



# General Assembly

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Official Records

*President:* Mr. Shahid ..... (Maldives)

*The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.*

## Agenda item 39

### Question of Palestine

**Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the  
Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People  
(A/76/35)**

**Report of the Secretary-General (A/76/299)**

**Note by the Secretary-General (A/76/309)**

**Draft resolution (A/76/L.14)**

**The President:** I thank the General Assembly for the opportunity to deliver remarks on today's plenary meetings on the question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East, two items that are deeply intertwined. We have seen time and again how the spillover effects of the Palestinian-Israeli dispute undermine the stability of the broader region.

To reiterate what I have said before, the lack of progress on this issue, despite its having been on the agenda of the United Nations since 1948, is disheartening. What is at stake is not only the region's peace and security but our ability to come together as a global community and resolve international disputes, in line with the founding vision of the United Nations. That is why we must not give up hope. We must maintain the credibility of this great institution and push for positive dialogue and engagement between the parties involved. Those efforts should be informed by international human rights law, international humanitarian law and

the values of the Charter of the United Nations, and throughout we must match actions to our words.

We speak year after year of the appalling humanitarian crisis in Palestine, especially in the Gaza Strip, but words are insufficient. They cannot fix the lack of decent living conditions and of running water, electricity and proper sanitation that millions of Palestinians endure. While words can tell us how the coronavirus disease pandemic has exacerbated such challenges, they cannot resolve them. They cannot save the Palestinian people suffering from decades of occupation, arbitrary arrests and the excessive use of force. Words cannot restore their demolished homes or halt the proliferation of illegal settlements on their land. These issues can be resolved only when we take action to resolve them, by providing humanitarian assistance, ending the conflict and upholding the human dignity of the inhabitants of the region.

Much remains to be done. Currently more than half of the 5 million Palestinians in the region are dependent on aid. Eighty per cent of the population of Gaza is in dire need of assistance and crying out for access to the most basic amenities and services. Similarly, the Palestinian refugees dispersed across the Middle East desperately need our help. While I am happy to acknowledge the resumption of funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which provides much-needed humanitarian assistance to Palestinian refugees, I note once again that the funding is not sufficient to last the rest of the year. UNRWA is funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions, and the growth in needs has outpaced the

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financial support. As a result, the UNRWA programme budget, which supports the delivery of core essential services, is operating with a large shortfall. As I have said before, many services to the refugees, including girls' education, the rollout of vaccinations and humanitarian assistance, are in jeopardy. Let us come together and ensure that there are sufficient financial resources to meet the humanitarian needs of Palestinians.

The most important thing that we can do is bring an end to this conflict by facilitating a two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders. As outlined in resolution 181 (II), a two-State solution remains the only path to ensuring that both Palestinians and Israelis can realize their legitimate aspirations and live side by side in peace and security, based on the 1967 borders, and with Jerusalem as the capital of both States. Today marks 74 years since the Assembly's adoption of that resolution, which provided the legal foundation for the formation of the State of Israel and a State of Palestine for the Palestinian people. To date, however, we have not achieved the establishment of a State for the Palestinian people in line with international law. Remedying that requires a multilateral political process aimed at achieving a just and peaceful solution based on international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions. We must continue to push for a return to constructive negotiations between the parties in order to resolve the complex issues involved. Anger and bitterness will fester as long as the Palestinian people are deprived of statehood, illegal settlements continue to be built on land that they are justly entitled to and families are forced to flee the violence and injustices against them and cannot return home. That contributes to a cycle of violence that has gone on for far too long.

Let us all come together as an international community and reiterate our commitment to protecting the rights of the Palestinian people. Let us grant them what they have been justly demanding for so long — dignity, statehood and respect. That is how we will resolve this conflict and secure peace in the Middle East.

I now give the floor to Mr. Neville Melvin Gertze of Namibia, in his capacity as Vice-Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, to introduce draft resolution A/76/L.14 and the Committee's report (A/76/35).

**Mr. Gertze** (Namibia): Allow me first to thank you personally, Mr. President, and all delegations, for participating actively in the recent special meeting of

the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to observe the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People on 29 November (see A/AC.183/PV.404). The statements of support that we received spoke eloquently to the international community's commitment to upholding the rights of the Palestinian people, supporting the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and rejecting any unilateral action, including on illegal Israeli settlement activities, that would hinder the two-State solution, as the only way to build a future of peace, justice, security and dignity for Palestinians and Israelis alike. The Committee will continue to advocate for those rights and for the international consensus on them, in cooperation with Member States, regional and international organizations and civil society.

It is an honour for me, in my capacity as Vice-Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, to introduce the Committee's annual report (A/76/35). The report focuses on the Committee's implementation of its programme of work, as well as on developments between 1 September 2020 and 31 August 2021 relating to the question of Palestine.

The report is organized into seven chapters. Chapters I and II contain the introduction and a brief overview of the major political developments, which serve as the context for the Committee's evolving work programme and activities during the reporting period. Chapters III and IV outline the mandate entrusted to the Committee by the General Assembly and contain information on the organization of the Committee's work during the year. Chapter V describes the work of the Committee, as well as the activities carried out on its behalf by the Division for Palestinian Rights around four major aspects of its mandate, which are the mobilization of the diplomatic community, awareness-raising, cooperation with intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and United Nations entities, and capacity-building. Chapter VI reports on the activities of the special information programme of the Department of Global Communications on the question of Palestine. The seventh and final chapter contains the Committee's conclusions and recommendations to the General Assembly and other relevant actors, including the following.

First, the Committee calls on Israel, the occupying Power, to halt the creeping annexation of parts of the

occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, which undermines the contiguity of the Palestinian territory and the physical viability of a two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders with East Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Palestine, in accordance with international law, the relevant United Nations resolutions, internationally agreed parameters, the Madrid principles and the Arab Peace Initiative.

The Committee deplores the use of excessive, disproportionate and indiscriminate force by Israeli security forces on Palestinian civilians, including during protests in the Gaza Strip in 2018 and 2019 and the 11-day conflict in May of this year. The Committee calls on the international community to shift from a humanitarian to a human rights framework in addressing the plight of the Palestinian people, and also demands an end to Israel's 14-year air, land and sea blockade of Gaza and the lifting of all closures under Security Council resolution 1860 (2009).

The Committee urges Member States and the Organization to call on Israel, as the occupying Power, to respect its obligations under international law to protect civilians. Further to the report of the Secretary-General (A/ES-10/794) pursuant to resolution ES-10/20, the Committee emphasizes the need for the implementation of an international protection mechanism that can credibly ensure the safety and welfare of Palestinian civilians.

The Committee expresses its deep alarm at the continuing acts of provocation and incitement, in particular by Israeli security forces throughout the occupied Palestinian territory, especially occupied East Jerusalem. The Committee reminds Israel and Palestinian militants that indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks and the failure to distinguish between military and civilian objects and their use constitute clear violations of international humanitarian law and may amount to war crimes.

The Committee regrets the postponement of the parliamentary and presidential elections in the State of Palestine and underlines that those democratic elections are a crucial factor in the full realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. To that end, the Committee urges the Palestinian leadership to announce new dates for holding the elections and urges the Security Council to ensure that Israel guarantees the holding of democratic Palestinian elections throughout the occupied Palestinian territory, including in East Jerusalem.

Supporting the Secretary-General's clear position on the question of Palestine, the Committee calls on him to continue to use his good offices and mediation capacities, including on all parties with influence, to act with urgency to de-escalate the current volatile situation and move towards a peaceful resolution of the conflict. The Committee urges the Security Council and the General Assembly to ensure the implementation of the long-standing parameters for peace affirmed in the relevant United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolution 2334 (2016) and General Assembly resolution 74/11 (2019).

The Committee requests that the Secretary-General continue to submit his reports to the Council on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016) in written format and, pursuant to paragraph 12 of the resolution, to include references to the implementation of its provisions by Member States. Pursuant to paragraph 11 of the resolution, the Committee also calls on the Council to examine practical ways and means to secure the full implementation of the relevant Council resolutions, including the use of sanctions on States and private entities that violate the Council's resolutions.

The Committee further urges the Security Council and the Middle East Quartet to revitalize the stalled peace process with a view to resuming meaningful negotiations towards a just and peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Committee will continue to mobilize the international community with the aim of halting Israel's annexation plan and will work to help to achieve a two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders. The Committee is also encouraged by the numerous statements in support of international legality by members of the international community, including from the Arab world and international civil society.

Any comprehensive resolution of the conflict will require a regional approach such as that offered by the Arab Peace Initiative. The Committee calls on regional organizations such as the European Union, the League of Arab States and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to take on a more politically active role in mediating an end to the conflict.

The Committee calls on international donors to fulfil without delay all pledges to expedite the provision of humanitarian assistance, the reconstruction processes and economic recovery, which are essential to alleviating the distress of Palestinians, including women and children, who face additional and gender-specific challenges that need to be addressed through

targeted actions. It stresses the urgency of ensuring sufficient and predictable funding to UNRWA to ensure its vital humanitarian and development assistance to the Palestine refugees. The Committee emphasizes the importance of the acknowledgement by Israel of the Nakba and its impact on the Palestinian people as a necessary requirement for a viable and lasting peace. Palestinian refugees should be treated as dispossessed nationals of a country, the State of Palestine, rather than as stateless refugees. The Committee strongly advocates the right to return, as well as just compensation for Palestinian refugees, as provided for in paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

The Committee considers unilateral decisions by Member States to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and transfer embassies in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem as null and void, as they are in violation of various Security Council resolutions, including resolutions 476 (1980) and 478 (1980). The Committee calls on those States to rescind their decisions and reiterates that the historic status quo of the holy sites in Jerusalem must be respected and that the international community shares the responsibility for preserving the city's legal, demographic and historical multicultural and multireligious character and status.

