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Official Records

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

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New York

Chair: Mr. Niang (Senegal)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People

The Chair: I declare open the special meeting of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People in observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People and in accordance with the provisions of resolution 32/40 B, of 2 December 1977.

It is my honour and pleasure to welcome His Excellency Mr. Philémon Yang, President of the General Assembly; Her Excellency Dame Barbara Woodward, President of the Security Council; Ms. Amina Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, representing the Secretary-General; and His Excellency Mr. Riyad Mansour, Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations, representing the President of the State of Palestine, His Excellency Mr. Mahmoud Abbas.

I would also like to welcome the delegations, intergovernmental organizations and civil society organizations participating in this special meeting. Our special appreciation goes also to Ms. Tanya Haj-Hassan, who is joining us today as a civil society representative.

I want to note that this meeting is being webcast live on United Nations Web TV, with simultaneous interpretation in all six official languages. I would like to urge all speakers to keep their statements to no more than five minutes. I should also inform the Committee that some of the dignitaries may have to leave the meeting at the end of the first segment owing to other commitments.

At this point I would like to make a statement on behalf of the Committee.

Today we once more gather to observe the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, not as a mere commemoration but as a solemn reminder of promises unfulfilled, rights denied and the historic injustice endured by the Palestinian people for decades. Seventy-six years after the adoption of resolution 181 (II), which

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envisioned two States living side by side in peace and security, the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people remain unrealized, including their right to self-determination, a right owed to all peoples on Earth.

This year's commemoration is taking place amid unprecedented suffering and tragedy. Now stretching beyond 400 days, Israel's military action in the Gaza Strip has inflicted devastating human and material losses. More than 44,000 Palestinians have been killed, 70 per cent of them women and children. More than 104,000 have been injured, many are disabled for life and thousands more are still missing, believed to be still buried under the rubble. The entire Palestinian civilian population in Gaza is enduring a humanitarian catastrophe on a level unseen since the Second World War.

A relentless blockade, compounded by devastating military assaults by Israel, the occupying Power, has left families without food, water, electricity, essential supplies or shelter. Gaza has been made uninhabitable by design, with homes, schools, hospitals and 80 per cent of civilian infrastructure lying in ruins, and the basic necessities of life have been weaponized by Israel, including by using starvation as a method of war. In the words of Commissioner-General Lazzarini of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), Gaza has been turned into a place where the "smell of death is everywhere as bodies are left lying on the roads or under the rubble". As the Secretary-General has lamented, Gaza has become hell on Earth. It is the most dangerous place in the world to be a child and the most dangerous place for humanitarians and for all the civilians who call Gaza home. We must now act decisively to end this humanitarian, political, legal and moral catastrophe.

The scale of the catastrophe and the severity of the crimes have led numerous scholars, independent experts and human rights organizations to recognize this grave situation as constituting genocide. The International Court of Justice is now addressing the case and has ordered three provisional measures to protect the Palestinian people from irreparable harm. At the same time, in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, Israeli settler violence against Palestinians and their properties continues to escalate, with impunity fostering a climate of lawlessness, leading to rising casualties and to the forced displacement of entire Palestinian communities. Israel's settlement expansion and its creeping annexation of Palestinian lands — now openly threatened by Israeli Government ministers — undermine both the prospects for peace and the viability of a future Palestinian State. Those actions — deemed illegal under international law, their illegality reaffirmed this year by the International Court of Justice — continue unchecked, underscoring the profound cost of global inaction. We must also act to end that injustice.

The grim reality that we are facing day in and day out forces us to confront a fundamental truth: Palestinians deserve dignity, respect and the same inalienable rights that are afforded to all people. Dehumanizing rhetoric and calls for their annihilation or for obliterating their identity or their right to exist as a nation are not only a stain on the perpetrators, but also a stain on our humanity.

The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People unequivocally condemns and demands an end to all the atrocities that are being perpetrated by Israel, the occupying Power, in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. We urgently call on the international community to take decisive action to end Israel's occupation, ensure accountability for perpetrators, deliver justice for the victims and uphold the long-overdue inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. That includes addressing the rights of Palestinian refugees and achieving the independence of the State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, with full recognition of Palestine as a sovereign State that is equal among nations. To continue to deny those rights to the Palestinian people is to betray the principles of humanity and justice that we claim to uphold.

The failure of the international system to act decisively in the face of such grave breaches of international law, and in particular the inability of the Security Council to uphold its duties under the Charter of the United Nations and to enforce its legally binding resolutions, have severely compounded this conflict and deepened the suffering of the Palestinian people. That unacceptable failure and abdication of responsibility reflect not only an institutional paralysis, threatening the credibility of our Organization, but also a glaring moral deficit. That inaction and the impunity granted to Israel in the commission of its violations have emboldened it in its disregard of international humanitarian law, leaving the Palestinian people defenceless in the face of relentless aggression and defying the very principles of the Charter.

We are encouraged by the action taken by the International Criminal Court with its decision to issue arrest warrants for the perpetration of war crimes and crimes against humanity, restoring lost trust in the rule of law. We urge all Member States to do their part to ensure accountability, as demanded by international law, as determined by the International Court of Justice and as set out in the provisions of resolution ES-10/24, on bringing an end to all violations and an end to this illegal occupation in its entirety.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, the lifeline for millions of Palestine refugees and a United Nations-mandated agency, is also under attack today — politically, financially and rhetorically. Those efforts to undermine and effectively eliminate the Agency and obstruct its operations in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, are unlawful and will cause millions of Palestinians further suffering and threaten regional stability and prospects for peace. As the occupying Power, Israel has no legal authority to terminate UNRWA's mandate. Its attempts to restrict or ban United Nations operations in the occupied Palestinian territory represent a direct challenge to the authority and the privileges and immunities of the United Nations and Israel's obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention. Those actions also contravene the collective will of the international community, as reflected in the General Assembly mandate in 1949 to establish UNRWA, a mandate that has consistently been reaffirmed with the overwhelming support of Member States.

Despite those dire circumstances, there are reasons for hope. The General Assembly's adoption of resolution ES-10/24, of 18 September 2024, which seeks to implement the International Court of Justice's advisory opinion on the illegality of the Israeli occupation and the requirement to end it, is a significant step forward. The resolution reminds Member States of their international legal obligations to address this illegal situation. It contains provisions for concrete action to be taken by Member States to uphold their obligations, including halting arms transfer to Israel and ending all dealings with its settlement enterprise.

The lessons of history are clear. The global solidarity that ended apartheid in South Africa and Namibia demonstrates that collective will can achieve change. All Member States must apply the same resolve to end the Israeli occupation and secure justice for the Palestinian people. Neutrality in the face of injustice is complicity. In the work of our Committee, we take comfort in the words of former Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, which echo today: "No occupation that oppresses a people can last forever." We therefore appeal to the Security Council and to all Member States to fulfil their responsibilities by urgently considering actions needed to swiftly end Israel's illegal occupation of the Palestinian territory, first and foremost through the implementation of the Council's numerous resolutions, and to assist the Palestinian people in realizing their right to self-determination and freedom, a solemn obligation for all of us.

Today we must resolve that this day will not merely commemorate unfulfilled rights but serve as a turning point for action. We call on all Member States to unite in pursuing a just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine. The path forward

is clear: prevent annexation and end the illegal occupation of the Palestinian territory in its entirety; halt all violence, both the relentless military assaults in Gaza and the escalating settler aggression in the West Bank and East Jerusalem; and uphold international law with accountability. Humanitarian lifelines like UNRWA must be protected, and Gaza's reconstruction must be prioritized under Palestinian leadership.

We must restart our actions towards achieving the two-State solution, based on United Nations resolutions and the pre-1967 borders, including the realization of the independence of the State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital. The time for action is now. Justice for the Palestinian people can no longer wait. The world is watching and history will judge us not by our words but by our actions. Let us act with urgency, courage and determination to fulfil the vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace, security and mutual recognition.

I now have the honour of giving the floor to the President of the General Assembly, His Excellency Mr. Philémon Yang.

Mr. Yang (President of the General Assembly): Seeking peace for everyone in the Middle East is why we are here today, for peace has long eluded the people of that region, who continue to be burdened by conflict and violence. Nowhere is that clearer than in Palestine, where people desperately yearn for peace as they endure prolonged suffering. Let me be clear. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict can be resolved neither through force from either side nor through endless occupation or annexation. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict will end only when both Israelis and Palestinians are able to live side by side in their own sovereign, independent States, in peace, security and dignity. That is why we are here today — to reiterate the importance of realizing the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, in particular the right to self-determination, and express our collective solidarity with that cause.

