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people on their own territory, as well as the prolonged disrespect for the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law, including numerous relevant United Nations resolutions.

Cuba condemns in the strongest terms the murder of civilians, especially women, children and humanitarian workers in the United Nations system; the indiscriminate bombing of the people in Gaza and the destruction of homes, hospitals and civilian infrastructure; as well as the deprivation of water, food, electricity and fuel services to the people of Gaza, which considerably worsens the precarious humanitarian situation resulting from the blockade of the Gaza Strip and constitutes flagrant violations of international humanitarian law. Nothing can justify such actions, which constitute collective punishment, serious violations of international humanitarian law, war crimes and crimes against humanity. The impunity with which the Israeli Government is acting can be

explained only by its confidence that it will not be held accountable for its actions and that it has the support of the United States Government and other NATO allies.

We demand an immediate and permanent ceasefire and the delivery of humanitarian assistance to Gaza without restrictions. We call for an end to the warmongering rhetoric of the occupying Power.

At the same time, we reject the annexation plans of the occupied West Bank and the repression and murder of the Palestinians living there, in flagrant violation of international law.

We must prevent the forced displacement of the Palestinians from the land that rightfully belongs to them.

Cuba has no doubt that Israel's system of domination of the Palestinian people, the exploitation and appropriation of their resources and the exponential denial of all the rights of the population constitute a true apartheid system against that people.

It is alarming that, in the face of that serious threat to international peace and security, the Security Council has failed to achieve an outcome commensurate with the circumstances. The United States, which has guaranteed criminal impunity for that genocide, must stop impeding Security Council action in that regard. We call once again on the Security Council to fulfil its responsibility under the Charter of the United Nations for the maintenance of international peace and security and demand an immediate end to the occupation of the Palestinian territories and Israel's aggressive policies and colonizing practices, in compliance with the resolutions on the situation in the Middle East, including the question of Palestine, in particular resolution 2334 (2016). The international community cannot remain passive given the increase in violence and the indiscriminate and disproportionate use of force against Palestinian civilians, in flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations and of international humanitarian law.

We reaffirm our unreserved support for a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, based on the creation of two States, that would allow the Palestinian people to exercise their right to self-determination and to have an independent and sovereign State, within the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and the right of return of refugees. That long-standing demand, reiterated in

the general debate of the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly by senior representatives of the vast majority of the international community, as well as in recent meetings of the plenary of the General Assembly on the question of Palestine, must be addressed as soon as possible. We express to the people and Government of Palestine our unwavering solidarity and our support for Palestine's full membership in the United Nations and reiterate our call for an international peace conference.

Cuba vigorously condemns of Israel's repeated attacks against Syria, in particular against the Damascus International Airport, in flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations and that country's sovereignty. We will continue to support the demand of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to recover the Golan Heights, and we call once again for Israel's full and unconditional withdrawal from the Syrian Golan and all occupied Arab territories.

Tomorrow, on 29 November, in just 24 hours, we will celebrate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. Let us make the United Nations relevant to the Palestinian people with deeds and not with words. Every moment of passivity, double standards and silence will cost more innocent lives. Cuba will support and contribute in every possible way to the legitimate international efforts to put an end to the current situation. The impunity with which Israel is acting must stop immediately.

Mr. Gueye (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): As Chair of the United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, my delegation would like to thank Ambassador Ahmad Faisal Muhamad of Malaysia for having presented, in his capacity as Vice-Chair the Committee, the report (A/78/35) submitted for Member States. In addition to fully aligning itself to that statement, my delegation would like to say a few words in its national capacity.

First of all, my delegation would like to take this opportunity to reiterate its praise for, and encouragement to, the Secretary-General António Guterres and all United Nations entities concerned for their commendable efforts, particularly since the events of 7 October, to resolve the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. In that regard, my country once again solemnly pays tribute to the memory of the more than 12,600 victims of the recent spiral of violence, including 4,000 women, 6,000 children and more than 103 United Nations employees. The need for action

remains urgent. Every day that goes by is marked by more tragedy and increases the threat to international peace and security. In line with the resolutions recently adopted at the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly and the Security Council, Senegal welcomes the humanitarian truce agreed between the parties, together with the release of the first Israeli hostages and Palestinian detainees. It is an insufficient but healthy first step. That is why Senegal, which has always condemned attacks on civilians under any circumstance, reiterates its call for a lasting and permanent ceasefire, which an increasing number of States is calling for, and encourages all parties that are working to that end.