The Committee further underscores that it is the responsibility of States, private entities and corporations to refrain from contributing to Israel's grave violations of Palestinians' human rights through its settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. The Committee welcomes efforts by Governments, parliamentarians and civil-society actors to impose sanctions for such support, including economic support, for illegal Israeli settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory.

As the international community embarks on renewed efforts to restart meaningful negotiations for a credible peace process on the basis of the long-standing international parameters for a just solution, the Committee is determined to continue its outreach to key stakeholders with influence on the question of Palestine and to offer support for initiatives, including by the Middle East Quartet, with a view to holding an international peace conference leading to a two-State solution, as highlighted in the 23 March statement of the Quartet envoys.

The Committee intends to continue working closely with other United Nations actors and entities, including the Special Coordinator for the Middle

East Peace Process, as well as UNRWA, in order to synergize efforts in areas of common concern and uphold the Organization's permanent responsibility regarding the question of Palestine until that question is justly resolved in all its aspects in a satisfactory manner and in accordance with international law. The Committee expresses its deep appreciation to the OIC and other partners for their contribution of extrabudgetary resources and their active participation in its conferences and events.

The Committee commends the Division for Palestinian Rights for its contribution in support of its mandate and highlights the growing importance of cooperation among developing countries and regional and subregional organizations within the framework of South-South and triangular cooperation in sharing replicable experiences with the aim of achieving of self-determination and independence. The Committee will continue to promote inclusivity and gender balance in all of its activities, including its capacity-building programme for the civil servants of the State of Palestine.

I would now like to introduce draft resolution A/76/L.14, entitled "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine", which was subject to consultation with regional groups and has been unanimously endorsed by the Committee. In its paragraph 13 it calls on all States, consistent with the provisions of paragraph 5 of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016),

"(a) [N]ot to recognize any changes to the pre-1967 borders, including with regard to Jerusalem, other than those agreed by the parties through negotiations...; (b) To distinguish, in their relevant dealings, between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories occupied since 1967; (c) Not to render aid or assistance to illegal settlement activities, including not to provide Israel with any assistance to be used specifically in connection with settlements in the occupied territories...; and (d) To ... ensure ... accountability, consistent with international law".

The Committee hopes that those and other provisions in the text will elicit the Assembly's overwhelming support and calls on all Member States to vote in favour of the draft resolution.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the observer of the Observer State of Palestine.



**Mr. Mansour** (Palestine): We thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important meeting and for your principled stance on the Palestine question. We also reiterate our gratitude to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for its steadfast support to our just cause and reaffirm our appreciation to Senegal for ably chairing the Committee during these long years, as well as to the Vice-Chairs of the bureau — Afghanistan, Cuba, Indonesia, Namibia and Nicaragua — along with all the Committee members and observers and the Division for Palestinian Rights, for their principled support and efforts for justice and peace.

Today we also reaffirm our gratitude for the tireless efforts of the United Nations agencies assisting the Palestinian people — the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) at the forefront, along with UNICEF, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme, UN-Women, the World Food Programme, the World Health Organization, the United Nations Population Fund, UN-Habitat, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the Mine Action Service — with the generous support of States and organizations from around the world. We also reiterate our thanks to Secretary-General António Guterres and to the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process for their efforts to promote a just and peaceful solution.

The United Nations responsibility vis-à-vis the question of Palestine is clear and remains vital, since the Nakba that befell the Palestinian people following the General Assembly's decision to partition historic Palestine has now persisted for 74 years, with generations deprived of their fundamental human rights and compelled to endure the misery of exile as refugees and more than half a century of foreign colonial occupation. The political, security and humanitarian consequences of the failure to address the root causes of that injustice and to secure a just solution are known to all, of course. They have affected not only Palestinians and Israelis but our entire region and indeed the world, as the rule of the law has been gravely undermined through its deliberate and systematic violation by Israel, the occupying Power, still unstopped by the international community. That undercuts the pillars of the international system, including the Charter of the United Nations, and emboldens a dangerous culture of impunity.

The consequences of this injustice have affected and defined Palestinian existence in countless ways across generations. It is an existence marred by deep and painful human insecurity, hardships, dispossession and loss — of life and living, of home and homeland, of opportunity and potential, of hope and dreams. Yet those same generations continue to believe in the inevitability of justice and in their inalienable rights, including their right to return, to self-determination and to equality — rights that they are entitled to individually as human beings and collectively as a nation. Despite distress and despair, they hold firm to the justness of their cause, refusing to give up on their national aspirations and right to live in freedom in their homeland, free from violence, discrimination, want and the searing indignities they have suffered under Israel's colonial occupation and apartheid policies.

The remarkable stories of resilience among our people — young and old, mothers, fathers, children, elders, refugees and prisoners — prove that even in the darkest moments, their belief prevails that we will one day know justice and live in peace. That resilience was witnessed again in May of this year. As Israel pressed on with its war of colonization, aggression and apartheid against our people in Jerusalem, Gaza and across our homeland, our people nevertheless remained steadfast and continued forward, along with their brethren in exile and the diaspora, with dignity and conviction, insisting on their rights and their rightful place in their homeland. Today I want to deliver on their behalf a message of proud resilience, but I am also here to once again appeal to the Assembly to uphold its commitments and obligations and to act, individually and collectively, responsibly and urgently, to end this grave injustice.

We all know by now that the absence of a credible political horizon and the failure to enforce accountability measures for Israel's systematic human rights abuses and war crimes have only enabled its impunity and prolonged the conflict. Israel believes that it can violate the law and ignore United Nations resolutions without cost or consequence. That in turn has enabled and even encouraged it to entrench its illegal occupation of our land and press on with its decades-long schemes to displace and replace the Palestinian people, which constitutes a grave breach of international law and every norm of human decency. This appalling reality has been on full display over the past year. While some speak with fanfare about the new Israeli Government, the truth is that under the cover of platitudes about

improving the situation, Israel is actually escalating its violations against the Palestinian people. Our civilians, including children and women, are being killed and injured. In some cases, entire families are being obliterated, as we saw in the wanton aggression against the Gaza Strip in May, during which Israeli air strikes also destroyed thousands of homes and entire neighbourhoods. Israeli soldiers make violent raids on Palestinian towns, villages and refugee camps on a daily basis, snatching children from their homes and arresting, detaining and imprisoning thousands, who suffer untold abuses. Settler militias and extremists acting as mercenaries on behalf of the occupation are terrorizing our people.

The construction of colonial settlements continues, with 60,000 more Israeli settlers implanted in occupied Palestine, including East Jerusalem, in just the five years since Security Council resolution 2334 (2016) was adopted. The apartheid wall continues to fragment our land and trap our people in walled enclaves and ghettos. Palestinian homes and properties are being seized and demolished, forcibly expelling and displacing families. The Jerusalem neighbourhoods of Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan have been the most intensely targeted, with more than 1,550 people facing the threat of losing their homes as Israel presses ahead with attempts to illegally alter Jerusalem's demography, character, status, history and identity. Incursions persist at Al-Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram Al-Sharif, violating the historic and legal status quo, trampling the authority of the Islamic Waqf and Jordan's custodianship of the Muslim and Christian holy sites and fuelling constant provocations, incitements and violence by Jewish extremists that risk igniting a religious war.

The gross collective punishment of our people continues with Israel's imposition of hundreds of military checkpoints in our land, a discriminatory permit regime and, most inhumane of all, the 15-year blockade of the Gaza Strip, imprisoning more than 2 million people in conditions of cruel deprivation. Our natural resources continue to be exploited, impairing our people's capacity to sustainably develop and thrive. Moreover, Israel persists in its denial of the rights of the Palestine refugees, especially their right to return, and has escalated hostile attempts to undermine UNRWA, harm our refugees and deprive them of even minimal humanitarian support. Its discriminatory and racist policies against our people, wherever they may be on either side of the Green Line, solely based on their existence and identity as Palestinians, have

led prominent Palestinian, Israeli and international human rights organizations to declare that Israel is committing the crime of apartheid. It is an ongoing crisis of protection, human rights and international law and remains a threat to regional and global peace and security.

It is time to end this deplorable situation and to act collectively and responsibly to protect human life, uphold the rule of law and universal rights and make urgent and real progress towards the achievement of the just, lasting, comprehensive, peaceful solution long sought by the General Assembly, the Security Council and the international community. We should remind those who declare that the world is fatigued by our issue that no one is more exhausted than our people, who are living this grim reality. And to those who declare that now is not the time to deal with the Palestine question — that it is not the time to make peace — we ask how it can ever not be the right time to make peace. Our people's rights, freedoms and very existence are at stake, as are the prospects for a peaceful and secure future in our region.

As we mark the thirtieth anniversary of the Madrid Peace Conference this year, we must ask what the biggest obstacle is to achieving a just solution. Is it the peaceful, political, diplomatic and legal efforts aimed at resolving the Palestine question, or is it Israel's constant aggressions against the Palestinian people? Is it the pursuit of accountability, or is it the entrenchment of an illegal occupation? Is it respect for international law and United Nations resolutions, or is it violations and mockery of them? Is it the existence of civil-society organizations for monitoring and reporting human rights abuses, or is it their criminalization, blatantly aimed at silencing their advocacy and their legitimate work for accountability and justice?

The answers are well known. Israel cannot be allowed to continue turning logic on its head, distorting and distracting with empty pretexts and rhetoric about security, including with regard to self-defence, and false and libellous accusations of terrorism and anti-Semitism, while it acts as the aggressor and destroys every prospect for peace, rejecting international law, negotiations and past agreements and even insulting the international community, indeed this Assembly, for its attempts to uphold the law and pursue peace. The basis and parameters of a just solution — in accordance with international law, the relevant United Nations resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative, and based on

a two-State solution and the pre-1967 borders — have long been known. The international consensus in that regard remains strong, as is clearly reflected in the positions affirmed by an overwhelming majority of States, including in support of the Assembly's resolutions on the Palestine question. What is missing is the political will to do what is necessary to actually achieve that just solution.