Today we also recall the General Assembly's historic adoption of resolution 181 (II), on 29 November 1947. The so-called partition resolution called for the establishment of two States, a Jewish State, called Israel, which exists, and an Arab State called Palestine, which still has not been admitted to the United Nations as a full Member State, 77 years later. That is unjust. Moreover, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains unresolved. Despite numerous resolutions and international conferences aimed at achieving a just, comprehensive and lasting peace, the conflict has once again escalated before our eyes, becoming one of the worst humanitarian crises in recent memory. In Gaza, more than 43,000 people have been killed since October 2023, most of them civilians, women and children. More than 100,000 people have been injured. Some 1.9 million people — nearly the entire population of Gaza — have been displaced. Civilian infrastructure lies in ruins. Meanwhile, the situation in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, remains deeply concerning. Israel's large-scale military operations, violence against civilians, settler-related violence, settlement expansion, demolitions and displacement continue to undermine the prospects for an urgently needed political process.

More than seven decades ago, the General Assembly called for a two-State solution. Today we gather to stress once again that the aspiration of the Palestinian people for their own State is a just aspiration, one that will help realize their hopes for peace, security and dignity and one that must finally be met. When generations of young Palestinians are being deprived of their fundamental rights and are left without hope for a better future, that only fuels desperation, trauma and extremism. We must restore hope and trust among Palestinians — hope that a better future is possible and trust in the United Nations and its commitments. We can start building that future here today by demanding a ceasefire, an immediate return of the hostages and the commencement of negotiations towards a long-lasting peace.

The future requires that the international community finally take concrete and meaningful action towards a just, comprehensive and lasting resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, a solution that is anchored in international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant United Nations resolutions. I am not saying anything new by affirming that only dialogue and negotiations towards the two-State solution will bring about an end to the vicious cycle of violence and instability. Today I would like to reiterate that only the establishment of a Palestinian State, alongside the State of Israel, can guarantee lasting peace, security and prosperity for the peoples of Palestine and Israel. Let us act now. I call on all the parties concerned and the States that have influence in the region to work to that end without further delay. Let us translate our solidarity with the Palestinian people into action that transforms their lives today. Let us do so for the sake of Palestinian children and to ensure a peaceful, prosperous and equitable future for everyone.

The Chair: I thank His Excellency Mr. Philémon Yang for his statement. Our Committee is thankful for his stewardship of the Assembly in addressing the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory.

I now have the honour of giving the floor to Her Excellency Dame Barbara Woodward, Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom to the United Nations, in her capacity as President of Security Council.

Dame Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom), President of the Security Council: I would like to thank the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of Palestinian people for inviting me to address this meeting in my capacity as President of the Security Council.

The Council remains fully committed to pursuing a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East, in line with international law, in particular the Charter of the United Nations, international human rights law and international humanitarian law, and consistent with its relevant resolutions, which represent a cornerstone of peace and security in the region. It is clearer than ever that a just, lasting and comprehensive solution, in accordance with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions, to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict can be achieved only by peaceful means.

Israel's military operation in Gaza, where 101 hostages are still being held by Hamas, continues. The immense suffering of the Palestinian people and the hostages endures. The international community needs to redouble efforts to support a ceasefire and the release of all hostages and take urgent action to address the catastrophic humanitarian crisis and chart an irreversible pathway towards the realization of the two-State solution.

During the past year the Security Council has remained seized of the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. The Council has continued to receive monthly briefings from the Secretary-General's Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and from the Secretary-General himself, in addition to holding open debates on the issue on a quarterly basis and receiving briefings and updates on the situation from United Nations officials and agencies and other international organizations on the ground. The Council has continued to receive the Secretary-General's reports on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016) in briefings by the Special Coordinator every three months, as well as in written form every six months. The Council has convened additional meetings and closed consultations in response to the extremely serious and worrisome developments on the ground, including the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza.

Since November 2023 the Council has adopted four resolutions and several press statements in response to the crisis. On 22 December 2023 the Council adopted resolution 2720 (2023). The resolution reaffirmed the obligations under international

humanitarian law of the parties to the conflict regarding the provision of humanitarian assistance and called for the creation of the conditions necessary for a sustainable cessation of hostilities. The resolution requested that the Secretary-General appoint a Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza with responsibility for facilitating, coordinating, monitoring and verifying in Gaza, as appropriate, all humanitarian relief consignments to Gaza. It further requested that the Coordinator expeditiously establish a United Nations mechanism for accelerating the provision of humanitarian relief consignments to Gaza through States that are not parties to the conflict. It also demanded the immediate and unconditional release of all the hostages and rejected the forced displacement of the civilian population, including children, in violation of international law.

On 25 March, the Council adopted resolution 2728 (2024), which demanded an immediate ceasefire for the month of Ramadan leading to a lasting sustainable ceasefire. It also demanded the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages, and the compliance of all the parties with their obligations under international law regarding all persons whom they detain.

On 10 June, the Security Council adopted resolution 2735 (2024), which welcomed the ceasefire proposal announced on 31 May and urged both parties to fully implement its terms without delay or conditions. As set out in the resolution, the implementation of the proposal would enable a ceasefire in three phases, with the release of hostages alongside the implementation of other provisions on the exchange of Palestinian prisoners, the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza, the return of Palestinian civilians to their homes, the safe and effective distribution of humanitarian assistance at scale throughout the Gaza Strip and a permanent end to the hostilities. The resolution also rejected any attempts to make demographic or territorial changes in the Gaza Strip, including any actions that reduce the territory of Gaza, and reiterated the Council's unwavering commitment to the vision of a two-State solution, whereby two democratic States, Israel and Palestine, live side by side in peace within secure and recognized borders, consistent with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions. In that regard, the resolution stressed the importance of unifying the Gaza Strip with the West Bank under the Palestinian Authority.

The members of the Security Council also recognize the essential role that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) plays in providing life-saving humanitarian support and services in the occupied Palestinian territory and the region. No organization can replace or be a substitute for UNRWA's capacity and mandate to serve Palestinian refugees and civilians in urgent need. The members of the Council are therefore gravely concerned about legislation enacted by the Israeli Knesset and have warned strongly against any attempts to dismantle or diminish UNRWA's operations and mandate. The Council members have also urged the Israeli Government to abide by its international obligations and respect the privileges and immunities of UNRWA. They welcome the Secretary-General and UNRWA's commitment to fully implementing the recommendations of the Independent Review of Mechanisms and Procedures to Ensure Adherence by UNRWA to the Humanitarian Principle of Neutrality, led by Ms. Catherine Colonna.

Over the past year, the violence in the West Bank has reached unprecedented levels. The members of the Council have continued to call for an immediate end to actions that undermine trust between the parties and threaten the viability of a two-State solution. Those actions include settlement activity, ranging from the demolition and confiscation of and construction on Palestinian property to evictions of Palestinians and settler attacks and incitement to violence across the occupied Palestinian territory.

The members of the Council have also continued to carefully monitor the acute fiscal and financial situation faced by the Palestinian Authority and have encouraged action to bolster its capacity to assume governing responsibilities in Gaza.

The members of the Council also condemn violence and any indiscriminate attacks on civilians, Israeli or Palestinian, and stress the importance of ensuring the protection of civilians.

The status quo is not sustainable. We must not give up our efforts to achieve an immediate ceasefire and the release of all hostages, as well as to ensure the safe, unimpeded, urgent delivery of humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian civilian population in Gaza in order to alleviate the catastrophic humanitarian situation. We reiterate our unwavering commitment to a two-State solution and underline the need to put in place urgent steps to revitalize a political pathway towards its realization. The Security Council will continue to follow closely the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, pursue the implementation of its relevant resolutions and foster and support efforts to ensure an environment conducive to achieving peace, prosperity and security for both the Israeli and Palestinian peoples.

The Chair: I thank Her Excellency Dame Barbara Woodward, President of the Security Council, for all the initiatives on the question of Palestine she has undertaken during the United Kingdom presidency, as well as for her important position on the recent Security Council draft resolution on Gaza (S/2024/835). The Committee highly appreciates her country's long-standing support for the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

I now have the honour to give the floor to the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Amina Mohammed, who will speak on behalf of the Secretary-General.