Until such a ceasefire is reached, we must ensure the protection of both the civilian population and humanitarian workers in Gaza more than ever from aerial bombing and the ground offensive, which make no distinction in terms of innocent civilians or critical infrastructure. In view of the gravity and urgency of the crisis, my delegation once again urges Israel, as the occupying Power, to show restraint and spare the civilian population, all humanitarian, medical and media personnel, as well as hospitals, places of worship and United Nations facilities, upon which the lives of more than 2.2 million people depend. Regardless of the situation, the Palestinian people, who are deeply attached to their land, have the absolute and indisputable right to remain there and to develop economically, socially, politically and culturally. Senegal therefore reiterates its continued call on United Nations States Members, multilateral organizations and people of goodwill to step up their support for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and its implementing partners, so that, beyond the urgency of the moment, they can properly carry out their mission in helping the Palestinian population.

We have all been gripped by the horror of the current situation. Although the report of the Committee predates the current events, it lays bare the deep roots of the anger that will continue to grow until the international community accords it the attention it deserves in all fairness and justice. What is happening in Gaza cannot be viewed separately from the troubling conditions in which the Palestinians have been living for 56 years in all the occupied territories, including in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The situation has been objectively documented by the relevant United Nations bodies and mechanisms, as well as by human

rights organizations, even Israeli ones. In addition to the already 16-year-old blockade of Gaza, the annexation of Palestinian territories must cease, together with the practice of the arbitrary mass detention of Palestinians, some of whom are minors. The report notes that the number of Palestinian detainees held without trial or charges has reached its highest level since 2008, with more than 5,000 Palestinians, including 160 children, held in Israeli prisons. My delegation is concerned that the number of detainees has more than doubled since then. In that regard, my delegation would once again like to call on United Nations mechanisms, including the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, to more closely monitor developments that put children and women at particular risk.

My country calls on the State of Israel to comply with international law. That means ceasing all actions aimed at changing the demographic composition, status and character of the occupied Palestinian territories. In that regard, my delegation condemns those within the Israeli Government who continue to fuel hostility, in particular by encouraging the acceleration of the illegal and aggressive policy of settlements, expulsions and house demolitions. It will also be imperative to repeal all legislative and regulatory provisions that contravene international law and to severely punish individuals and entities responsible for such violations of international law and international humanitarian law. In that light, Senegal believes that the International Court of Justice will deliver a judicious advisory opinion on the issues that have been referred to it and will reaffirm, based on its erudition and wisdom, the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to a viable State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with all the General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. In that vein, my delegation once again urges the General Assembly, the Security Council and Member States to adopt the Committee's recommendations within the scope of their respective responsibilities and competencies. Likewise, my delegation calls on Member States to continue to translate their expressed support for the State of Palestine into action, particularly when considering draft resolutions on the issue.

Resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict requires ending practices and actions that serve as a detour from the path leading towards a just and lasting peace, and therefore from the two-State solution, with Israel and Palestine living side by side within secure and

internationally recognized borders. Despite the current crisis, my delegation remains hopeful that those advocating for peace will take the difficult path and turn away from the one leading to a dead end. In that regard, Senegal particularly encourages the Quartet to recreate the conditions for direct talks. Otherwise, we will continue to count the dead on both sides. Otherwise, the international community will continue to fail to realize the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to a viable, contiguous State within secure and internationally recognized borders.

Tomorrow we will commemorate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. Let us hope that the commemoration will enable us to refocus our commitment on two of the ideals that were integral in the founding of the Organization: the peaceful settlement of disputes and the right of peoples to self-determination. The Palestinian people are in need of our meaningful solidarity more than ever so that the law can finally do justice to history.

Mr. Abushahab (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the Permanent Representative of Malaysia, Ambassador Ahmad Faisal Muhamad, for submitting the annual report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (A/78/35). We support the recommendations of the report and take this opportunity to express our appreciation for the efforts of the Committee under the chairmanship of Ambassador Cheikh Niang, and the efforts of the Division for Palestinian Rights and the United Nations as a whole in supporting the brotherly Palestinian people, especially in the current difficult circumstances.

We also align ourselves with the statement delivered by the representative of Sultanate of Oman on behalf of the States members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (see A/78/PV.39).

It has been more than 76 years since the General Assembly adopted resolution 181 (II), known as the partition resolution. That resolution laid the foundation for the creation of two States in Palestine — an Arab State and a Jewish State. While Israel was created as a State by virtue of that resolution, the brotherly Palestinian people have so far been deprived of an independent sovereign State, international recognition of the State of Palestine and full membership at the United Nations. Three generations of Palestinians have known only occupation, refugee status and forcible

displacement. Therefore, it is incumbent upon all of us to underscore the importance of reviving a serious and credible peace process to achieve the two-State solution and establish a sovereign independent Palestinian State, along the 4 June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side with Israel in security and peace and mutual recognition.

It is urgent to reach a peaceful, just and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian question, especially in the light of the serious escalation in the occupied Palestinian territories, in particular in the Gaza Strip, which has for weeks been experiencing Israeli aggression, which has been condemned. That aggression has claimed the lives of more than 14,000 civilians, of whom third are women and children, while injuring tens of thousands of people.