Business as usual is not an option. Merely managing or shrinking the conflict is unacceptable, offensive and amounts to negligence when so many lives hang in the balance. What is needed is concerted action, including lawful countermeasures to bring the necessary pressure to bear to halt Israel's violations, along with collective efforts to salvage and revive the prospects for peace. We need a genuine political process under international auspices aimed at ending the longest belligerent occupation in modern history, enabling the liberation of the Palestinian people and the realization of their rights and establishing Palestinian-Israeli peace and security. The Security Council, with the Quartet that it has mandated and the General Assembly, has an important and leading role to play.

States also have clear responsibilities. We urge all States to uphold their principled positions on the Palestine question and make concrete efforts to implement United Nations resolutions at both the national and international level. In the light of Israel's continued non-compliance, its continuing violations must be met with accountability and consequences, including sanctions and legal action and with the involvement of the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice. It is time to stop appeasing Israel and rewarding its transgressions. Accountability is the key to deterring further crimes, sparing the suffering of more innocents and creating the conditions we need to bring us from merely talking about Palestinian-Israeli peace to making it a reality.

We therefore once again call on all States to ensure that they are not complicit with Israel's illegal actions, do not recognize as legitimate the unlawful situation that Israel has imposed on occupied Palestine, including East Jerusalem, and do not render any aid or assistance in order to maintain that unlawful situation. As called for in Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), all States must distinguish between the territory of Israel, the occupying Power, and the territories it has occupied since 1967, including with regard to Jerusalem. In that regard, we once again reiterate that

Israel is the occupying Power and has no sovereignty rights whatsoever in occupied Palestine, including East Jerusalem, regardless of any unilateral declarations and so-called basic or nation-State law or anything else.

It is time to work together to implement the resolutions of the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Human Rights Council and all other relevant United Nations decisions and rulings, including those of the International Court of Justice, the principal judicial body of the international community, whose authority must be upheld. It is time to use the tools at the international community's disposal, and rather than shying away from making peace because the challenges are so formidable, to rise to the occasion because so much is at stake. As Special Rapporteur Michael Lynk has stressed,

“[Y]esterday's playbook has only led to repeated diplomatic culs-de-sac, while enabling the patterns of human rights abuses and an endless occupation to continue largely unimpeded ... We cannot continue to tolerate the intolerable: the imposition of a colonial reality in Palestine in the twenty-first century.”

The Palestinian people and leadership remain steadfast in their pursuit of justice and peace. The path we have chosen is a peaceful one, and we remain committed to diplomatic, political, legal and non-violent means to realize our rights. As we committed to long ago, we also remain ready for negotiations, but that does not exclude other efforts and cannot be detached from respect for international law and United Nations resolutions, the guarantees of a just solution. We are trying, under the most immense challenges, to help ourselves, to unify and to work for peace. But we also need Member States to uphold their political, legal, humanitarian and moral obligations. We appeal to the international community to seize this opportunity to prevent the passing of another year at the expense of more Palestinian suffering, more violence and instability and yet another lost generation.

It is time for members to translate their principled statements and positions into serious, responsible, moral action without delay in order to promote a just solution that fulfils the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and enables them to live as a free people in their independent, sovereign State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, side by side with Israel and all of its neighbours in peace and security.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm what President Mahmoud Abbas stated in his message on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, that

“[o]ur people do not ask for more than what international law has granted other peoples around the world, but they will not accept less. The destiny and fate of our people is to live in freedom and dignity on the land of Palestine, and there is no power on Earth that can deny them their achievement of that goal.”

**Mr. Aidid** (Malaysia): Earlier this week, we observed the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People (see A/AC.183/PV.404) — an occasion that continues to remind us of the dreadful suffering and hardship faced by our Palestinian brothers and sisters. It is disheartening that for generations they have continued to live under brutal occupation and within a repressive blockade, with their fundamental rights denied while illegal settlements expand.

Israel’s systematic oppression of Palestinians and discriminatory policies are tantamount to the crime of apartheid, and its settlements are illegal under international law. Malaysia urges all Member States that believe in the rule of law and human rights not to shy away from denouncing Israel’s illegal and inhumane actions. The international community must assume its responsibility to secure justice and accountability for Israel’s crimes and human rights violations. Impunity in the occupied Palestinian territory must end. We also call on all Member States to refrain from taking a selective and discriminatory approach in protecting human rights defenders and civil-society organizations that are working for the human rights of Palestinians.

It remains Malaysia’s firm position that only a negotiated political solution, based on internationally agreed parameters, international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions, can lead to durable peace. In that connection, it is more urgent than ever to restart and create the necessary conditions for peace talks between the relevant parties. We must not rely on the status quo, as there is no guarantee that we will not see another flood of bloodshed. Malaysia also continues to call for the United Nations membership to grant the State of Palestine full membership status. The United Nations was founded on the principles of ensuring the presence and practice of human rights, justice, peace and the respect for international law for all. That should also apply to the State of Palestine and its people.

Malaysia also remains committed to supporting the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). Last month, we pledged a \$1 million long-term contribution to UNRWA in support of its predictable and sustainable funding. We call on Member States that have not done so to consider providing financial assistance to the Agency so that it can continue to provide for the critical humanitarian and development needs of millions of Palestinian refugees. Let me conclude by reaffirming Malaysia’s commitment to and support for the Palestinian people in realizing their inalienable rights to self-determination and independence, based on the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

**Mr. Al Omoush** (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like at the outset to express my thanks and gratitude to you, Mr. President, for your sincere efforts and successful conduct of the work of the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session. I am also pleased to reiterate our support to the Chair and members of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for their tireless efforts in defending the rights of our brother people of Palestine, foremost of which is their right to self-determination, and their legitimate aspirations to an independent State along the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital. The work of the Committee is vital because it keeps the question of Palestine active in the international arena and draws attention to the suffering of the Palestinian people, whose situation runs counter to the values of justice, dignity and basic human rights.

It is essential that we work actively to achieve a political environment that is conducive to a just and comprehensive peace based on a two-State solution that establishes an independent and sovereign Palestinian State along the 4 June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. If that does not happen, the conflict will only continue and worsen through the continued violations of the rights of the Palestinian people and illegal measures that undermine any prospect of peace. We must therefore redouble our efforts. We also need to achieve an economic environment that will help to end the suffering of the Palestinian people. The Palestinian Authority must have sufficient financial support, and every obstacle to the growth of the Palestinian economy must be removed, including those imposed by the Paris Protocol regarding investment and trade. In that regard, we must emphasize that improved economic conditions cannot take the place of improved political conditions



where achieving a two-State solution is concerned. They complement each other.

If we are to maintain calm, there must be a complete halt to the unilateral Israeli measures that caused tensions in May, and progress must be made in reviving the peace process. Silence is not an option. Effective and practical action is needed to save what remains of the prospects for peace. Without a clear position in support of the rules of international legitimacy and Palestinians' right to freedom and to establish a State, as well as of the right of the peoples in the region to live in security and stability, despair will prevail and conflict will erupt again, creating a significant threat to regional and international peace and security.

His Majesty King Abdullah II, as the Hashemite Custodian of the Muslim and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem, has stressed that Al-Quds Al-Sharif and the holy sites have always been and will continue to be the focus of attention and care. In coordination with our Palestinian brothers, Jordan will continue to shoulder that responsibility and strengthen the resistance of the inhabitants of Jerusalem. We will block any attempt to impose a new reality or change the legal and historic situation in the holy city, in particular with regard to the Al-Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram Al-Sharif.

Last month, Jordan and Sweden co-chaired an international ministerial conference in support of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East that sent an important message, reiterating the international community's support to the Agency in providing vital services to Palestinian refugees, including the right to a dignified life and to education and health care. The conference was also an opportunity to guarantee long-term financial support for the Agency and ensure that the international community would not abandon the refugees. Jordan will continue to work with all partners and friends to guarantee the necessary support for the Agency, which has suffered from repeated financial deficits, and to ensure that it is provided with all the support that it needs to work sustainably and in line with its United Nations mandate. We will continue to do so until a fair and comprehensive solution is reached that addresses all final-status issues and guarantees the rights of the Palestinian people, in line with the resolutions of international legitimacy, foremost of which is General Assembly resolution 194 (III), while ensuring the right of Palestinian refugees to return and to reparations.

Jordan will continue to support its brother people of Palestine. We will continue to work tirelessly to help them achieve their legitimate rights, especially their right to freedom and to establish a State in their homeland based on a two-State solution.

**Mr. Erdan (Israel):** Eli Kay was a young, vibrant 26-year-old who grew up in South Africa and dreamt of immigrating to Israel, the homeland of the Jewish people. After moving to Israel, he spent time working on a kibbutz. It was important for Eli to work the land and feel its holiness. Eli loved Israel, but he had a special connection to Jerusalem. He became a tour guide at the Western Wall and dedicated himself to sharing with others his unbreakable bond with the holy city. Eli was accepting of everyone and always greeted people with a warm smile, no matter who they were. He had been planning his upcoming engagement to his girlfriend, Jen, who was ready to start a family and spend the rest of her life with him, because Eli was the most gentle, caring and considerate person she had ever met. Tragically, last Sunday, a Palestinian terrorist opened fire on a crowd in Jerusalem, brutally murdering Eli and wounding four others. Eli's only crime was being a Jew in the holy city — the city that has been in every Jewish heart for 3,000 years.