Ms. Mohammed: I have the honour to deliver this message on behalf of the Secretary-General.

"Every year on this day, the international community stands in solidarity for the dignity, rights, justice and self-determination of the Palestinian people. This year's commemoration is especially painful, as those fundamental goals are as distant as they have ever been. Nothing justifies the 7 October 2023 terror attacks by Hamas and the taking of hostages. And nothing justifies the collective punishment of the Palestinian people. Yet more than a year later, Gaza is in ruins, more than 44,000 Palestinians — mostly women and children — have been reportedly killed, and the humanitarian crisis is getting worse by the day. That is appalling and it is inexcusable. Meanwhile, in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, Israeli military operations, settlement expansion, evictions, demolitions, settler violence and threats of annexation are inflicting further pain and injustice.

"It is time for an immediate ceasefire and the unconditional release of all hostages, an end to the unlawful occupation of the Palestinian Territory, as confirmed by the International Court of Justice and the General Assembly, and irreversible progress towards a two-State solution, in line with international law and relevant United Nations resolutions, with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security and Jerusalem as the capital of both States.

"As a matter of urgency, I appeal for the full support of life-saving humanitarian relief for the Palestinian people — in particular through the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, which represents an irreplaceable lifeline for millions of Palestinians. The United Nations will continue to stand in solidarity with the Palestinian people and their inalienable rights to live in peace, security and dignity."

The Chair: I would like to thank the Deputy Secretary-General for her inspiring, important and concise statement, which vividly depicts the tragic situation prevailing in the occupied Palestinian territories. It also reminds us of our responsibility to fulfil the promises contained in all the engagements made by the international community, through the United Nations, to assist and help the Palestinian people to realize their legitimate aspirations.

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

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): I have the honour and privilege of reading out the statement of His Excellency Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine, at this meeting held on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

I welcome the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Amina Mohammed, representing the Secretary-General.

(spoke in Arabic)

“Today we commemorate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People at a time when our people have endured more than 400 days of an ongoing genocidal war. That war has led to more than 150,000 casualties — the majority of whom are children, women and the elderly — inflicted by the Israeli occupation forces, who are deliberately and systematically targeting civilians, in a repetition of what happened in the Nakba of 1948 and the tragedy of 1967, aiming to displace our people and seize their land and resources. An urgent international intervention is needed to stop that tragedy, which is taking place before the eyes and ears of the world.

“The international community has declared this International Day in support of the rights of our people, above all their right to self-determination and the independence of their State, which necessitates taking practical and radical steps to confront the dangers of achieving a just and comprehensive peace, based on international legitimacy and the Arab Peace Initiative. It is now apparent to the entire world that the main reason for the lack of security and stability in the Middle East is the existence of that occupation, which must be removed from the territory of the State of Palestine, including its capital, East Jerusalem, in order to ensure the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people — in particular the right to self-determination — and achieve a just and agreed-upon solution to the Palestine refugees issue, in accordance with resolution 194 (III).

“Disregarding the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people over the past 76 years and treating the occupying Power as a State above international law, shielding it from accountability and thereby providing it with impunity for its crimes — and even providing it with financial and military support — have emboldened it to defy international legitimacy and international law and persist in its aggression at every level. Consequently, it has declared its rejection of the existence of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees, which was established by the General Assembly, going so far as to consider it a terrorist organization. It has also rejected the decisions of the international courts, including the most recent advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the cessation of the aggression and the ending of the occupation. It has also rejected the arrest warrants issued by the International Criminal Court and has even formally announced its readiness to implement the racial annexation and settlement expansion schemes, in addition to other illegal Israeli policies and practices, including the ongoing invasions of cities in the West Bank, leading to

the killing and arrest of innocent people, the demolition of their homes, the confiscation of their land, the building of illegal settlements and other unilateral steps aimed at consolidating the occupation and ensuring its continuation.

“All of that has caused significant harm to the multilateral system based on international law and has damaged its credibility, which has been shaken by the inability to stop the aggression despite the images of massacred children that have shocked humankind. The latest demonstration of that inability was the biased use of the veto in the Security Council (see S/PV.9790) to prevent a comprehensive and permanent ceasefire and thereby allow the aggression against our people to continue. How long will the world remain silent, unable to deter the occupying Power from its crimes, hold it accountable and compel it to abide by international law, like the rest of the countries of the world?

“A few days ago, we commemorated the anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, a very significant step, reflecting our adherence to international legitimacy and international law, through which we agreed to the United Nations resolutions regarding a two-State solution as a way to achieve a just and comprehensive peace. The Palestine Liberation Organization — the sole legitimate representative of our Palestinian people and the umbrella of all Palestinians — has embodied the hopes and aspirations of our people for freedom and independence, stressing the need to eliminate the occupation from the entire Palestinian territory occupied in 1967 and to resist it through all political, legal and diplomatic means and through peaceful, non-violent popular resistance. It has also stressed that no matter what the occupation does, it will not succeed in breaking our people’s determination and steadfast attachment to their land and rights, which continue to have the constant support of the solidarity of the peoples of the world, who will not allow the occupation’s plans to eliminate the Palestinian cause, obliterate our people’s legitimate rights, implement an annexation and carry out apartheid, ethnic cleansing and other policies that violate international legitimacy and international law.

“We stress the importance of taking practical steps to deter the occupation, including by suspending Israel’s membership in the General Assembly, owing to the country’s refusal to abide by international law and its documented obligations and insistence on continuing its crimes against the Palestinian people. Those steps are needed in order to restore confidence in the international system’s ability to hold accountable those who violate international conventions and international law and to compel them to fulfil their obligations.

“We have consistently stressed that the only way to halt the dangerous escalation that we are witnessing in the region and to maintain regional and international stability, security and peace is to resolve the Palestinian question on the basis of resolutions of international legitimacy. The implementation of Security Council resolution 2735 (2024) should begin immediately in order to ensure that the humanitarian needs of the entire Gaza Strip are provided for, along with Israel’s full withdrawal from the Strip, the State of Palestine’s assumption of its sovereign responsibilities and the return of displaced persons to their homes, in preparation for rebuilding what the occupation has destroyed.

“At the same time, we must reject Israel’s plans to separate Gaza from the West Bank and Jerusalem and undermine the State of Palestine’s responsibility for them. The settlements must be stopped and an end must be brought to the occupation, the killings and the settler terrorism. The attacks on the holy sites and the attempts to alter the legal and historical status quo in the Holy City must cease. We must also put an end to the invasions of cities, extra-judicial killings, arbitrary arrests, attacks on prisoners, withholding of the bodies of martyrs and plundering of the Palestinian people’s money and resources.

“Despite all the difficulties that we are facing today, we believe that no matter how brutal and horrific the occupation is, it will come to an end. We will continue to work to fulfil the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and freedom and independence on their land — the land of their ancestors — and to realize the independence of their State, with East Jerusalem as its capital. We are all confident that the peoples of the world will continue to stand for what is right and just, as well as for freedom for Palestine and its people, and that they will continue to work to end the aggression, war, killing, destruction and displacement.

“In that regard, allow me, both in my own name and on behalf of the Palestinian people, to express our appreciation to all the peoples of the world who have spoken out and continue to speak out against injustice and aggression, demanding an end to an occupation that has tarnished the face of history with blood, murder and the deprivation of the rights, freedom and independence of an entire people, as well as an end to the genocide of our steadfast people in the Gaza Strip. They have affirmed that this dangerous situation makes it essential to translate those courageous positions into actions through their Governments’ and parliaments’ willingness to support the steadfastness of our people on their land and maintain their hope for a firm international consensus that will enable them to achieve peace and stability in accordance with international legitimacy. That includes the continued international support for the State of Palestine’s independence and recognition through full membership of the United Nations. In that regard we should also commend the great efforts being made by the Global Alliance for the Implementation of the Two-State Solution, whose first meeting was held in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia with the broad participation of our brothers and friends, designed to reach the goal that we collectively seek to achieve.

“Finally, I would like to salute the resilience of our people in Palestine, the refugee camps and the diaspora. With pride and honour, I salute our brave martyrs, prisoners and wounded people, and I tell them all that our united goal is to end the occupation and achieve freedom and independence. Once again, I reiterate that the occupation will end and that Palestinians’ rights will prevail no matter how long it takes.”