The situation is further deteriorating, with nearly 80 per cent of the population of the Gaza Strip displaced and houses, schools and infrastructure almost completely destroyed due to the violent Israeli bombardment. We are specifically concerned over the collapse of the health sector. Twenty-six hospitals are out of service. More than 55 health-care centres are also out of service, while the other health facilities suffer an acute shortage of medical supplies and are deprived of fuel and electricity.

In the light of those catastrophic circumstances, the United Arab Emirates welcomes the four-day truce, which was extended for two additional days. We reaffirm the need to continue extending the truce and to swiftly move to a permanent ceasefire to allow the delivery of humanitarian assistance, which should be delivered in a safe and continuous manner through several crossings. We should guarantee the delivery of assistance to all those in need across the Strip without any obstacles. We commend the efforts of the Arab Republic of Egypt, the State of Qatar and the United States, which have facilitated the truce and have supported its implementation.

We reaffirm that the unprecedented humanitarian crisis in Gaza, which is escalating due to the blockade and destruction, requires additional international support for the brotherly Palestinian people. More than 2 million Palestinians in Gaza are deprived of the most basic life necessities, while 1 million people have sought shelter in schools of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which also were not spared by the

bombardment. In that context, we strongly condemn the forcible displacement and collective punishment against the brotherly Palestinian people, who deserve to live in peace and security on their land. We call upon all parties to respect their obligations under international humanitarian law and to refrain from targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure. We take this opportunity to commend the leading role of UNRWA in meeting the basic needs of the Palestinian refugees since it was created and despite the dangerous situation. We extend our sincere condolences to UNRWA for the 108 employees who were killed while discharging their humanitarian mission in Gaza. There is also a need to end the escalating deterioration of the situation in the West Bank and in East Jerusalem because of the ongoing Israeli violations, especially the repeated incursions into Palestinian cities and towns, the increased settler violence and the increased expansion of the unlawful settlements, which undermine the two-State solution.

We are gravely concerned about the blatant violations of Islamic and Christian holy sites, especially the Holy Al-Aqsa Mosque. The United Arab Emirates reaffirms the need to preserve the legal and historical status quo of Jerusalem and its holy sites and to respect the custodianship of the holy sites and the custodianship of Jerusalem undertaken by the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

As we prepare to celebrate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People tomorrow, we would like to mention that we are at a critical juncture in the history of the Palestinian question and the region. Achieving peace requires a political, peaceful, just and comprehensive settlement that would promote peaceful coexistence among the peoples of the region and would put an end to the cycle of violence, extremism and hatred.

Mr. Iravani (Islamic Republic of Iran): Our meeting today indeed represents the long-standing support of the international community for the full realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. It is my delegation's pleasure to commend the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for providing us with updates on the Palestinian question, as illustrated by the second chapter of its report (A/78/35). I also wish to express my delegation's gratitude to the Vice-Chair and Rapporteur of the Committee for providing an in-depth briefing.

Over the past few weeks, we have witnessed a violent act of aggression carried out by the Israeli armed forces in the Gaza Strip, resulting in the deaths of more than 15,000 Palestinian civilians. Based on the report presented in this Hall, the current situation on the ground is a direct result of continued Israeli occupation, which is the core of crises and conflicts in the Middle East. The second chapter of the report of the Committee shows that the number of Palestinian casualties rose rapidly in the first half of 2023, the highest number of casualties recorded since 2006. The report indicates that Israeli settlers, who are supposed to act like regular civilians, targeted Palestinians, including children on their way to school, and attacked and vandalized Palestinian homes and vehicles. International law unequivocally asserts that those among armed settlers who directly take part in hostilities with the backing of military forces cannot be afforded the status of civilians protected by humanitarian law.

My delegation firmly maintains that any desperate attempt to cover up and justify crimes against Palestinians under the guise of self-defence, while disregarding the inherent rights of Palestinians, particularly their right to self-defence, is devoid of legal basis and credibility. However, the deliberate targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure is expressly prohibited under international law, and it therefore should not be supported under any circumstances. It is imperative to underscore that if any party is justified in exercising the right to self-defence, it should rightfully be the Palestinians. Their plight has been rooted in the historical occupation and atrocities perpetrated by Israeli forces long before the formation of their resistance as a response to the oppressive Israeli regime.

It is our request that all Member States take these findings into consideration before any acceptance of the excuse of self-defence made up by the aggressors. We also request Member States, in condemning the act of taking hostages, note the part of the report as well that says that Palestinian detainees imprisoned without trial or charge reached its highest level since 2008. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights reported that 5,000 Palestinians, including 160 children and 1,100 prisoners, were being held in Israeli prisons without charge or trial. Over the course of just the past 50 days, more than 3,200 Palestinians have been arrested by Israel.