And while that horrific act of terror has devastated families and destroyed lives, the Palestinian Authority and President Abbas have not even bothered to condemn it. Why? Simply because they are not interested in reconciliation. The Palestinian leadership is interested only in promoting violence and incitement, while attempting to erase the connection between Jerusalem and the Jewish people. Spurring a culture of hate and incitement against Israel is more important to Palestinian leaders than improving the quality of life of their own citizens. That Jewish blood is barely dry, and yet the Palestinians have the audacity to single out Israel for violence in Jerusalem. Today the General Assembly will vote on three draft resolutions that have one purpose and one purpose only: to demonize Israel. This annual package of distorted anti-Israel resolutions is part of a broader campaign to attack Israel and promote the Palestinians' false narrative. While the world is in the midst of a pandemic, global hunger is affecting billions and climate change is threatening humankind, the Palestinians' destructive, one-sided agenda remains the top priority for this body.

Year after year, Member States pledge their support to that propaganda, wasting valuable time, effort and

resources rather than focusing on the world's most pressing challenges. Has it ever occurred to anyone here that supporting these falsehoods makes peace less and less likely? Every year this body adopts between 10 and 20 resolutions that single out and specifically condemn Israel. Does anyone know how many resolutions the General Assembly has adopted condemning Iran or Syria? Barely one each. Here in this Hall, Israel, the only vibrant democracy in the Middle East, endures endless attacks, while the Iranian regime, which murders thousands of its citizens and sponsors terror around the globe, is hardly mentioned. While Syria uses chemical weapons on its citizens and has turned millions of them into refugees without homes, Israel, a beacon of human rights, is the primary focus of this institution. What a disgrace. Meanwhile, some Member States see no harm in supporting these distorted resolutions, despite their bias.

So I want to tell everyone here that by voting in favour of these draft resolutions, they are directly contributing to prolonging this conflict. By supporting this narrative of lies, Member States embolden the Palestinians to continue boycotting any negotiations and rejecting any compromises. If the international community unconditionally backs all of their outrageous and radical demands, why even bother coming to the negotiating table? The detachment of these resolutions from reality and their basic lack of understanding of this conflict truly knows no bounds. Through the votes in favour of these deceitful draft resolutions, the transformative progress being made across the Middle East is completely ignored as if it had never happened.

I am not sure if the General Assembly has heard, but more than a year ago, Israel signed peace agreements with three Arab countries — the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Morocco. Without any resolutions, condemnations and, most importantly, without any intervention by the United Nations, the Abraham Accords have created a real people-to-people peace, while deepening our ties with partners new and old. While the Palestinian leadership chooses hatred and violence, the leaders of Israel's new partners choose to educate their citizens on religious tolerance and coexistence. That is the only way to achieve peace between Israel and the Palestinians. Since the signing of the Accords, the region has become a hub for innovation and unity. From the recent water and energy deals, to collaboration on green technology ventures and even joint military exercises, the Abraham Accords are a model for what can be achieved when we support

coexistence and religious tolerance and prefer the path of peace and prosperity.

Israel has proved time and again that whenever there is a willing partner, our hand is always extended in peace. Yet rather than seizing the opportunity, the Palestinians opposed the Abraham Accords, demonizing that progress as well. While today's draft resolutions focus on peace in our region, they do not contain a single condemnation of the Palestinian leadership for that blatant rejection of peace. How can that be?

One of the most absurd demands in these resolutions is the call to maintain the status quo in Jerusalem, when in essence they do the exact opposite. By referring to the Temple Mount, Judaism's holiest site, only by its Muslim name, draft resolution A/76/L.16 is itself changing the status quo. The hypocrisy is truly outrageous. The fact that a draft resolution on Jerusalem does not refer to its ancient Jewish roots is not an ignorant mistake but an attempt to distort and rewrite history. At every Jewish wedding ceremony, the newly married couple stand under the wedding canopy and pledge never to forget the deep Jewish connection to Jerusalem. In Hebrew, we say, if I forget you, O Jerusalem, may my right hand lose its skill. So let me be clear. Neither terror attacks on Jews at our holy sites nor biased United Nations resolutions that are completely detached from reality will ever erase the eternal bond between the Jewish people and our capital, Jerusalem.

While peace can be achieved only through direct negotiations, not counterproductive resolutions, the General Assembly continues with its failed approach. Perhaps it is time to chart a different path. It is time for the United Nations to stop lending a hand to Palestinian rejectionism, giving Palestinian terrorism a free pass and erasing the everlasting bond between Jerusalem and the Jewish people. We will never allow that to happen. The time has come for a new direction. Today members will vote on three shameful draft resolutions. If the Assembly truly wants to ensure a future in which the entire region can live in peace and prosperity, the cycle of furthering false narratives and destructive propaganda must end now.

**Mr. Mahmoud (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*):** At the outset, I would like to express Egypt's appreciation for the convening of this meeting in the context of the debate on agenda item 39, entitled "Question of Palestine", and draft resolution A/76/L.14, entitled "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine".

The question of Palestine was one of the first issues to be put on the agenda of the United Nations. Since its inception, the Organization has adopted many resolutions that have become the basis for international legitimacy with regard to that question. However, despite the clear foundations underpinning those resolutions, there seems to be a lack of political will on the part of the international community to implement them. If carried out, that implementation could solve the Palestinian question and end the suffering that has been passed down from one generation to the next.

Despite that, the deterioration of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories has accelerated since the General Assembly's discussion of this agenda item last year (see A/75/PV.34). In May we witnessed an escalation in the Gaza Strip between the two parties against a backdrop of violations in the city of East Jerusalem. In response, Egypt has played its natural role, working diligently with the parties concerned to achieve a ceasefire and restore calm. But I also want to express our deep concern about the escalation of tensions in all of the occupied Palestinian territory as a result of settlement expansion, the confiscation of lands, the demolition of Palestinian homes and facilities, arrests of unarmed Palestinian civilians and settler violence against them, the ongoing process of the Judaization of East Jerusalem and attempts to expel Palestinian families from the Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan neighbourhoods, as well as Israel's continued blockade of the Gaza Strip. The burden of those developments has also worsened with the repercussions of the coronavirus disease pandemic for our brother Palestinian people in the occupied territories.

*Mr. Malovrh (Slovenia), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

We are all duty-bound to acknowledge that the only way to resolve the Palestinian question is by applying international law and the resolutions of international legitimacy, foremost among them the relevant United Nations resolutions, the concept of a two-State solution and the Arab Peace Initiative. Any attempts to resolve this decades-long conflict by other means are useless and will not achieve peace. Moreover, in the wake of the developments in the occupied territories, the situation is liable to explode again at any moment.

From that standpoint, Egypt emphasizes the importance of establishing a political framework for reviving the peace negotiations between the two sides on the basis of the agreed resolutions of international

legitimacy, by convening a ministerial meeting of the Middle East Quartet in order to prepare for the resumption of negotiations, and through ongoing efforts to build confidence between the two sides by improving conditions on the ground, ending all unilateral measures and supporting the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East so that it can fully carry out its mandate for Palestinian refugees. We reiterate that the only way to achieve security and stability in the Middle East is by ensuring all of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and establishing an independent Palestinian State along the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

**Mrs. Ali (Maldives):** I thank the President for convening this important plenary meeting on the question of Palestine. My delegation welcomes the Secretary-General's report on this agenda item (A/76/299) and notes that these reports reflect the heartbreaking realities of the daily lives of Palestinian people living under occupation. The suffering of civilians in those territories is immense, inhumane and inexcusable.

The question of Palestine remains the longest unresolved issue on our agenda. Over the past seven decades, many meetings have been held in this Hall and countless resolutions adopted to ensure that the Palestinian people's historic and legal rights are respected. The voices of the vast majority of the international community have been firm and clear regarding this issue. Yet as we gather here today, nothing has changed, and one may in fact argue that things are worse. The occupation continues. We have seen an acceleration of unlawful settlement activities and annexation threats and have witnessed an excessive and escalating use of force against civilians, including women and children. In short, the human rights situation is deteriorating day by day. This sustained occupation and continuous aggression has deep and far-reaching consequences. The Palestinian people have lost access to employment opportunities, natural resources, basic legal protections, and essential needs and services such as food, water, health care and education. The ongoing coronavirus disease pandemic has only worsened their living conditions and made them more vulnerable.

During the general debate, President Solih reaffirmed the Maldives' resolute position on the Palestinian issue (see A/76/PV.3). We continue to

believe firmly that the best solution is an independent and sovereign State of Palestine, established along the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side with Israel in peace and harmony. However, we must be clear-eyed. It is both depressing and plain to see that this solution, to which all sides in the conflict once agreed in the past, seems further and further away from becoming a reality.

When we agreed to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), we made a promise to leave no country behind. So when we speak of achieving the SDGs, we must not ignore the plight of the Palestinian people and their development aspirations. Additionally, Israel has continued to restrict freedom of expression and peaceful assembly throughout the occupied territory, arresting and prosecuting Palestinians for exercising their fundamental right to express their political beliefs. That fact is too often ignored. We have witnessed countless violations of international law by Israel, going back decades, with no accountability. The impunity with which Israeli forces operate in the occupied Palestinian territory is a serious threat to the rules-based international order and deeply offends our sense of justice and decency.

The Maldives supports a peaceful solution to the situation in Palestine. We continue to stand in solidarity with the Palestinian people and advocate for their full statehood and right to self-determination. The Maldives reiterates its call for an internationally agreed two-State solution with an independent and sovereign State of Palestine, based on the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital, living in peace and prosperity. We must recommit with renewed urgency to achieving a two-State solution that recognizes the full rights, freedom, justice and equality of the Palestinian people.

**Mr. Tirumurti (India):** I am taking the floor to deliver India's statement on the agenda items "Question of Palestine" and "The situation in the Middle East".

On the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, observed on 29 November (see A/AC.183/PV.404), the Prime Minister of India extended his best wishes to the people of Palestine in their endeavour to achieve statehood, peace and prosperity. In his message, he reaffirmed our relationship with the Palestinian people, which is based on deep-rooted historical and people-to-people ties. India's support to a peaceful resolution of the Israel-Palestine conflict is consistent and well known.