The Chair: I thank you, Mr. Mansour, and I once again express the Committee’s full support for the quest to restore the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. I ask you to convey our sincere gratitude and appreciation to His Excellency Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine, for this particularly important message.

We will now conclude the first part of our meeting. I would like to thank His Excellency the President of the General Assembly, Her Excellency the President of the Security Council and the Deputy Secretary-General for their statements and expressions of solidarity with the Palestinian people. We will now take a short break to allow the guests to leave the Chamber.

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The Chair: We will now move to the second part of the meeting. I would like to welcome the intergovernmental organizations that have supported the Palestinian cause over the years and that have participated in this special meeting to express their solidarity. Next, representatives of those organizations will deliver from the rostrum statements on behalf of their organizations.

I would now like to give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Salem Matug, Chargé d’affaires a.i. of the Permanent Observer Mission of the African Union to the United Nations, who will read out a message from His Excellency Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the African Union Commission.

Mr. Matug (African Union): Let me start by thanking you, Mr. Chair, and members of the Bureau for the excellent work the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People is doing.

I have the honour to deliver the following message on behalf of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, His Excellency Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat.

“On behalf of all African people, the African Union Commission and my own personal behalf, I send warm greetings and strong solidarity sentiments on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

“Today is not only an International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people, but also a day to reiterate our commitment as an international community to support the Palestinian cause. More than 13 months have passed since Israel started its brutal attacks against the Palestinian people in Gaza. More than 45,000 people have been killed, and hundreds of thousands injured, which has led to an unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe and a dangerous escalation in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. The deterioration in the region has caused and is causing unspeakable horror, tremendous human loss and suffering. This is threatening not only the Middle East, but also world peace and security. The cost for the civilian population is unbearable and unacceptable for the human conscience.

“As members of the international community, we cannot remain idle in the face of such dangers, atrocities and suffering. We have a duty to maintain international peace and security and to protect the people of the region, as well as humankind, from the risks and brutality of war. We must act to ensure accountability, with full respect for international law, taking into account the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice of 19 July 2024 and resolution ES-10/24, of 18 September 2024, which seeks to implement the Court’s advisory opinion.

“The African Union Commission continues to call on the international community to assume its responsibilities concerning the question of Palestine and the implementation of all United Nations resolutions adopted from 1948 to date aimed at reaching a peaceful solution. African support to the Palestinian cause is premised on the values of freedom, justice and the humanitarian principles that Africa defends in international forums alongside all those striving to ensure that Palestinians regain their right to exist and Palestine regains its right to exist as a key viable State in the Middle East.

“The African Union Commission has consistently expressed deep concerns about the consequences of unilateral policies and actions, including the ongoing war in Gaza. The war in Gaza is unjustifiable and is contributing to a devastating humanitarian situation, which is a war against humanity. Also, the city of East Jerusalem and the holy sites have never been as endangered as they are now. Christians and Muslims are fundamentally deprived from practicing their faith and beliefs.

“We call for an immediate ceasefire and the implementation of the Security Council resolutions in that regard, as well as resolution ES-10/21, which calls for an immediate humanitarian truce and cessation of hostilities against the civilian population in Gaza. On the other hand, we call for the release of all Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails and detention centres, and we call also for the release of Israeli hostages in Gaza. Today more than ever before, there is a need for urgent and renewed efforts to find a lasting solution to the conflict based on the coexistence of two States, Israel and Palestine, within the framework of all relevant United Nations resolutions.

“We express our deep concern about the adoption of two laws by the Israeli Parliament to ban the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, in contradiction of international law and which, if implemented, would prevent the provision of United Nations humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people under Israeli occupation, who are already under unprecedented and continued physical attack as of the past year.

“We welcome the decision of the General Assembly to convene, during its seventy-ninth session an international conference on the implementation of United Nations resolutions related to the question of Palestine and the two-State solution. The current situation calls for urgent measures to end the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land. And we call on the parties to stop the war and engage in negotiations in good faith. That is the only way to guarantee the fulfilment of the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian and Israeli peoples and to achieve peaceful coexistence, security and prosperity and to ensure a better future for all the people in the Middle East and beyond. The current situation calls for urgent action to end the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land.

“The African Union Commission reiterates its commitment to support all efforts aimed at achieving an ultimate solution for the Palestinian-Israeli conflict based on international legitimacy and rejects any incomplete and fragmented solutions, such as temporary borders or the Jewishness of Israel. The African Union Commission will work tirelessly with other international actors to ensure the establishment of an independent Palestinian State on the borders of June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to self-determination, in accordance with international law and the relevant United Nation resolutions.”

The Chair: I thank Mr. Salem Matug for delivering the principled statement of the Chair of the African Union Commission, and we are appreciative of the African Union’s continued support for the question of Palestine.

I now have the pleasure of giving the floor to Mrs. Nasria Elardja Flitti, Chargé d’affaires a.i. of the Permanent Observer Mission of the League of Arab States to the United Nations, who will read out a message from His Excellency Mr. Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States.

Mrs. Elardja Flitti (League of Arab States) (*spoke in Arabic*): Today we observe the International Day of Solidarity with the proud, resilient and patient Palestinian people, who continue to struggle for their deprived freedom and the independence of their usurped territory of Palestine, land of all divine religions and peace. On this occasion, I would like to deliver a statement on behalf of His Excellency Mr. Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States.

“Our observance this year of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people comes at a solemn and bitter time as the Palestinian question endures extremely difficult historical circumstances. Today, after the masks have fallen and the hideous Israeli plot has been exposed, it is clear that the aim of the right-wing gang in Israel is to end the Palestinian presence in the Palestinian homeland, liquidate the Palestinian State project and turn the dream of forced displacement into a reality by making Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, unliveable for Palestinians and making their survival unbearable or unachievable on the ground.

“The inaction and silence facing that plot, which has been exposed in full view of the world, amount to no less than complicity in that historic crime. Inaction and negligence can be described only as shameful. We are not referring

to the people of principle in the four corners of the world who have stood up against the crime of the century. They are a living testament that our humanity lives on, that there are those who still call a spade a spade.

“Gaza is undergoing ethnic cleansing and a genocidal war against humanity, the only aim of which is to entrench the Israeli occupation and extend the despicable apartheid regime from the river to the sea. We pay tribute to the countries and people of principle and conscience who have stood up against that mighty Power. We pay tribute to the countries that have recognized the State of Palestine. They are aware that peace and stability will not prevail in the region without establishing an independent Palestinian State along the 4 June 1967 borders, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. We call on all countries to do so by implementing the two-State solution and giving hope to the Palestinians in these dark times. We welcome the important decisions taken by some countries to end arms exports to Israel and impose sanctions on settlement activities and settlers. We reaffirm that accountability for the crimes of the occupation is the best means to end them and undermine the basis of the occupation.

“We commend the bold action of the International Criminal Court, which issued arrest warrants against occupation leaders for their war crimes and crimes against humanity. That is an important step towards accountability and justice, the two pillars of sustainable peace. While we welcome those measures, they are not enough to achieve the objective of ending the aggression and the genocide against the Palestinian people.

“This is the moment of truth — after over 400 days of indiscriminate killing, destruction and systematic genocide. The advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice of 19 July 2024 confirmed that the Israeli occupation of the territory of Palestine since 1967 is unlawful and must be brought to an end as soon as possible. The General Assembly then adopted a resolution in support of the advisory opinion and calling for its implementation (resolution ES-10/24).

“All countries of the world must now end the occupation and must not cooperate in any manner with the continuation of the occupation of the historic land of Palestine. Countries must choose if they want to stand on the right or wrong side of history. The truth is crystal clear. The truth is that the continuation of the Israeli occupation weakens trust in the international order. This occupation, with its inhumane practices and ongoing violations of international law, international humanitarian law and international human rights law, along with its public disregard for the United Nations and its most senior representative, will bring about the collapse of the international system.

“The Arab League Summit in Jeddah, held earlier this month, adopted important decisions and advocated, inter alia, mobilizing international support to suspend Israel’s participation in the General Assembly. That is plausible, as the occupation poses a threat to international peace and security and breaches the conditions of Israel’s admission to the United Nations more than 75 years ago. We have all witnessed the legally invalid and immoral decisions, including the recent Israeli Knesset decision to ban the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and its activities on the occupied Palestinian territory. That comes at a time when UNRWA represents a lifeline for millions of Palestinians in its five areas of operation and when the people of the Gaza Strip are on the brink of slow death, induced by famine. That continues to date.