It is an inalienable right for Palestinians, *inter alia*, to seek full accountability for the Israeli regime and its officials for their crimes against humanity, war

crimes and genocide. We believe that those crimes fundamentally call into question the 1949 judgment of the Security Council (resolution 69 (1949)) concerning the peace-loving nature of Israel. It raises doubts about the ability and willingness of the regime to fulfil the obligations outlined in the Charter of the United Nations. Furthermore, those barbaric crimes must be addressed by the international community in a decisive manner, and Palestinians must be protected internationally. It is high time for the General Assembly to revive its resolution 3379 (XXX), adopted in 1975, which determined “Zionism” to be a form of racism and racial discrimination. In order to address the situation, the occupying regime should no longer be allowed to commit all its crimes while enjoying total impunity. It must comply with all its obligations. The blockade of the Gaza Strip, which has turned it into the world’s largest prison, should be permanently lifted. The occupation of all occupied territories must come to an end, and the Palestinians should be supported in establishing their own independent State, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. In that regard, priority must be given to the full membership of Palestine in the United Nations and the General Assembly. In our view, as long as that problem is not addressed and the Palestinian people are not allowed to fully exercise their right to self-determination, any hope for durable peace and stability in the region will be nothing but a futile wish.

In conclusion, my delegation once again reiterates its principled position that the most effective and durable path to peace in Palestine is the holding of a referendum among all residents of Palestine — Jews, Christians and Muslims, including displaced Palestinians and refugees. Based on the history of conflict and instability in the Middle East over the past seven decades, the Islamic Republic of Iran believes that durable peace can be achieved only by ending the occupation, restoring Palestinians’ inalienable right to self-determination, returning refugees to their homelands and establishing a Palestinian State with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. We believe that the most important and urgent priority is to extend the humanitarian pause in Gaza and turn it into a durable ceasefire, and to provide rapid and extensive transfer of humanitarian aid to Gaza.

Since the General Assembly will consider the adoption of a draft resolution entitled “The Syrian Golan” under item 34 (A/78/L.10), I wish to reiterate that the Islamic Republic of Iran is supportive of the draft resolution and will vote in favour of it. Meanwhile,

we would like to register our observation regarding the provisions of the text that may be construed as recognition of Israel.

Mr. Chumakov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): For almost two months now, there has been a terrible crisis in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Its victims include an enormous number of civilians from both sides. The recent agreement reached through the mediation efforts of regional players on humanitarian pauses and an exchange of hostages provides a glimmer of hope. However, there are currently no signs, unfortunately, of a full ceasefire in this recent cycle of violence.

There can be no justification for the killings and violence that the citizens of Israel have endured. Any terrorist attack against civilians, including hostage taking, should be firmly condemned. Nonetheless, there can be no justification for the unjustified — in terms of size and scale — bloodshed in the occupied Palestinian territory, especially Gaza, caused by the punitive actions of Israel, including a ground operation. We are very concerned by some statements by representatives of the Israeli leadership regarding plans to continue to “cleanse” the Gaza Strip intensively after the end of the humanitarian pause. The resumption of hostilities will bring about colossal civilian casualties and will worsen the humanitarian disaster.

From the very beginning of the escalation, Russia has consistently called for a swift and lasting ongoing ceasefire. That is a pressing moral and humanitarian imperative. The events in the Gaza Strip have a tragic impact on the situation in the West Bank. There are ongoing armed raids by Israel there, and Palestinian civilians are being killed and injured. There is active, ongoing illegal settlement activity promoted by the policy of West Jerusalem, including the financing of the expansion of Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories. According to media reports, such plans are being approved by the Israeli Cabinet right now at the height of the destruction in Gaza. We are convinced that no references to the right to self-defence can justify aggressive settlement activity, forced displacement of Palestinian families and the destruction of their property. Even the European Union talked about that.

The world has repeatedly borne witness to similar unilateral steps in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, that led to an escalation of violence in the

occupied Palestinian territory. It is paradoxical that, on the one hand, the entire international community is recognizing the illegal nature of the Israeli actions in the occupied Palestinian territory, which run counter to Security Council decisions and provisions of international law, while on the other hand, our Western colleagues prefer not to mention in their statements that the current unprecedented escalation on the ground is, *inter alia*, the result of the settlement policy of West Jerusalem and the systematic restrictions by it of the rights of the Palestinian people to freely visit their holy sites. We are pleased that Mr. António Guterres did not shy away from talking about this during the Security Council open debate on the Middle East on 24 October (see S/PV.9451). He noted that the current outbreak of violence did not occur in a vacuum. In saying that, he swiftly came under fierce and unwarranted criticism from Israel, the representative of which preferred to start history from a clean slate, namely, from 7 October.

United States policy has also played a destructive role in the current escalation. The United States has long deliberately turned a blind eye to the ongoing construction of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories and has recognized Israeli sovereignty over the occupied Golan Heights. As a result, today we have a conflict of unprecedented scale, which risks spilling over to the entire Middle East region. Over the years we have openly warned that Washington's path was dangerous and without prospect. We stated clearly that it might lead to tragic results.