We hope for an early resumption of direct negotiations on the peace process between Israel and Palestine. The international community, and the Middle East Quartet in particular, has an important role to play in reviving those negotiations.

Recent developments on the ground, however, could pose challenges for a resumption of the peace process. The continued acts of violence against civilians in both Israel and Palestine, as well as the acts of destruction, are deeply concerning. We condemn those unilateral acts, which unduly alter the status quo on the ground, undercut the viability of a two-State solution and must be avoided in the interests of peace and stability. We are also worried about the violent incidents, provocation and incitement in Jerusalem. Given India's historic connection to Jerusalem, the city and its holy sites have a special place in the hearts of the millions of Indians who visit them every year. The historic status quo at the holy places of Jerusalem must be respected. We urge all sides to work cooperatively to defuse tensions and halt all provocations, incitement and violence in the city.

India welcomes the ongoing cooperation between Israel, the Palestinian Authority and the countries of the region. For our part, as a committed development partner of Palestine, India continues to provide development and humanitarian assistance to the people of Palestine, both bilaterally, through the Palestinian Authority, and through contributions to the United Nations. Even during the pandemic, our work on realizing development projects in Palestine, including an India-Palestine techno park, the India-Palestine Centre for Empowering Women and the construction of schools, has continued to progress.

We also appreciate the work of the United Nations and its agencies in ensuring the delivery of critical aid to Palestinians. We call for the regular and predictable transfer of aid and for its appropriate use. India remains supportive of the role of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in human development and in the delivery of humanitarian services. India has fully disbursed its pledged contribution to UNRWA for 2021. India's Minister of State for External Affairs, Mr. V. Muraleedharan, participated in the recent UNRWA ministerial conference in Brussels and renewed India's commitment to continuing its contributions to the Agency through a \$5 million donation for 2022.

I reiterate the urgent need for a resumption of direct negotiations between Israel and Palestine in



order to provide a sustainable platform for resolving all final-status issues towards the establishment of a sovereign, independent and viable State of Palestine, within secure and recognized borders, living side by side and at peace with Israel. India stands ready to support all efforts aimed at resuming direct negotiations.

**Mr. Pérez Ayestarán** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We appreciate the convening of this plenary meeting to address the situation in the Middle East and the question of Palestine, issues that are of vital importance to my country and to the international community. We would like to thank the Secretary-General for transmitting the reports contained in documents A/76/194, A/76/299 and A/76/309, whose contents we have duly noted. We also want to take this opportunity to recognize the valuable work of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People in its efforts to achieve, among other things, a just, peaceful, comprehensive and lasting solution to the question of Palestine, the crux of the Arab-Israeli conflict. And we endorse the conclusions and recommendations in the report contained in document A/76/35.

For more than 70 years, the heroic Palestinian people have resisted with great courage and dignity the aggressions systematically perpetrated against them by the occupying Power, which today, in the twenty-first century, continues to perpetuate a cruel and inhumane regime of ethnic domination that constitutes a true apartheid. We are referring to the armed attacks, indiscriminate bombings, destruction of vital infrastructure, mass violations of human rights, evictions and expulsions of Palestinians from their homes and ancestral lands, attacks on religious sites by groups of fanatics and mass arrests. These are among a lengthy list of aggressions whose victims include girls, boys and women and have resulted in the murder of innocent civilians and the forced displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, further adding to the 5.6 million Palestinian refugees.

This is about acts of racism, hate crimes and crimes against humanity that are committed through extermination, torture, ethnic cleansing, persecution, forced disappearance, extrajudicial killings and other degrading treatment, many of which amount to war crimes, and for which the international community must demand justice and an end to impunity, despite the systemic impunity consistently perpetuated by

the United States Government, which encourages Israel's crimes.

Almost two years ago, the Secretary-General called for peace and reconciliation in an appeal for a global ceasefire to enable the international community to focus its efforts on the fight against what today is our one true common enemy, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. However, that call has gone unheeded by Israel, which has instead taken advantage of the worst pandemic in a century to further its policies of occupation and domination, including by escalating military aggression, destroying homes and confiscating property, expanding illegal settlements, even bombing laboratories for processing coronavirus tests. In fact, according to information recently released by the Israeli Defense Forces themselves, incidents of violence have increased by 150 per cent over the past two years.

That is not even to mention the humanitarian catastrophe that Israel has created in the Gaza Strip, where more than 2 million Palestinians have been cut off from the rest of the world for 14 years. The Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip, infamous as the largest open-air prison on the planet and which the Secretary-General recently described as "hell on earth", live under a blockade, in precarious conditions, and among other things suffer from a terrible shortage of fuel, water and electricity, despite the assistance provided by United Nations agencies. It is an experiment by the occupying Power coldly calculated to cause pain and suffering.

Given the situation, it is safe to say that the State of Palestine is currently facing two pandemics, one of COVID-19 and the other the brutal, systematic and deliberate Israeli military aggression in the occupied Palestinian territories, which violates the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and the norms of international law on a daily basis and disregards Israel's obligations under the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council.

The outlook is not encouraging. In essence, we are looking at a real tragedy. We therefore believe that the Assembly and the Security Council must take decisions without further delay to ensure international protection for the Palestinian civilian population, prevent crimes that violate the dignity and human rights of the noble Palestinian people and ensure that those responsible for such heinous crimes are held to account before international justice.

However, we remain convinced that there is no option other than that of a political and peaceful solution to end what is one of the most unjust, painful and protracted conflicts confronting humankind. Thirty years after the Madrid Peace Conference, we reiterate that a two-State solution is the only way forward. It is the most just and lasting way to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and enjoys the widest support of the international community. It would in turn bring peace and stability to the Middle East region and also enable progress to be made towards Israel's withdrawal from the Syrian Golan and the occupied Lebanese territories.

In that regard, we call for easing tensions, including by ending the ongoing apartheid policies, and for avoiding unilateral measures or actions. That would be a positive step towards reversing the arbitrary and unjustified designation of Palestinian civil-society organizations as terrorist and help to foster an environment conducive to a resumption of the necessary political dialogue and credible, serious and direct negotiations for a just, comprehensive and lasting peace, based on a two-State solution, with both States living side by side in peace and security. In that regard, we hope that the Quartet will succeed in its efforts to enable the prospects for peace to be salvaged and thereby usher in the convening of an international conference under the auspices of the United Nations that includes the participation of all the parties involved in the Middle East peace process.

In conclusion, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has sponsored draft resolutions A/76/L.14, A/76/L.15 and A/76/L.16, and in that connection reaffirms its full solidarity and firm principled position in defence of the independence of the Palestinian people, their inalienable right to self-determination and the realization of their legitimate national aspirations. We renew our commitment to continuing to work actively and constructively towards achieving a free, independent and sovereign State of Palestine, within the pre-1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital, and as a full member of our Organization.

**Ms. Fatima** (Bangladesh): I thank the President for convening this important meeting on the question of Palestine, and reiterate Bangladesh's unwavering and steadfast support to the just cause of the people of Palestine for an independent, viable and sovereign Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, under a two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders.

Earlier this week we observed the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People (see A/AC.183/PV.404), as we have for 44 years now. Yet the aspirations of the Palestinian people to a homeland free from occupation remain elusive. Instead, in blatant disregard of repeated calls by the international community, Israel's illegal occupation and acts of aggression continue in the occupied Palestinian territory. The situation continues to deteriorate on every front. The demolitions and seizures of Palestinian homes and structures, and Palestinians' expulsion, forced displacement and bloodshed, are daily reminders of Israel's illegal occupation and blatant disregard for United Nations resolutions, international human rights and humanitarian law.

There has been no respite from Israeli acts of aggression and terror, even in the face of the devastating coronavirus disease (COVID 19) pandemic. Targeted attacks on health-care infrastructure and health workers have further aggravated the situation. In yet another flagrant act in October, Israel attempted to divide the Al-Aqsa Mosque, both violating the historic and legal status quo at the holy site and disrespecting the Islamic Waqf. Bangladesh condemns such reprehensible acts by the Israeli forces and calls for protecting innocent Palestinians and the sanctity of Palestinian territory and properties, including holy sites and places of worship. I would like to make a few points on what is needed to address one of history's most blatant acts of injustice and inaction.

First, the international community must make genuine efforts and act to address the root causes of the Palestinian crisis and put an end to the Israeli aggression. We must ensure that Israel complies with all international human rights and humanitarian laws and the relevant United Nations resolutions, including resolution 2234 (2016). The speedy implementation of the road map of the Arab Peace Initiative and the efforts of the Middle East Quartet are crucial building blocks in that regard.

Secondly, the perpetrators of the human rights violations and other crimes committed against Palestinian civilians in the occupied Palestinian territory must be held accountable in order to end the culture of impunity. Our failure to make good on our own decisions only adds to that sense of impunity. In that regard, we welcome the ongoing independent international commission of inquiry established to investigate all alleged violations of international human

rights in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, as mandated by Human Rights Council resolution S-30/1, adopted on 27 May. We also welcome the developments in that regard at the International Criminal Court.

Thirdly, the urgent humanitarian needs of the Palestinian people, including those related to their COVID-19 recovery, must be addressed immediately. We commend the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in that regard and urge the international community to strengthen UNRWA's capacity by addressing its perennial funding crisis. In that regard, we also call for the immediate lifting of the blockade on Gaza to ensure the delivery of COVID-19 vaccines and other health-care needs for the people there.

The General Assembly's continuing debate on the question of Palestine is a stark reminder of the international community's failure to protect the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and to implement the decisions that we have adopted here. The very existence of this crisis undermines the authority of the Charter of the United Nations and of the Organization. We owe it to the Assembly to act in accordance with our decisions to achieve a just, lasting, comprehensive and peaceful solution to this crisis through the recognition of an independent State of Palestine that has its own rightful place in this body.