“In conclusion, I pay tribute to the Palestinian people of whom I am proud and appreciative for their ongoing struggle and steadfastness in the face of the Israeli machinery of oppression, injustice and tyranny. We extend our appreciation to

all free countries and peoples that have stood up for the just Palestinian question. The global solidarity demonstrated by the peoples of conscience in the South and the North reflects a genuine commitment to the human values and international principles in support of the right of peoples to freedom and independence. That solidarity also confirms that the global conscience continues to embrace justice and human rights. Undoubtedly, that solidarity will offer hope to the Palestinian people and bring us closer to achieving the desired peace — a peace based on justice and truth, not on force or tyranny.”

The Chair: I thank Mrs. Nasria Elardja Flitti for her important statement on behalf of the League of Arab States. We appreciate the active and crucial role that the Arab League is playing in its unwavering commitment to resolve the question of Palestine.

I now have the pleasure of giving the floor to His Excellency Mr. Duncan Laki Muhumuza, Deputy Permanent Representative of Uganda to the United Nations, who will read out a statement from His Excellency Mr. Adonia Ayebare, Permanent Representative of Uganda to the United Nations, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

Mr. Muhumuza (Uganda): I am honoured to speak on behalf of the 121 member States of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (NAM).

NAM affirms its long-standing, common and principled position on the question of Palestine, which it has held for the past seven decades. It is in that spirit that NAM stands with the community of nations to commemorate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. The International Day reminds us all of the ongoing quest for justice, peace and the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. The Movement expresses its concern that we are marking the International Day amid heightened tensions in the Middle East, with a devastating war in the region. NAM reiterates that respect for the Charter of the United Nations, international law and United Nations resolutions constitute the foundation for a just solution of the Palestinian question as a cornerstone of regional and global peace and security in the Middle East. A peaceful solution to the question of Palestine is central in establishing wider peace and stability in the Middle East and is an issue of wider concern for the international community as a whole and for global peace and security.

NAM condemns in the strongest terms all forms of violence, in particular Israel’s military attacks and collective punishment of the Palestinian people, which are a grave breach of international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law, including, inter alia, the killing and injuring of tens of thousands of Palestinian civilians, many of them women, humanitarian workers and journalists. NAM demands the immediate and complete cessation of all forms of hostilities, violent repression and the illegal Israeli policies and practices against the Palestinian people and other nations of the region. NAM demands an immediate and permanent ceasefire, in accordance with the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, including Security Council resolution 2735 (2024), which calls for, inter alia, the release of hostages, the exchange of Palestinian prisoners, the return of Palestinian civilians to their homes and neighbourhoods in all areas of Gaza, and the safe and effective distribution of sufficient humanitarian assistance throughout the Gaza Strip to all Palestinian civilians who need it, including those with medical needs.

NAM members also express concern at the reports of the forced starvation and forced displacement of the civilian population throughout Gaza. NAM expresses support for all diplomatic efforts aimed at reaching an agreement on an immediate and permanent ceasefire. NAM recalls Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), which provides for a viable path to peace, setting forth the essential requirements and parameters for the realization of a just outcome on the basis of the two-State

solution, based on the 4 June 1967 lines, and ensuring the fulfilment by the Palestinian people of their inalienable rights, including the right to self-determination and the independence of the State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and a just solution for the plight of the Palestinian refugees.

NAM reiterates the call for full respect for the historic and legal status quo, the historical Hashemite custodianship over the Christian and Muslim holy sites in Al-Quds, the protection of the sanctity of the holy sites and all relevant provisions of international law and Security Council resolutions. Action must be taken immediately to help de-escalate the volatile situation, which must include a halt to all unilateral and unlawful measures by Israel, the occupying Power, in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, in order to lay the foundations for any prospects for peace. NAM commends the efforts of His Majesty King Mohammed VI as Chair of the Al-Quds Committee of the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation.

NAM calls for the continued provision of the necessary humanitarian and socioeconomic assistance to the Palestinian people, including the Palestinian refugees. The Movement reaffirms the continued indispensability of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), along with other United Nations agencies and international organizations, for alleviating the plight of the Palestinian people and safeguarding their rights and urges the international community to provide the Agency with sufficient and predictable funding. Furthermore, NAM rejects the provocative and dangerous attacks by Israel against the personnel, premises and mandate of UNRWA, and calls for an immediate halt to such unprecedented assaults on the United Nations humanitarian agency and the United Nations as a whole, which are in direct violation of the Charter, numerous international conventions, including the 1946 Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations, and relevant resolutions.

The Movement reiterates its grave concern at the lack of accountability for all the violations committed by Israel in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. Israel must comply with international law and be held to account for its blatant breaches of its international legal obligations. NAM member States therefore continue to call for international action to ensure the cessation of hostilities, the protection of civilians and accountability for the violations of international law. NAM reiterates that dialogue, diplomacy and respect for the principles of international law are the cornerstones in advancing peace in the Middle East. We encourage all parties to seek political processes that entail a commitment to justice, equality and mutual respect.

In conclusion, on this International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, NAM stands with the Palestinian people in their quest for dignity, freedom and peace. NAM member States reaffirm their commitment to bringing an end to this grave and historic injustice by promoting a just, lasting, comprehensive and peaceful solution to the question of Palestine, in accordance with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions. NAM reaffirms its support for the Palestinian people in their struggle to achieve justice, exercise their inalienable rights and fulfil their legitimate national aspirations, including for self-determination, freedom and independence in their sovereign and independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The Chair: I thank Mr. Muhumuza for reading out that important message from the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries. We are once again very grateful to the Movement for being a strong ally of the Committee in advancing the cause of the Palestinian people.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Hameed Opeloyeru, Permanent Observer of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, who will read out a message from His Excellency Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

Mr. Opeloyeru (Organization of Islamic Cooperation): I thank you for convening this meeting, Mr. Chair. I have the distinct honour and privilege to deliver the following message from His Excellency Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

“At the outset, allow me to express the appreciation of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to the United Nations and its various committees and bodies, especially the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, its Chair, Ambassador Cheikh Niang, and its distinguished members, for their efforts to support the cause of Palestine and enhance international solidarity with the Palestinian people.

“As we come together on this International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, we are deeply aware of the dire and dangerous conditions developing in the occupied Palestinian territory, particularly the Gaza Strip, where the military aggression, genocide, starvation, siege, forced displacement, ethnic cleansing, indiscriminate destruction and terrorism perpetrated by the Israeli occupation forces have continued to cause widespread suffering, dire humanitarian disaster and instability. Those harsh realities, marked by violence and displacement, constitute a flagrant violation of international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions. It is in that context that we stand in solidarity with the people of Palestine and join the global call to address the grave challenges posed by the unending atrocities of the Israeli occupation forces.

“To that end, the OIC has been unwavering in affirming its principled position, most recently expressed in a resolution issued by the Extraordinary Arab and Islamic Summit held in Riyadh on 11 November. The resolution condemned outright the continued Israeli aggression in Palestine and Lebanon, which threatens security and stability in the entire region. It also renewed the call to the international community, especially the Security Council, to fulfil its responsibility to put an immediate end to the ongoing aggression, which constitutes a war crime and crimes against humanity. It also called for the urgent delivery of humanitarian aid and basic needs to the Gaza Strip, including by ensuring international protection for the Palestinian people.

“The unfortunate developments in the Gaza Strip cannot be viewed in isolation from the organized terrorism and severe attacks committed by extremist settlers under the protection of the Israeli occupation forces in the West Bank, including in the city of Al-Quds. Those actions unquestionably form a part of Israel’s illegal measures designed to change the demographic composition of the occupied Palestinian territory, even as they seek to obliterate the Arab and Islamic identities of Al-Quds Al-Sharif. Accordingly, we reaffirm that the illegal Israeli colonial occupation has no sovereignty over the city of Al-Quds and its holy sites, as they remain an integral part of the Palestinian territory occupied in 1967 and the capital of the State of Palestine. While we warn against the attempts of the Israeli occupation authorities and extremist settler groups to undermine the historical and legal reality of Islamic sites, especially the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque, we affirm that this action constitutes an attack on the established religious rights of Muslims around the world and represents a violation of freedom of worship and the sanctity of holy places. Those illegal actions are therefore capable of fuelling extremism, violence, and racism and will endanger security and stability in the region and indeed in the world at large.