Today's report by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) (see A/78/303) also touches on another serious issue encountered by the population of the West Bank — the economic impact of the Israeli occupation. The Palestinian people continue to be deprived of sovereignty over their natural resources and the possibility of tapping into their own production and technological capacity. In terms of its economic and social impact, this activity is commensurate with having an external blockade and unilateral economic coercive measures. In such circumstances, it is unrealistic to talk about achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, primarily the Goal 1, the eradication of poverty. The illegal settlement activities and restrictions on economic activity for the Palestinian people, as well as artificial fragmentation of where they carry out their livelihood geographically, should stop, as is required by Security Council decisions.

Of great importance, obviously, is the UNCTAD opinion as to the need to expand donor support to the Palestinian people in order to mitigate the negative economic impact of Israeli restrictions. We believe that this moral imperative is particularly applicable to those developed countries that justify the years-long Israeli settlement activity and, even with the current conflict in the Gaza Strip, were not brave enough to acknowledge the humanitarian tragedy the Palestinian people are facing.

The economic impact of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank also has a clear humanitarian aspect. Every day, the right of Palestinians to access water, sanitation and dignified work is violated, and they are subject to violence and psychological trauma. We note UNCTAD's initiative to develop a framework for a systematic, comprehensive assessment of the occupation. This is an important initiative that needs to be carried out. Moreover, we support the conclusion of the report, which states that economic and humanitarian assistance are not a replacement for a final settlement of the Palestinian question. That has a broadly recognized international legal basis, namely, the two-State solution and the establishment of an independent, sovereign Palestinian State within the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, that will co-exist in peace and security with Israel and all other neighbours.

Ms. Pichardo Urbina (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to highlight and share with the General Assembly some important points from the message of our President, Commander Daniel Ortega Saavedra, and our Vice-President, Comrade Rosario Murillo, on the occasion of tomorrow's commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

Crimes against humanity continue to be committed against children, young people, women, men and the elderly. It is our duty to condemn this barbarity and demand the immediate withdrawal of and cessation of the bombings by the Israeli army and the imperialist forces led by United States leaders. As the heroic Palestinian people face these hard and unjust times, this Day represents the essence of unity, solidarity, brotherhood and comradeship that the international community and the people of the world must demonstrate with respect to the most just cause of all time — the historic Palestinian cause.

The people and the Government of Nicaragua, which have a history of working tirelessly for our national liberation, recognize and understand that the Palestinian people will be victorious in the fight to ensure respect for, and the effective exercise of, their legitimate right to self-determination, national sovereignty and the territorial integrity of the State of Palestine, based on the 4 June 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Nicaragua, forever blessed and free, sends a strong brotherly message of solidarity and hope to the brave Palestinian people, while reaffirming our conviction that the desired peace and stability in the Middle East will be achieved only with the full attainment of a State of Palestine and the recognition of, and respect for, the inalienable rights of the Palestinian People, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions and the aspirations of peace-loving peoples.

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

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 35.

Agenda item 34 (continued)

The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Secretary-General (A/78/315)

Draft resolution (A/78/L.10)

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt to introduce draft resolution A/78/L.10.

Mr. Mahmoud (Egypt) (spoke in Arabic): At the outset, I would like to express Egypt's appreciation for the convening of this meeting under agenda item 34, entitled "The situation in the Middle East", which includes a draft resolution on the Syrian Golan (A/78/L.10), submitted annually by Egypt to the General Assembly.

Egypt is cognizant that decades have passed since the Arab territories, including the Syrian Golan, were occupied by Israel in 1967. Egypt is also cognizant of the significant changes the region has witnessed since then. However, Egypt remains keen to submit the draft resolution on the Syrian Golan to the General Assembly each year under the agenda item entitled "The situation in the Middle East", as Egypt maintains its rejection of the Israeli occupation and its belief that the occupation must come to an end.

The developments in the Middle East over the past decade in general, and in the sisterly Syrian Arab Republic in particular, should not discourage the international community from upholding international law and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. The ongoing wanton Israeli aggression against Gaza and the ensuing killing and intimidating of innocent civilians, destruction of infrastructure and attack on United Nations facilities should not, no matter how harsh it is, make us lose sight of the continued Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan.

Egypt reiterates that the only way out of the current crisis in the Middle East is full compliance with the rules of international law and the resolutions of international legitimacy, without double standards. If the international community has rejected the principle of occupying territories by force in one situation, has condemned the occupation and demanded the taking of necessary measures to address the situation, the same international community should then reject occupation in all other situations with the same resolve and decisiveness. It is therefore incumbent on the international community to take a strong position in relation to the decades-long occupation of the Syrian Golan, as no progress has been made to end that occupation or to implement the relevant United Nations resolutions. Those resolutions have repeatedly and unequivocally rejected the annexation of territory by force and have not recognized any unilateral measure or any demographic changes in the Syrian areas under occupation.