**Mr. Al Hassan** (Oman) (*spoke in Arabic*): I have the honour of delivering this statement in the context of the General Assembly's debate on agenda item 39, regarding the question of Palestine. I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report entitled "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine" (A/76/299), and for his positions in support of international law and international legitimacy, especially with regard to the question of Palestine.

This is far from the first time that the United Nations has met to discuss the question of Palestine, which has been a major issue on our Organization's agenda since it was established in 1945. Despite the international resolutions on the issue, including those adopted by the Security Council, and despite the international consensus on the necessity of ending the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, we are still seeing the persistence not only of that occupation but of its continuing settlement activities and other restrictions

and provocations, which offend the feelings of peoples of the region, especially where holy sites are involved.

The Sultanate of Oman is resolutely committed to peace. We support peace efforts and understand the meaning of peace, and will continue to support peace in the Middle East and all over the world. At the same time, we also support the international law that emphasizes justice with regard to the question of Palestine and the legitimacy of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, particularly their right to independence and to establish a State with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with international law, the relevant Security Council resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative. We also support a two-State solution in which both peoples live side by side in peace and security and in sovereignty and independence.

My delegation reiterates the concern expressed by the Secretary-General about Israel's continued policies of aggression, settlement, escalation and abuse of civilians, including women and children. We believe that such actions do not serve peace. The occupying Power Israel's lack of respect for international law, combined with the international community's failure to fulfil its responsibilities regarding the Palestinian people, has led to the commission of grave violations against them and inflicted misery on Palestinian civilians forced to live in areas that are partially isolated from the world. We will not remain silent on that. As we commend the resolve of the Palestinian people to live in freedom, dignity and independence, we reiterate our support for their persistence in their pursuit of peace in the face of hostile actions and provocations. We call on Israel to take firm steps towards peace and begin a new era of cooperation and coexistence among all States and peoples of the Middle East in order to end this conflict, which has undermined stability and development in the region.

In conclusion, we stress that peace is the only strategic option for resolving the conflict in the Middle East, and peace can be achieved only by respecting the law and rendering justice. We therefore call on the international community to work collectively to establish a just and lasting peace in the Middle East that takes into account the interests and rights of all parties.

**Mr. Zhang Jun** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The question of Palestine is at the very heart of the situation in the Middle East. Its comprehensive, just and lasting settlement would serve the common interests of

Palestine and Israel. It is also the shared aspiration of all countries and peoples that stand for peace and justice.

The current Palestinian-Israeli situation is still complex and fragile. In particular, in May of this year, intense clashes broke out in Gaza, resulting in the death and injury of innocent civilians, as well as damage to property. It was yet another reminder to us all that the settlement of the question of Palestine cannot be delayed indefinitely, the suffering of the Palestinian people and the fundamental rights to which they are entitled cannot be ignored, the Middle East peace process must not continue to be derailed and the international community, including the United Nations, must assume its undeniable responsibilities.

China is a sincere friend of the Palestinian people and a staunch supporter of peace between Palestine and Israel. President Xi Jinping has put forward initiatives to promote a settlement of the question of Palestine on multiple occasions. This week he sent his ninth consecutive annual message marking the observance at the United Nations of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People (see A/AC.183/PV.404), reiterating China's unwavering support for Palestinians' just cause in restoring the legitimate rights of their nation. On the question of Palestine, China will always speak up for fairness and justice, actively facilitate talks for peace, continue to provide humanitarian, development and pandemic-response assistance to Palestine and support the United Nations in playing a positive and constructive role.

China supports the full implementation of a two-State solution. History and reality have shown over and over again that a two-State solution reflects the international consensus, as well as equity and justice. It is the only realistic avenue for addressing the question of Palestine. The international community must work together to turn it from a vision into a reality and translate consensus into action. The power of the Palestinian Authority should be enhanced, and it should be authorized to exercise sovereign functions in security, finance and other areas in order to give it effective control over the autonomous and occupied territories. The Palestinian factions should be supported in attaining greater unity, enabling them to achieve internal reconciliation through consultation and dialogue and arrive at a united position on talks for reaching a settlement. Palestine and Israel should be encouraged to resume peace talks based on a two-

State solution. Palestinian and Israeli negotiators are welcome to conduct direct negotiations in China.

China calls for broader international efforts to promote peace. This year marks the thirtieth anniversary of the Madrid Peace Conference. The land-for-peace principle established by the Conference provides fuel for the peace process. The international community should take this thirtieth anniversary as an opportunity, remain objective and unbiased, promote tolerance and mutual understanding and make greater efforts to enable a resumption of dialogue on an equal footing between Palestine and Israel, based on a two-State solution. We support the United Nations, the Arab League and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, as well as countries with significant influence, in playing a more active role so that broader and more effective efforts can be directed towards peace. The Security Council bears the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. It must therefore take robust action to find a solution to the Palestinian-Israeli question. China calls for holding an international peace conference under the auspices of the United Nations, with the participation of the permanent members of the Security Council and all stakeholders in the Middle East peace process.

China supports improving the economy, the people's welfare and the humanitarian situation in Palestine. The conflict and instability, compounded by the coronavirus disease pandemic, have exacerbated the already difficult conditions that the Palestinian people find themselves in. It is incumbent on the international community to take urgent action to provide assistance through multiple channels to Palestine to mitigate its financial crisis, help Gaza recover and rebuild and support the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East in carrying out its relief and assistance work. The blockade and siege on Gaza should be lifted as soon as possible. The legitimate rights of the people in the occupied Palestinian territory must be upheld. The settlement expansions, evictions, forced demolitions and violence against civilians must stop, as they undermine mutual trust and heighten tensions. China cares deeply about the well-being of the Palestinian people and gives Palestine active support in developing its economy and improving people's lives. China has sent humanitarian aid to Palestine on many occasions, including in the form of emergency cash transfers, anti-pandemic supplies and vaccines, and we will continue to provide assistance within our capacity.



China has always been a guardian of peace and a contributor to development in the Middle East. On the question of Palestine, China always stands on the side of peace, reason and justice. We support the establishment of a fully sovereign, independent State of Palestine based on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. We support peaceful coexistence between Palestine and Israel and the common development of the Arab and Jewish nations. China stands ready to work with the international community to practice genuine multilateralism, push for a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine and achieve security, stability, development and prosperity in the Middle East as soon as possible.

**Mr. Ishikane** (Japan): On 29 November, the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People (see A/AC.183/PV.404), Japan renewed its support for the Palestinians' long-standing aspirations for statehood. We also renewed our commitment to building confidence among the parties and assisting Palestinians' State-building efforts. Japan supports a two-State solution whereby Israel and a future independent Palestinian State live side by side in peace and security. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict should be resolved only through negotiations, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions and internationally agreed parameters. Japan urges the parties to strive to build trust and to refrain from unilateral acts that hinder the resumption of direct negotiations.

The tensions in Gaza have decreased since the announcement of a ceasefire. Humanitarian and reconstruction efforts are ongoing, with logistical and financial support from neighbouring countries and donors. While more remains to be done to meet humanitarian needs in Gaza, the ceasefire has brought about some positive developments, such as the smoother delivery of humanitarian goods, the freer movement of people and the issuance of Israeli work permits for Palestinians.

However, the situation on the ground remains worrisome. The settlement activities violate international law. Japan is deeply concerned about the fact that in October the Government of Israel announced the publication of tenders for housing units in the West Bank and East Jerusalem and approved plans for the construction of new housing units in settlements. At the same time, the continued acts of violence in the West Bank must also cease. They jeopardize the

efforts to build trust among the parties and could lead to a re-escalation. Japan calls on all the parties to halt any activities that would hinder progress towards the realization of a two-State solution, and to make serious efforts to resume a dialogue between the two parties. We reiterate that the solution can be achieved only through negotiations and mutual trust, not with violence.

Japan is committed to continuing its support to the people of Palestine as long as humanitarian and socioeconomic challenges remain in Palestine, particularly in Gaza. Japan has extended grant aid of \$23 million to Palestine since June and contributed \$40.8 million to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) this year. We appreciate the new financial pledges made by other donors at the international conference on UNRWA in November and call for further efforts, particularly by the countries of the region, to support the Agency, which continues to face financial difficulties.

Furthermore, Japan has taken the lead in two important initiatives. First, the Corridor for Peace and Prosperity is a programme that seeks to establish a business model for regional cooperation by attracting investment and creating jobs, in cooperation with the Palestinian Authority, Israel and Jordan. Secondly, the Conference on Cooperation among East Asian Countries for Palestinian Development has been instrumental in mobilizing the knowledge, experience and economic resources of East Asian countries for the development of Palestine's institutions and human resources since 2009. In collaboration with Indonesia and Malaysia, Japan has offered training courses for Palestinians in the fields of agriculture, finance and support for small- and middle-sized enterprises.

Let me conclude by expressing Japan's determination to spare no effort to achieve a two-State solution.

**Mr. Kvalheim** (Norway): It remains Norway's firm position that only a negotiated two-State solution, based on internationally agreed parameters, can lead to durable peace. That will continue to be the basis for us in our capacity as Chair of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of International Assistance to Palestinians (AHLIC) and during our membership of the Security Council.

Norway warmly welcomes the resumption of contacts at the highest political levels between the Palestinian Authority and the new Israeli Government.

Although the Israeli Government has announced that it will not enter renewed negotiations on the final-status issues, it is sending positive signals of change in other policies regarding the Palestinian question. However, new and reinforced measures are needed to reduce tensions on the ground — particularly in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem — stabilize the volatile ceasefire in Gaza and strengthen the Palestinian Authority. If that is not successful, we risk further destabilization and more violence.