“In the same vein, we have been following with great concern the recent desperate measures taken by the Israeli occupation authorities against the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which is the agency entrusted with the vital role of providing

essential humanitarian and social services to Palestinian refugees over the years. Without a doubt, UNRWA's activities remain a testament to the international community's commitment and responsibility regarding the cause of regional peace and stability in the region. On this occasion, we emphasize the need for the international community to stand by UNRWA and to support it politically and financially.

"The OIC believes that a more credible and definitive solution to this lingering crisis requires a paradigm shift on the part of the international community. Its political will needs to be translated into practical and effective measures. That is to ensure that the Israeli occupying Power discharges its obligations and duties in accordance with the relevant international resolutions, including by ending its illegal occupation of Palestine and its illegal settlements. It also behoves the international community to provide international protection for the Palestinian people, expand recognition of the State of Palestine and its right to full membership in the United Nations, and implement a two-State solution.

"In conclusion, the OIC renews its firm and absolute support for the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including the establishment of an independent State of Palestine within the 1967 borders, with East Al-Quds as its capital, based on the relevant United Nations resolutions, especially the General Assembly's recent resolution on the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (resolution ES-10/24), and the Arab Peace Initiative".

The Chair: I thank Mr. Opeloyeru for his statement. I would like to express the sincere appreciation of the Committee for his important message and for the strong support of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation for and partnership in our Committee's activities.

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

Mr. Pieris (Sri Lanka): On the solemn occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, I thank you, Mr. Chair, for the opportunity to deliver this statement in my capacity as Chair of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories.

When we met last year (see A/AC.183/PV.414), the situation in both Gaza and the West Bank was deeply distressing. The situation today is even worse. The escalating violence, immense loss of civilian lives and destruction persist unabated. The humanitarian crisis — particularly in Gaza, where people continue to be deprived of basic resources, including food and nutrition — has reached catastrophic levels. Amid the unfolding catastrophe, the majority of the international community asserts the right to the Palestinian people to self-determination and continues to emphasize the need for a ceasefire and the provision of humanitarian relief and adherence to international law. However, 76 years after the adoption of resolution 181 (II), envisioning a two-State solution, those hopes remain unfulfilled. The situation today is dire, with death, destruction and mass displacement, as well as regional destabilization with possible global ramifications. The International Court of Justice is examining allegations of violations of international law that may constitute grave crimes against humanity.

On 18 November, I presented the fifty-sixth report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories (see A/79/363), which highlights a dire situation, particularly in Gaza. The report emphasizes that the current circumstances

represent a regression to unchecked violence and persecution, undermining international law and causing immense suffering. The findings reveal that Israel's military operations have caused catastrophic damage to essential services, leading to long-term health risks and environmental disasters. The report critiques Israel's use of artificial intelligence in military targeting, which has resulted in heavy civilian casualties, particularly among women and children. It also addresses issues of sexual violence against Palestinian women and the deliberate targeting of civilians. The report discusses the suppression of media and dissent, contributing to a narrative that obscures the realities in Gaza and the West Bank, where similar alarming trends are occurring. The report calls for immediate action to halt support for Israel's actions, emphasizing the need for accountability from Member States so as to uphold international law and protect Palestinian rights.

The urgency of the situation is also underscored with the report warning that inaction will have lasting consequences for global peace and security. It was in 1977 that the General Assembly adopted resolution 32/40B, declaring 29 November as the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. However, almost 47 years later, we are still grappling with a situation in which peace and peaceful coexistence between the States of Israel and Palestine seem as illusory as ever. We reiterate our commitment to a just, lasting, comprehensive and peaceful solution to the question of Palestine, based on the Palestinian people's right to self-determination, including the right to an independent State based on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. Let us remember that our response to this issue — or lack thereof — will determine the moral and ethical foundation of our international system.

In conclusion, I reaffirm our unwavering solidarity with the Palestinian people during these challenging times and our steadfast support for their pursuit of statehood.

The Chair: I thank His Excellency Mr. Pieris for the very important message he shared on behalf of the Special Committee and for his country's active participation in our Committee's activities. Like my colleague Ambassador Ahmad Faisal Muhamad of Malaysia, I represent my country, Senegal, on the Special Committee. Therefore, from my vantage point as a member, I can attest to Mr. Pieris's leadership and his commitment to fully delivering the mission entrusted to the Special Committee. As he is about to end his tenure here in New York, I would like to thank him sincerely for his engagement and the passion he has shown regarding the mission. I wish him all the best for the future.

I now have the pleasure of giving the floor to Dr. Tanya Haj-Hassan. Before she takes the floor, I would like to introduce her briefly. Dr. Haj-Hassan is a paediatric intensive care physician who received her medical degree from the University of Oxford's medical school. She has worked in the occupied West Bank and Gaza, including with the organization Doctors Without Borders. Since the outbreak of the war in Gaza, she has been to Gaza several times with the United Kingdom-based organization Medical Aid for Palestinians and also co-founded the social media account @gazamedicvoices, which shares first-hand accounts from healthcare professionals in Gaza. Dr. Haj-Hassan is one of the voices from the field bringing the stories of medical professionals and their patients to the outside world. She has been featured in many news outlets.

Dr. Haj-Hassan: As you mentioned, Mr. Chair, I am a paediatric intensive care doctor and I have worked in Gaza many times over the past decade. Most recently, I worked as part of an emergency medical team working in a hospital in Gaza's central area during the ongoing genocide.

I am here today in the moral company of every other health professional I know who has worked in Gaza over the past 14 months, some of whom are with me here today in the Chamber. We are here in solidarity with our Palestinian healthcare colleagues and the Palestinian people. One cannot witness what is happening in Gaza and not emerge

enraged and determined to stop it. We do not want to be here or on the news repeatedly acting as moral witnesses to ongoing atrocities. But by design, international journalists and independent human rights and forensic investigators have been prohibited by Israel from bearing witness. At the same time, incredible Palestinian journalists covering the genocide of their own people have been repeatedly targeted by Israel and discredited, while both their reporting and their murders have been largely ignored by mainstream western media.

As one of the few international observers allowed into Gaza, I can confirm — let anyone spend just five minutes in a hospital there and it will become painfully clear that Palestinians are being intentionally massacred, starved and stripped of everything needed to sustain human life. Collectively, for the past 14 months, we have treated people subjected to civilian massacre after civilian massacre at the few remaining partially functioning hospitals in Gaza. Entire families have been eliminated, wiped off the civil registry. Our healthcare and humanitarian colleagues are being killed in record numbers. We have treated countless children who lost their entire families — a phenomenon so frequent in Gaza that it is given a specific name: “wounded child, no surviving family”. We held the hands of children as they took their last breaths with no one but a stranger to comfort them. Those who recovered enough to leave the hospital continued to face the obvious risk of death, be it through another bombing, starvation, dehydration or disease.

History has clearly shown us that doctors cannot stop genocide. That is why it is called the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, and that is why I, a doctor, am here today pleading to the Committee. Before I share what I witnessed, I want to share a quote from my colleague Dr. Mohammed Ghanem — a young emergency room doctor who was killed one month ago by a quadcopter drone after steadfastly caring for his patients for more than 400 days while the hospitals in which he was working were repeatedly besieged. Dr. Ghanem said:

“As much as I could, I stayed away from sharing the tragic stories for two reasons: the first reason is that I know it is of no use, for those who could not be moved by pictures of dismembered and charred corpses will not be moved by some words. And the second reason is that I cannot find the words to describe the stories.”

I share Dr. Ghanem’s sentiment. What is left to say that might move people to action? What is left? How can we even begin to articulate what we have seen?

I remember the silence of the woman brought into the hospital injured, staring blankly and unable to speak. She had given birth one week earlier. She could not find her seven-day-old baby. Both her baby and her toddler were trapped under the rubble. There are no words that can adequately convey the pain and depravity of the aggression.

I remember 6-year-old Sewar who was intubated in the intensive care unit (ICU) with severe traumatic brain injury, her little brother still missing. I recall her mother sitting next to her, tears streaming down her face, asking, “What was her crime?” I did not have the heart to tell her that Sewar, with her beautiful long, dark lashes and curls, if she were to survive, would likely never talk or interact fully.

I will continue, as our Palestinian colleagues have for over 400 days.