Based on that, Egypt submits to the General Assembly a draft resolution on the Syrian Golan. The current session's draft resolution maintains the same language of last session's resolution (resolution 76/11) except updating it technically. This year's draft resolution includes reference to the failure by Israel to implement Security Council resolution 497 (1981). It reiterates that the Israeli measures in the Syrian Golan are null and void. The draft resolution stresses that the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949 continues to apply to the occupied Syrian Golan. The draft resolution determines that the continued occupation by Israel of the Syrian Golan constitutes a stumbling block in the way of achieving just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East region. It calls on Israel to resume peace talks, with a view to withdrawing from the Golan to the line of 4 June 1967 in implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Egypt hopes that all Member States will support the draft resolution. In doing so, we will demonstrate the importance we all attach to upholding international law, rejecting the annexation of the territory of others by force and respecting the Charter of the United Nations.

The Israeli occupation in the Golan, Palestine and Lebanon must eventually come to an end. The international community, represented in the General Assembly, must ensure that it comes to an end. It must act in one unified voice without any excuses, justifications or double standards.

Mr. Dandy (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to sincerely thank the Permanent Representative of the sisterly Arab Republic of Egypt for introducing the draft resolution entitled “The Syrian Golan” (A/78/L.10). We also thank all the Member States that have co-sponsored the draft resolution and those that will be supporting it and voting in its favour.

For more than five decades, the General Assembly has at every session called upon Israel, the occupying Power, to end its occupation of the Syrian Golan. It reaffirms that any measures taken by Israel to impose its laws, jurisdiction and governance on the occupied Syrian Golan are null and void and have no legal effect whatsoever. In that respect, the General Assembly is fully in line with the position expressed unanimously by the Security Council in resolution 497 (1981).

Paragraph 4 of the draft resolution before us today stipulates that the General Assembly decides once again that the continued occupation of the Syrian Golan and its de facto annexation constitute a stumbling block in the way of achieving just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the region. In that context, my country reaffirms the need to end the inability to implement United Nations resolutions, which cannot be implemented without lifting the umbrella of protection provided by the United States and its Western allies to Israel, and their indefinite support to Israel both inside and outside the United Nations. That protection encourages the Israeli occupation authorities to continue to occupy the lands of others and to dangerously threaten stability, peace and security in the region and the world.

We are witnessing today criminal Israeli practices in the occupied Palestinian territories, especially in the Gaza Strip, where the number of victims has reached the highest records, pushing the region to unprecedented levels of tension and instability. Israel

is doing so by committing further massacres against the brotherly Palestinian people. It is also escalating its military aggression, including by repeatedly bombing Syrian cities, ports and civilian airports, endangering the lives of civilians, the safety of civil aviation and halting United Nations humanitarian operations. Israel also persists in its settlement policies, Judaization, blockade, arbitrary detention, forcible displacement and racial discrimination in the occupied Arab territories.

The Syrian Arab Republic calls upon the United Nations to adopt immediate measures to implement its resolutions and to put an end to the Israeli occupation of the occupied Arab territories, including the occupied Syrian Golan. We also call upon the United Nations to put an end to the violations by the Israeli occupation forces of Syrian sovereignty and the systematic Israeli practices against the occupied Syrian Golan and its people, including such crimes as settlement expansion, altering the demographic composition and institutional structures, confiscation of land and property, the plundering of the natural resources of the Golan, killings, arbitrary detentions and torture.

The Syrian Arab Republic reaffirms its legitimate right to fully reclaim the occupied Syrian Golan to the line of 4 June 1967, however long it takes. This is an established right that is not subject to compromise or pressure. It is an imprescriptible right guaranteed by international law and relevant United Nations resolutions, especially resolution 497 (1981).

Syria reaffirms that it will exercise its legitimate right to defend its land and people using all necessary means, to hold the Israeli occupation authorities accountable for all their crimes and to guarantee that they will not enjoy impunity. Syria reaffirms its firm and principled position in support of the rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination and the establishment of their independent State with Jerusalem as its capital, and in support of guaranteeing the right of return to refugees according to international law and relevant United Nations resolutions, namely, resolution 194 (III) of 1948.

In conclusion, I call on all Member States who are keen to end the injustice being done to peoples living under occupation, as well as to support their rights to freedom, to vote in favour of resolution A/78/L.10, entitled “The Syrian Golan”, and to vote in favour of draft resolutions related to Palestine, thereby reaffirming their

commitment to international law, the United Nations Charter and specifically to the fundamental principle of the inadmissibility of acquiring land by force.

Mr. Hachem (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to express my appreciation for the convening of this meeting to discuss agenda item 34, entitled “The situation in the Middle East”.

Tomorrow, on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the world will reaffirm its support for the legitimate and inalienable rights of the brotherly Palestinian people, chief among being their right to live in their independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital.