Earlier this month, Norway convened the autumn meeting of the AHLC, held at the ministerial level in Oslo. We were pleased that both parties came to the Oslo meeting with constructive measures to address the entrenched Palestinian financial deficit. The Palestinian Authority announced its intention to embark on much-needed financial reforms, and Israel came with steps to improve the Palestinian economy, starting with an early resumption of the Joint Economic Committee to modernize the Paris Protocol. Improving economic relations between the Palestinian Authority and Israel is key. There is simply not much external aid available. The meeting also called for increased external financial support commensurate with the Palestinian fiscal reforms. A sustainable and inclusive economic recovery that improves the livelihoods of all Palestinians, including women, children, refugees and other vulnerable groups, is vital.

Norway recently increased its core support to the budget of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, and we encourage other donors to step up their contributions as well. We are particularly concerned about the situation of children. All stakeholders must prevent and end violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, including against children, and ensure better protection of children.

A strong Palestinian Authority that is trusted by the people and represents all Palestine is vital. The absence of regular national elections has weakened the Palestinian Authority's legitimacy. Palestinians deserve democracy and the rule of law, with security, equal rights and opportunities for all.

We hope that the negative trends that we have witnessed in the past few years can be changed by the new Israeli Government. We have repeatedly expressed our deep concern about the numerous plans announced to expand Israeli settlements in East Jerusalem and the West Bank. That settlement activity is illegal

under international law. It is a significant impediment to a viable two-State solution and an obstacle to the resumption of talks. We are also concerned about the increase in house demolitions and evictions and in the violence inflicted by settlers on Palestinians. All activities that lead to polarization and violence should stop.

Norway welcomes efforts to streamline the draft resolutions under agenda item 39, and we encourage the continuation of those efforts. In conclusion, I encourage all supporters of a two-State solution to make use of the improved dialogue and the new momentum in regional politics to help bring the parties back to a path towards a lasting viable agreement. Norway stands ready to support such efforts.

**Mr. Kadiri** (Morocco) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to express my thanks and sincere appreciation to Ambassador Cheikh Niang and the members of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for the important role that the Committee plays and its tireless efforts to enable the Palestinian people to realize their just and legitimate rights.

The Kingdom of Morocco, led by His Majesty King Mohammed VI, chairs the Jerusalem Committee of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and pays close attention to the question of Palestine. It is a core issue in the Middle East, where the future stability and prosperity of the region are greatly dependent on the possibility of finding a just and lasting two-State solution that is based on the 4 June 1967 borders and the resolutions of international legitimacy. Morocco reiterates its support for the right of our brother Palestinian people to establish a viable independent State living side by side with Israel in security, stability, tranquillity and peace.

The Kingdom of Morocco emphasizes the need to safeguard the unity and sanctity of Al-Quds Al-Sharif as well as its legal, civic and historic status as a city of peace. In this context, King Mohammed stressed in his Jerusalem Appeal, which he signed jointly with Pope Francis during the Pope's visit to Morocco on 30 March 2019, the importance of safeguarding the holy city, as part of the shared heritage of humankind and with its special legal, historic and demographic status, while keeping it open to the followers of the three monotheistic religions.

Morocco supports the Palestinian people based on its unwavering position that their cause is just. We have also launched many initiatives through the Bayt Mal Al-Quds Al-Sharif Agency, which is 80 per cent sponsored and financed by the Kingdom of Morocco, under King Mohammed's direct supervision, for the benefit of the Palestinian people and the residents of Al-Quds, as well as in support of Palestinian institutions. Social services constitute a core sector of the activities undertaken by the Agency, whose 2020 report shows that this area accounted for 75 per cent of the total projects and programmes for that year, exceeding \$1.44 million.

The International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People is an annual opportunity to renew our commitment to resolving the question of Palestine. This year the International Day took place (see A/AC.183/PV.404) amid very delicate circumstances at the regional and international levels. In his message of solidarity for the occasion addressed to the Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian people, King Mohammed called for

“intensive and effective diplomatic efforts to be launched in order to resume negotiations between the two parties with a view to finding a favourable outcome for the Palestinian question within the framework of a two-State solution and, ultimately, building a promising future for Palestinian and Israeli generations”.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that Morocco will continue its historic and key role regarding the Palestinian question and its relations with all the parties involved, as well as with influential international Powers, in order to provide conditions conducive to reviving negotiations, as the only way to achieve security and stability in the Middle East.

**Ms. Al-Thani** (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like at the outset to thank the Chair and the members of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. I also thank the secretariat of the Division for Palestinian Rights and the Department of Global Communications.

This year has seen violations by Israel in occupied East Jerusalem as part of its Judaization and settlement expansion policies. This was followed by military escalation that resulted in hundreds of civilian victims, some of them children, in the Gaza Strip, and exacerbated the humanitarian situation there. The

occupying Power continued to escalate the situation as well as carrying out measures and policies inconsistent with peace efforts, international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions aimed at achieving a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine.

Israel's measures against Palestinians have had multiple consequences. The report of the secretariat of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development before the General Assembly today (see A/76/309) details the economic costs to the Palestinian people resulting from the Israeli occupation and its closure policy, as well as the stringent measures that Israel has enacted since the year 2000, showing the long-term negative impact on all economic sectors that has continued for 20 years, including growing unemployment and poverty rates. The report stresses that it will be impossible to compensate for the accumulated costs without bringing the occupation to an end.

The success of any initiative aimed at finding a just solution to the Palestinian question must be based on international law, the relevant United Nations resolutions, the agreed terms of reference, the principle of land for peace and the Arab Peace Initiative, and must be negotiated by the Palestinian and Israeli sides. Any settlement must be founded on a two-State solution that ensures the establishment of an independent and viable Palestinian State along the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital. That also requires an end to the Israeli occupation of the occupied Arab territories, including those in the Syrian Golan and Lebanon. There must also be an immediate and total halt to all settlement activities and attempts to annex Palestinian territories. In addition, the Palestinian people must see their inalienable rights restored and refugees returned. We also emphasize the importance of not altering the status quo at Al-Quds Al Sharif and the holy Muslim and Christian sites, particularly the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

That is Qatar's unwavering position in its support for sincere efforts to resolve the Palestinian question and achieve peace in the Middle East. We also support the efforts of the Secretary-General and are cooperating with the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process. We continue to provide humanitarian support to our brother people of Palestine in the occupied Palestinian territory. We have launched a cash assistance programme, to which we have contributed \$40 million, to help nearly 100,000 families in need in the Gaza Strip who are victims of the suffocating

siege there. This year His Highness Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani, Amir of the State of Qatar, has also allocated \$500 million for the Gaza Strip's reconstruction, providing employment opportunities, education and power supplies as well as reconstruction and the promotion of infrastructure.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East plays an indispensable role in providing education, health care and food for millions of refugees in the occupied Palestinian territory and in host countries. In that regard, Qatar commends the Agency's tireless efforts to fulfil its responsibilities while working to improve its performance. We continue to contribute to the Agency's budget, which is always in need of support.

In conclusion, we want to take this opportunity to reiterate the solidarity of the State of Qatar with the Palestinian people, who continue to strive to exercise their legitimate and inalienable rights.

**Ms. Seneduangdeth** (Lao People's Democratic Republic): My delegation wishes to express its sincere gratitude to Secretary-General António Guterres for his report (A/76/299) and his relentless efforts to resolve the long-overdue question of Palestine. The question of Palestine has been on the agenda of the United Nations for more than seven decades. Many resolutions have been adopted on it over the years. Yet the dream and aspiration of the Palestinian people for independent statehood and freedom have not materialized and their struggle continues. It is therefore high time for the international community to uphold its responsibilities and take concrete steps towards ending the unlawful occupation of the Palestinian territory and paving the way for a peaceful solution to the conflict.

We are deeply concerned about the ongoing conflict and violence in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and Jerusalem. The continued illegal settlement activities and destruction of property and economic institutions in the occupied Palestinian territory have not only worsened the Palestinian people's already critical socioeconomic situation but are also violations of international law. We call on the parties concerned to make every possible effort to prevent the already fragile situation from deteriorating further and to take steps to create conditions conducive to a resumption of peace negotiations.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic supports all international efforts aimed at achieving a just

and peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, ensuring respect for the inalienable rights of Palestinians, including the right to self-determination, and resolving the question of Palestine in all its aspects, based on international law and the United Nations resolutions. We therefore reiterate our strong support for the engagement of many world leaders on the issue and welcome possible new multilateral initiatives to revive the peace process. To that end, we must sustain active international involvement in order to ensure that the parties concerned live up to their commitments and negotiate in good faith with a view to achieving peace and security and salvaging the prospects for achieving a two-State solution as soon as possible.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic reaffirms its consistent support for the independence and sovereignty of the State of Palestine and for the Palestinian people in their legitimate quest for dignity, justice and the inalienable right to self-determination in an independent and viable State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side in peace and security with the State of Israel, within internationally recognized borders.

On a final note, we commend the continued efforts by the United Nations and its relevant agencies, especially the United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, for assisting Palestinians in need throughout the year amid the ongoing challenges posed by the coronavirus disease pandemic in every region of the world, including within the Palestinian territory. And I wish the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People every success in its noble task.

**Mr. Alfassam** (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): The State of Kuwait attaches great importance to this agenda item, which we discuss in this Hall every year. This year's debate coincides with the commemoration at the United Nations of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People (see A/AC.183/PV.404). In that regard, I want to reiterate my country's principled and steadfast position in support of the Palestinian people, with a view to ending their suffering and enabling them to enjoy all their legitimate rights.