There was 5-year-old Mohammed, with an in-and-out penetrating injury to the head, likely a gunshot, who died in the emergency room, as there were no beds in the ICU. He had no known surviving family to retrieve his body and was taken to the morgue by the medical team. I remember Mohammed so well. His hands and feet were really small. The last expression on his face was one of pain.

There was the elderly woman, whose age I did not learn, shot multiple times by the Israeli military while she was on the beach. She died while her elderly husband held her hands, tearfully telling me, “We have only God.” Or 13-year-old Amer,

who sustained severe neck trauma after his home was bombed and kept calling for his sister. He did not recognize that she was the girl in the bed next to him because she had been burned beyond recognition. When she died, Amer was left as the only surviving member of his family. I recall his vacant stare and his soft voice whispering into my ear: "I wish I had died with them. Everyone I love is in heaven. I do not want to be here anymore." How does one find the words to describe Amer's story?

There were toddler cousins, Mohammad and Massa, whom we resuscitated on the same bed after the residential building was bombed. I recall undoing their diapers, desperately looking for blood vessels to give them intravenous fluids. Mohammad bled to death. Massa suffered severe brain injury. She was still in a coma when I left Gaza. Both her parents were injured in the same attack. I do not know if they survived.

There was Shuruq, a 15-year-old girl with head and chest injuries, whose eyes were severely burned. She kept calling for her mother, whom she could not see was right next to her and also severely injured. Her mother gasped desperately for air until she died. We, the medical team, knew before Shuruq did that she was the only surviving member of her family. Shuruq's name means sunrise. How does one even begin to find words to tell these stories?

There was the father frantically searching for his children in the emergency room, who found us resuscitating them on the floor. We were resuscitating all of his children except Abdullah, whom he never found.

There was the lovely older gentleman who helped carry the injured into the emergency department, comforting them in any way he could, cleaning the pools of blood after every mass casualty. I saw him daily and had assumed he was a hospital employee, only to later learn that he had started volunteering at the hospital after his entire family had been killed at the beginning of the genocide. He had found that the only way he could cope with having survived was by helping other families. How does one begin to find words to describe his story?

These are not exceptional stories. Every single person I met in Gaza has lost family, friends, colleagues and neighbours, who were violently taken from them. I am speaking of the patients with traumatic injuries, whom I cared for over just 14 days, but that is only one dimension of this apocalyptic situation. Everything needed to sustain life — water, food, shelter, education, healthcare, energy, sewage, sanitation — is under attack in Gaza and has been for some time. A child who was living in an apartment and going to school in Gaza 14 months ago, if alive today, is now attempting to survive Israeli air strikes, warships, gunfire, hunger, starvation, a lack of clean water, the spread of diseases that threaten their little immunocompromised bodies, no safe shelter and no prospects for education today or in the future. Every university in Gaza has been destroyed. The only two medical schools in Gaza where I used to teach have been destroyed. Every child in Gaza is living this horror. I constantly think of those children, children whom I personally met, and I hope they are alive, surrounded by parents who are also still alive, and that they are not maimed, not hungry, not thirsty, not sick and not cold, as the winter encroaches on their tents and not scared. At the same time, I know that that is an impossible reality for any child in Gaza today.

On the eve of World Children's Day last week, the United States vetoed for the fifth time a Security Council draft resolution (S/2024/835) calling for a ceasefire in Gaza. In the words of Palestinian Ambassador to the United Nations Majed Bamyá, there is no justification for vetoing a draft resolution that is trying to stop atrocities (see S/PV.9790). There is no justification for that.

I want the Committee to take a second and imagine all of the children whom I just spoke about — their mothers, their fathers, desperately seeking medical care and searching for hope in one of the few remaining hospitals in Gaza. Then the

electricity cuts out; the entrance to the hospital is struck by a missile; the hospital is threatened with forced displacement orders again. It is apocalyptic. The same hospital in which I witnessed each of those horrific tragedies has been targeted multiple times over the past 14 months, as has virtually every single hospital in Gaza. Hospitals and healthcare workers have been systematically targeted by the Israeli military from the very first day. Our colleagues and friends have been killed, maimed, unlawfully detained and tortured. I have personally met healthcare workers who describe physical, psychological and sexual torture by Israeli military and Israeli prison guards. One of my most dedicated nursing colleagues, Saeed, had been abducted, while evacuating from Al-Shifa Hospital after an Israeli forced displacement order. He was detained for 53 days and described the most horrific forms of torture. After his release, he suffered from severe insomnia, and yet he attended the emergency room every single day to care for his patients. He fell asleep one day holding the small body of a fatally injured infant, who had died during an attempted resuscitation, from exhaustion.

Dr. Ghanem, whom I quoted before, wrote in April, six months before he was killed:

“Al-Shifa Hospital was under siege while I was inside it three times, and I was forcefully removed from it twice. This time it was the most severe, both in terms of the siege, the incursion and the amount of destruction. We were 13 doctors in the emergency department, all of us were tortured to different degrees, and six doctors were injured or arrested. I am only talking about the department I was in charge of, and I am not talking about the doctors who were executed directly from other departments after they were arrested or the doctors whose fate is still unknown.”

More than 1,000 healthcare workers have been killed in Gaza. Hundreds of healthcare workers have been held in Israeli captivity. At least four have been killed while in detention. Their bodies are still being held. Every single healthcare worker I met in Gaza has lost family, friends and colleagues. Every single healthcare worker I met has been displaced multiple times and has been forced out of the hospitals where they work. Many healthcare workers have been killed while trying to rescue the wounded in what has infamously been called Israel’s double- or triple-strike attacks, where a location is struck and then, shortly after, is struck a second and third time once the rescuer workers are there to retrieve the casualties. Other healthcare workers have been killed while working in hospitals. Hospitals and healthcare workers represent life and the will to keep people alive. The systematic and egregious targeting of healthcare is a line that should have never been crossed — like so many other red lines.

What happens now that all of those lines have been crossed? What sort of world have we descended into? It is actually a world that we have allowed to persist and build up to for decades. These profound injustices did not start 14 months ago. Palestinians have attempted every single means, including diplomacy, peaceful protest and appealing to the very reason this establishment was created. Their efforts have been met with the complete disregard of United Nations resolutions and the deepening violation of their human rights.

I remember one Friday in 2019 at Al-Shifa Hospital during the Great March of Return, the peaceful protests that lasted for two years at the border wall, in which 223 Palestinians were shot and killed by Israeli forces. Al-Shifa Hospital is the same hospital that has now been almost entirely destroyed, where doctors have dug mass graves to bury the dead, where the brilliant doctor Adnan Al-Bursh led the orthopaedic department before he was abducted, tortured and, likely, raped to death.

I vividly recall one day in 2019 in that hospital — an adolescent boy had been just brought in from the protest after being shot in the neck by Israeli soldiers from one of the towers. He was awake but gagging on his breathing tube and unable to move any of his body below his neck. His spinal cord had been severed by the bullet. He would never again be able to move his arms or legs or likely even breathe on his own. His father pleaded with the medical team and kept asking, “what did we do, other than peacefully demand our rights?”

In the words of our dear friend, Dr. Khamis Elessi, a pain and rehabilitation doctor, who, to this day, is besieged in Gaza, “We have been abandoned. We have been sacrificed for a cause that we wanted to protect for everyone, but we are the only people who are paying the price, unfortunately.” By everyone, Dr. Khamis means each and every one of us here together in this room and the world over.

Knowing I would be here today, I asked some colleagues in Gaza if they had messages they wanted me to share today. I would like to share some of them: “Tell them that we are tired. We are without homes, on the streets, our loved ones are gone and we are all stories.” That was a message from a young emergency room nurse, who is still trapped. An intensive care doctor, besieged in Gaza and separated from his family, told me, “Tell them everything you came and saw with your eyes. Tell them that I want to see my son and my wife because I really miss them.”

Saeed, the nurse I spoke of earlier, who was detained and tortured, said,

“We are being buried, every minute we are being buried, every minute we disappear, every minute we are abducted, we are experiencing things that the mind cannot even comprehend. We die and do not find anyone to bury us. I am asking you to share my story, my whole story, with my name. I want the whole world to know that I am a human being. At the end I am not pen on a paper, I am not anonymous, I am a human being created by God.”

He then asked a question I will pose here now:

“Why are not Palestinians the ones speaking for our cause. Why are we not there and able to speak — the Palestinian people, the people in Gaza? Why not me, why not my neighbour, why not my colleague?”