This year is one of the most difficult ones that the Palestinian people have experienced since the Nakba. That is because of the bloody aggression being carried out by Israel against Gaza and the West Bank. That aggression has not excluded civilians, children and the elderly from being killed, and neither has it excluded civilian or United Nations facilities from being destroyed. We have all seen the scale of the destruction that has happened in Gaza and the suffering that unarmed civilians are experiencing. We have seen children trembling in fear after being dug out from beneath the rubble. We have seen parents burying their children, and children who have become orphans after losing their families. We have seen how international humanitarian law and human rights have been violated. What took place at the Al-Shifa Hospital and Al-Fakhura school are two painful and resounding examples.

We heard last week from directors of United Nations relief agencies just how much suffering the people of Gaza are enduring in every hour that goes by without access to humanitarian assistance and due to the shelling of civilian targets, while Israel is using food, water, electricity, medical supplies and basic life-saving materials as war weapons. Those inhumane scenes are reminiscent of a bloody past, while the United Nations was founded to ensure that such a past never happens again. Unfortunately, it is happening again today.

Furthermore, there is a parallel humanitarian crisis taking place in the West Bank, where thousands of Palestinians are being displaced from their land as a result of the terrorism of Israeli settlers. So far, more than 200 Palestinians have been killed since 7 October, and more than 400 have been killed since the beginning of the year.

Israeli violations of Lebanese sovereignty continue. Israel is bombing south Lebanon and Lebanese villages using lethal weapons and white phosphorus, both of which are internationally prohibited. That has led to more than 100 martyrs and more than 30,000 Lebanese people being displaced from their villages, in addition to deliberate massive environmental and material damage. Moreover, the Israel Defense Forces have repeatedly, deliberately and directly targeted locations where journalists were known to be while reporting events on the southern border. Three journalists have lost their lives as a result of those attacks.

As His Excellency Mr. Najib Mikati, Prime Minister of Lebanon, has said, those violations prove once again that the Israeli criminality knows no bounds and that its goal is to silence the media exposing its crimes and its violations. Those crimes are added to Israel’s record, which is already rife with violations against Lebanon’s sovereignty and territory, part of which is still occupied, namely, the Kafr Shuba Hills, Sheba’a Farms and the outskirts of Al-Mari, part of which includes the urban extension of the village of Al-Ghajar.

We also condemn the continued Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan and the increase of Israeli settlers therein, which has exceeded the number of local Syrian residents through the expansion of settlement construction. Such an act is prohibited by international law, specifically international humanitarian law. That goes hand in hand with continued discriminatory measures against Syrians in the Golan and the plundering of the region’s natural resources.

We must build upon the humanitarian pause that was reached last week in Gaza, and extended yesterday, in order to reach a permanent ceasefire. In that regard, we value the mediation efforts led by the sisterly States of Qatar and Egypt, as well as the United States of America, to reach the humanitarian pause. We call on all influential parties to exert greater efforts in order to reach a permanent ceasefire.

We must also push for the implementation of the General Assembly resolution adopted during the tenth emergency special session on the situation in Palestine (resolution ES-10/21) and Security Council resolution 2712 (2023), which refers to the humanitarian situation in Gaza. The implementation of that resolution must not be voluntary. Rather, it must be enforced, monitored and its effectiveness assessed so that it can be a basis for a solution to the crisis.

There is a need to revitalize the political process as soon as the aggression ends and to meet the basic humanitarian needs in Gaza. The current terms of reference must be implemented in order to end the occupation and establish an independent Palestinian State across 4 June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. There must be a just solution to the refugees issue and other issues related to the final status, in accordance with the resolutions of international legitimacy, the latest of which is resolution 2334 (2016), as well as the Arab Peace Initiative, adopted in Beirut in 2002. Israel must also withdraw from the occupied Arab territories in order to avoid the recurrence of armed conflicts, the price of which is paid primarily by civilians, and the catastrophic consequences of which cannot be predicted.

Let us work together, hand in hand, to stop the tragedy that has been repeated for 75 years. We must preserve security and stability in the Middle East region, whose peoples love life and deserve to live in peace.

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

We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/78/L.10.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Nakano (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of draft resolution A/78/L.10, and in addition to the delegations listed in the document, the following countries have also become co-sponsors of the draft resolution: Bahrain, Bangladesh, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brunei Darussalam, Cuba, Djibouti, Indonesia, Iraq, Malaysia, Morocco, Nicaragua, Oman, the State of Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Somalia, South Africa, the Sudan and the United Arab Emirates.

The Acting President: The General Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/78/L.10, entitled "The Syrian Golan". A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Costa Rica, Cuba, Democratic People's

Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Guinea, Guyana, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Jamaica, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Peru, Qatar, Russian Federation, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Türkiye, Turkmenistan, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zimbabwe

Against:

Australia, Canada, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Palau, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

Abstaining:

Albania, Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malta, Mexico, Monaco, Montenegro, Nauru, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Sudan, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Togo, Ukraine, Uruguay, Vanuatu

The draft resolution was adopted by 91 votes to 8, with 62 abstentions (resolution 78/11).

The Acting President: Before giving the floor for explanations of vote after the voting, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Ms. Jiménez de la Hoz (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the European Union.

The European Union firmly condemns, in the strongest possible terms, Hamas and its brutal and indiscriminate terrorist attacks in various parts of Israel. There is no justification for terror. Hamas's use of civilians as human shields is a particularly regrettable atrocity. We deeply deplore the loss of Israeli and Palestinian civilian lives. The release of the first hostages is an important step, and the European Union commends the work of Qatar, Egypt and the United States. The pause should be extended. We reiterate our call on Hamas to immediately release, without preconditions, all hostages, including the many citizens of the European Union.

The European Union underscores in particular Israel's right to defend itself under international law and international humanitarian law.

The European Union expresses its deepest concern about the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Gaza and requests rapid, safe and unhindered access for humanitarian assistance, and that such assistance reach those most in need, while taking all the steps required, including humanitarian corridors and pauses, to meet humanitarian needs. The European Union will work closely with partners in the region to protect civilians, provide assistance and facilitate access to food, water, medical attention, fuel and refuge, ensuring that terrorist organizations do not make undue use of that assistance.

The European Union firmly condemns the resurgence of violence perpetrated by settlers in the West Bank. Israel must stop the legalization of expansion of illegal settlements, prevent the violence of the settlers and ensure that perpetrators are held accountable for their acts. The European Union recalls the need to prevent regional escalation and to engage with its partners in that regard, including the Palestinian Authority.

The European Union stands ready to contribute to reactivating a political process based on the two-State solution, including through the Peace Day Effort; welcomes diplomatic initiatives in the area of peace and security and demonstrates its support for the early holding of an international peace conference. The European Union stresses the need to combat the spread of disinformation and illicit content and underscores the legal responsibility of platforms in that regard.

With the understanding that the texts being reviewed for technical rollover during the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly do not reflect or address the developments in the situation on the ground since the 7 October 2023 attacks, we nevertheless again confirm the same pattern of voting as last year on draft resolutions submitted for adoption. The European Union's position on terminology used in other draft resolutions that have not been submitted this year remains unaltered. This time, we would like to state for the record that with regard to draft resolutions adopted during the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly, the European Union and its member States believe that, so long as the Palestinian Government is mentioned, reference should be made to the Palestinian Authority.

Furthermore, we highlight that the term "Palestine" in any draft resolution submitted for consideration by the Fourth Committee cannot be interpreted as recognition of the State of Palestine and is understood without prejudice to the individual positions of member States on the matter, and therefore concerning the issue of the validity of adherence to or accession to conventions and treaties mentioned in them. The European Union, as a whole, has not expressed any legal qualification on the term "forced displacement", used in various draft resolutions.

Lastly, in the future, the European Union would like that the draft resolutions be streamlined, including through the use of more balanced language and a reduction in the number of draft resolutions.

Ms. Squeff (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Argentina voted in favour of resolution 78/11 because we believe that its core message is linked to the illegality of acquisition of territory by force. We are referring here to the resolution on the Syrian Golan.

Article 2, paragraph 4, of the Charter of the United Nations prohibits the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State. At the same time, we would also like to clarify Argentina's position on paragraph 6 of the resolution. Our vote is without prejudice to the content of that paragraph, specifically the reference to the line of 4 June 1967.

Argentina believes that it is important to make progress in the quest for a solution through the Syrian-Israeli track of the conflict in the Middle East, with a view to putting an end to the occupation of the Golan Heights. Therefore, the Government of Argentina

reiterates the importance of resuming negotiations to find a definitive solution to the situation in the Syrian Golan, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and resolution 338 (1973) and the land for peace principle.

Mr. Eckersley (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom has maintained its voting position on this resolution (resolution 78/11) in line with our long-standing approach. We believe the Golan Heights, along with East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza, are occupied territory and do not recognize Israel's annexation of the Golan.

We continue to call on Israel, as the occupying Power, and all actors to uphold their obligations under international law to promote peace, stability and security. That is why, on 9 November, we maintained our vote in favour of the Palestinian-sponsored draft resolution on the occupied Syrian Golan in the Fourth Committee.

However, today's resolution, proposed by the Syrian regime, repeats much of the same language and adds nothing new. It is unnecessary and disproportionate. This additional resolution deflects attention from the Syrian regime's own criminal actions.

To prevent further spread of the conflict, the United Kingdom will continue to invest all efforts for a political solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The United Kingdom will work with its partners towards the two-State solution, based on 1967 lines, with Jerusalem as a shared capital, which provides justice and security for Israelis and Palestinians alike.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote after the voting.

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 34.

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.