Our Palestinian colleagues are not here because the systems we currently exist in do not recognize the value of Palestinian life. This has gone on for too long.

I will end with some personal reflections and some reflections from my colleagues who recently came back from Gaza.

I am speaking here today both as a member of civil society and as a healthcare worker who has witnessed first-hand the death and destruction inflicted upon the Palestinian people. We spent the past 14 months watching as the most live-streamed and documented genocide in history has been met with silence and widespread propaganda campaigns justifying the unjustifiable, silencing and discrediting those who have attempted to expose it.

The eyewitnesses that have made it out alive consistently reported crimes that in any other context would have led to sanctions. But here, after 14 months of the gravest breaches of humanitarian law, gross violations of human rights and barbaric war crimes, it is met with impotence by individuals, countries and the very institution represented by this building. One day someone will dig up the records of our testimonies, pleading for 14 months. They will dig up the records of Palestinians covering their own genocide when international journalists were unprecedentedly banned from entering, of Palestinian children setting up press conferences to tell the world that their lives mattered. We will have to reckon with that history.

The precedent that has been set in Gaza, as some of my colleagues here mentioned earlier, will spread everywhere throughout the world. It signals the demise of the rule of law. We have already seen it spread to Lebanon. As one volunteer surgeon said, “when I was in Gaza, I felt like it was a prelude to the end of humanity.” If solidarity with one’s fellow humans is not enough of a reason to act, think about how this will spill over. This should be frightening for everyone.

I recognize that the words I shared today are heavy, but they pale in comparison to the reality experienced by Palestinians for over 400 days, and 76 years before that. Palestinians do not need our pity, and they do not need our praise. They need our meaningful and truthful solidarity. And there is no time for despair. In the 24 hours that I will spend in this city, at least 60 children in Gaza will be injured or killed. We cannot afford to wait one more day.

I recognize that many here, by virtue of being here today, are already convinced of the need to act. It takes courage to fight a corrupted system, a system that gives disproportionate power to countries with terrible records of global violence.

Today, as all of us sit here in the comfort of safety, Dr. Hussam Abu Safia is in Kamal Adwan Hospital, just discharged from the intensive care unit after he was injured by an Israeli strike. His son was killed not long ago, and his two daughters are injured. Yet he continues steadfastly to provide care for his patients. He said, a few days ago, “we will continue to provide this service at any cost to ourselves”.

The courage and action by Palestinian healthcare workers in the face of this genocide presents an exemplary model for all of us. The question I leave with is — what are we risking?

The Chair: I thank Dr. Tanya Haj-Hassan for her very powerful statement. Her very moving documented account of the shattered lives of innocent children truly reveals the profound inhumanity of the oppressors. We all know that. It also reveals the failure of the international community and of this very United Nations to live up to their responsibilities. I thank her for reminding us of all that. I think that our moral conscience is truly called into question. I am at a loss for words. All I can say is that we really need to do more than just utter empty words. We must take action. There is no other route for us to take.

Allow me to take this opportunity to also thank all civil society organizations and individuals active on the question of Palestine throughout the world for their invaluable work in support of, and in solidarity with, the Palestinian people. Our Committee is working with policy and civil society organizations to fulfil their inalienable rights. Once again, I thank Dr. Haj-Hassan very much for her engagement and commitment. We share all her concerns and frustrations and her belief that we need to do something very concrete.

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

We have received messages from the Heads of State of the following countries: Jordan, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, the Philippines, Algeria, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Tunisia, China, Türkiye, Colombia, Brunei Darussalam, Kuwait, Vietnam, Qatar, Senegal, Morocco, the Maldives, Indonesia and the United Arab Emirates.

We have received messages from the Heads of Government of the following countries: Lebanon, Pakistan, Malaysia and Malta.

The Committee has also received messages from the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the following countries: Bahrain, Syria, Guinea, Guyana, Saudi Arabia and Cuba.

We have received messages from the Governments of the following countries: Iran, Nicaragua, Japan, Chile, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bangladesh, Egypt, Afghanistan and Iraq.

I am sure that the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights will receive further messages. They will be posted as they are received on the United Nations website on the question of Palestine, maintained by the Division for Palestinian Rights, which is un.org/unispal.

Before adjourning the meeting, I would like to give the floor to Ambassador Mansour of the State of Palestine to make some final remarks.

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): On behalf of the Palestinian people and its leadership, I would like to express our gratitude, first of all, to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for organizing this event this year — one of the most painful in the history of the Palestinian people.

There is not much that one can say after the passionate and powerful testimony in the statement made by Dr. Haj-Hassan on behalf of the people whose message she was asked to convey to the Committee and thereby to the world. We hear them. We will not rest until we put an end to the atrocities in the Gaza Strip and the genocide there. We will not forget. We will not forgive. And we will go after the criminals who have caused our people so much suffering and pain. The journey of the Palestinian people before, during and after the Nakba has always been a painful one. But we are resilient people; we are powerful people; we are creative people; we are educated people; we are determined people. We will never be defeated. We will never be broken.

I thank Dr. Haj-Hassan deeply for giving a synopsis of the reality that our people are experiencing in the Gaza Strip. I know that the magnitude of that reality is a million times greater than what she tried to convey of it. But convey it she did, with such eloquence, passion and faithfulness to what she has seen and the tremendous amount of pain it displays. What she has seen is something that should be told by all the brave people who, like her, have an opportunity to go and tell the world of our people's pain. I agree with her and with the many who have told me that no matter what we say, we cannot truly reflect the atrocities and pain prevailing in the Gaza Strip.

We would also like to express our thanks to the Division for Palestinian Rights for playing a very important role, to all who are with us today to express their solidarity with the Palestinian people and to the speakers who delivered statements on behalf of so many organizations and groups. We, the Palestinian people, will never forget the heroic work of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the efforts by you, Mr. Chair — my twin brother — and the members of the Bureau and of the Committee. They have all worked tirelessly to tell the story of the Palestinian people and, more importantly, to fight so hard for justice for the Palestinian people and for an end to the illegal occupation in order to enable the Palestinian people to exercise their right to self-determination, including their right to an independent State with Holy Jerusalem as its capital, and to uphold the right of the refugees to return in accordance with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

This point in time — this moment of solidarity with our people — is unique, a moment when we need to redouble and triple our efforts to stop the genocide against our people. If we succeed in ending this aggression against our people today, we will save lives. We cannot bring back to life those whom we have lost — God bless their souls — but we can save those who are alive. We need to save them. We need to stop

this war. We need to stop the genocide and we need to save our people, so that we can tend to their wounds and rebuild the beautiful Gaza Strip and the entire nation of Palestine by getting rid of the evil, illegal occupation. We need to do it so that we can live in freedom and dignity in our own State, where we can run our own affairs and do everything that other nations do, without interference from a vicious occupation that is denying us our every right. But as I said, we will never be broken, and we will stay the course, put an end to the evil, illegal occupation and enjoy our independence.

I thank you once again for organizing this event and for the Committee's efforts, Mr. Chair. We will continue to work with you until we accomplish the Committee's objectives, as mandated by the General Assembly — that is, to help the Palestinian people attain their inalienable rights, including the right to self-determination, independence and statehood, and to uphold the rights of Palestinian refugees.

The Chair: I thank Ambassador Mansour for being an inspiration to the Committee. I would also like to say how much we appreciate the passion that he is instilling in the Committee. He, his team and the Permanent Observer Mission of the State of Palestine to the United Nations and the State of Palestine are not alone in this fight. The Committee will do whatever it can to really play its part fully in order to render justice to the Palestinian people.

Before concluding, I would like to clarify that the messages received from the delegations of Egypt, Iraq and Iran were messages from the Heads of State. The message received from the delegation of Bangladesh was a message from the Head of Government. Once again, I would like to express our sincere appreciation to the Heads of State and Government, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs whom I mentioned earlier and all participants for their persistent efforts to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine and for the support that they have always given to the mandated activities of the Committee.

Before adjourning this special meeting, I wish to thank everyone who made it possible, in particular the staff of the Division for Palestinian Rights, the Department for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, the Department of Public Information and the Office of Central Support Services, as well as the interpreters and everyone who worked behind the scenes.

In conclusion, let me remind members that next week, the Committee will launch an exhibit in connection with the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People in the Visitors Lobby of the General Assembly Hall. Details on the opening of the exhibit will be shared very soon. On behalf of the Committee, I look forward to seeing all members there.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.