It is regrettable that we are ending this year as we began it. Israel, the occupying Power, continues to defy international resolutions and to issue more permits to build thousands of housing units in illegal settlements in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. The Secretary-General has denounced the



permits and activities and they have been condemned by the entire international community. They undermine the possibility of a two-State solution and are a clear violation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), international law, human rights and the Fourth Geneva Convention. Kuwait joins the international community in condemning these plans and reaffirms the importance of ensuring that the illegal Israeli practices end and that Israel implements all the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Israel's violations are not limited to expanding settlements. While the international community is preoccupied with the coronavirus disease pandemic, Israel, the occupying Power, has continued its relentless aggressive policies towards the Palestinian people. It has allowed settlers to attack unarmed Palestinian civilians, including the elderly, women and children. Settlers have destroyed Palestinians' property and houses and seized them. A few days ago the President of the occupying Power stormed the Al-Ibrahimi mosque in the city of Hebron/Al-Khalil, in another example of Israel's provocations. Kuwait strongly condemns and deprecates the Israeli President's incursion, which was designed to provoke the feelings of Muslims and runs counter to the resolutions of international legitimacy. It represents an attempt to impose Judaism in the Al-Ibrahimi mosque and take control of it, in a continuation of the Israeli occupation's aggressions against the Palestinian people's rights and holy sites. Such practices demand more than ever that we activate international, political and legal mechanisms to ensure that Israel is made to account for its continued violations. These Palestinians' rights are protected under international law. There must be an end to the arbitrary arrests, the demolitions of Palestinian houses and property, the confiscations and the forced displacement of civilians. Urgent action is needed to protect the holy sites, compel the Israeli occupying Power to end its flagrant violations, preserve the sanctity of the holy places and protect the Palestinian people.

In conclusion, Kuwait reiterates its support for defending the rights of the Palestinian people, whom we salute for their resilience and their continuing struggle. We stress the importance of working to resume negotiations according to a firm timetable in order to achieve a just and comprehensive peace that can lead to a two-State solution — based on the Middle East peace process, the resolutions of international legitimacy and the Arab Peace Initiative — that will end the Israeli occupation and establish an independent

Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, along the pre-1967 borders. At the same time, we stress the historic role of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which provides basic assistance to millions of Palestinian refugees, and emphasize the importance of continued support to it. Through the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development, we have contributed \$21.5 million to ensure that UNRWA's vital services in the areas of education, health and social care continue for Palestinian refugees wherever UNRWA is active, based on our steadfast position in support of a resolution of the Palestinian question.

**Mr. Abushahab** (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to express the United Arab Emirates' appreciation for the efforts undertaken by the United Nations, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the Division for Palestinian Rights in support of our brother Palestinian people. The United Arab Emirates has spared no effort in their support since our founding, as shown through our provision of humanitarian and development assistance and in our position over the years, whereby my country has supported the Palestinian question and contributed to safeguarding peace.

Tomorrow, as we commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of our foundation, my country emphasizes that it will continue to maintain its unswerving position in support of the efforts to achieve an independent and sovereign Palestinian State along the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in line with the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference and the Arab Peace Initiative.

The events that took place in the occupied Palestinian territories earlier this year showed the fragility of the situation on the ground and the risk of emerging conflicts that could jeopardize the security and stability of the Middle East, which is already facing a number of challenges and crises that have weakened its peoples and consumed their resources. In view of that, we stress the importance of continuing the efforts to advance the peace process in the Middle East and to resume direct negotiations between the two parties in order to achieve a fair, lasting and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian question that will support peace in the region as a whole. In that context, we emphasize that peaceful means, including diplomacy and dialogue, are the best way to resolve differences and ease tensions

in order to achieve peace and security and strengthen peaceful coexistence between the peoples for the long term. For such efforts to be successful, it is essential to create an atmosphere conducive to peace by ending any illegal practices in the occupied Palestinian territories, including the building and expansion of settlements, the displacement of Palestinians and the confiscation or demolition of Palestinian properties. In that regard, we emphasize the importance of preserving the status quo in Jerusalem, in line with the relevant United Nations resolutions, as the city has its historical and religious importance for the three Abrahamic religions. We also underline the need to respect the guardianship of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan over the holy sites of Jerusalem and to preserve their existing legal and historic status.

The United Arab Emirates is very concerned about the worsening humanitarian, economic and health situations in the occupied Palestinian territories, which have been exacerbated by the coronavirus disease pandemic. We underscore the importance of supporting the essential sectors in Palestine, especially health care and education. It is also important to create jobs for young people, who are suffering from high unemployment rates.

For its part, my country will continue its commitment to providing assistance to the Palestinian people. We have contributed more than \$890 million between 2013 and 2021 to financing vital sectors and supporting development work in the occupied Palestinian territories as well as the efforts of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. My country has also sent 340,000 vaccine doses and more than 37 tons of urgent medical assistance to thousands of Palestinian families in the Gaza Strip to help them to cope with the pandemic. We have strengthened hospitals' capacity by providing 30 ambulances and are currently completing the work of building a field hospital named for Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, with 200 beds for the treatment of patients with coronavirus. We have also sent 1,768 tons of food, helping 40,000 families in the Gaza Strip affected by the humanitarian situation resulting from the coronavirus pandemic.

In conclusion, we will continue to work effectively with our regional and international partners with a view to achieving international peace and security in our region and the world. We hope that new opportunities for peace and reconciliation will emerge with the

establishment of new relationships within the region. Above all, with the signing of the Abraham Accords, we hope that we can achieve peace and security for all the peoples of the region, and that they will enjoy prosperity and economic growth so that our young people can begin a new phase full of hope and with prospects for a better and safer future.

**Mr. Romero Puentes** (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*):

My delegation has the honour of speaking on agenda items 38, "The situation in the Middle East", and 39, "Question of Palestine". We would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the work done over the past two years by Ambassador Cheikh Niang, Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, a time when the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has afflicted the world. Despite the difficulties that the pandemic has posed for our work, the Committee has been able to adapt to the new reality in order to fulfil the mandate entrusted to it by Member States.

Despite the pressing need to make progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals adopted through the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Israel has continued with its occupation of Palestinian territory; its annexation policies; its increased illegal settlement activities, including the construction and expansion of settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory; its punitive demolitions; its seizures of resources from Palestinian institutions; its forced displacement of hundreds of civilians; its harassment of civil society and its blockade of the Gaza Strip, exacerbating the emergency situation of the public health system and the socioeconomic and humanitarian situation in Palestine, especially in East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip, thereby making it harder to stop the spread of COVID-19.

A little over a month ago we marked the seventy-fourth anniversary of the partition of Palestine, in 1947, and the fifty-fourth anniversary of Israel's illegal military occupation of Palestinian territory and other Arab territories. More than half a century after those events, the question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East are still pending in the United Nations.

It is alarming that the Security Council has remained silent in the face of this serious threat to international peace and security. The obstruction and repeated silence on the part of the United States, which is complicit in Israel's aggression and occupation, are damaging the Council's credibility. We reiterate

our appeal to it to fulfil the responsibilities entrusted to it under the Charter of the United Nations for the maintenance of international peace and security. And we call for an immediate end to Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory and aggressive settlement policies and practices, in accordance with the relevant resolutions on the situation in the Middle East, including the question of Palestine, in particular Security Council resolution 2334 (2016).

The international community cannot remain passive in the face of the increasing indiscriminate and disproportionate use of violence and force against Palestinian civilians, in flagrant violation of the Charter and international humanitarian law. We affirm our full support to a broad, just and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on the basis of a two-State solution that enables the Palestinian people to exercise their right to self-determination and to an independent sovereign State along the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, as well as the right of refugees to return.

This long-standing demand must be addressed as soon as possible. It was reiterated during the general debate of the General Assembly by high representatives of a great majority of the international community. We offer the people and the Government of Palestine our untiring and unwavering solidarity with and support for Palestine's acceptance as a full member of the United Nations and for its President's call for the holding of an international peace conference. Once again, we reject the unilateral actions of the Government of the United States in recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and establishing its diplomatic representation in that city without respect for its historic status.

Cuba reiterates its firm condemnation of the decision by the Government of the United States to recognize the occupied Syrian Golan as Israeli territory in a serious and flagrant violation of the Charter, international law and the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, particularly resolution 497 (1981). These manoeuvres by Washington undermine the legitimate interests of the Syrian people and the Arabic and Islamic nations, creating serious consequences for the stability and security of the Middle East and further raising tensions in this volatile region. We will continue to support the demand of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic for the restoration of the Golan Heights, and we once again call for Israel's total

and unconditional withdrawal from the Syrian Golan and all occupied Arab territories.

On 29 November, a mere 48 hours ago, we commemorated the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People (see A/AC.183/PV.404). For the sake of the people of Palestine, let us ensure — through actions, not words — that the United Nations is indeed relevant. Let us support without delay actions that can enable a political negotiation process that guarantees the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and a just and lasting peace for all the peoples of the region.

**Ms. Squeff** (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Argentina would like to speak on agenda items 38 and 39, on the situation in the Middle East and the question of Palestine, respectively.

My country continues to believe that the only solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is through negotiations between the two sides aimed at seeking agreement on the final-status issues identified in the Oslo Accords — Jerusalem, refugees, settlements, borders and security measures. We support a peaceful, definitive and comprehensive settlement of the Palestinian question on the basis of a two-State solution within the 1967 borders, the agreement of the parties in the negotiation process and the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council.

Argentina reaffirms its support for the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to establish an independent and viable State recognized by all nations, as well as the right of the State of Israel to live in peace with its neighbours, within secure and internationally recognized borders. We also reiterate our concern about the persistent and continuing growth of illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories and urge Israel to cease expanding them. As has been repeatedly stated in the General Assembly, the settlements violate international law and are an obstacle to peace, and they weaken the prospects for a two-State solution with both countries living in peace and security, thereby perpetuating an unsustainable status quo. The Security Council has recognized the gravity of the situation in its resolution 2334 (2016), which we fully endorse.

Argentina also condemns the indiscriminate firing of rockets from Gaza against civilians in Israel, as well as all violent actions by Hamas and other armed groups. Palestinian leaders must address Israeli security concerns in good faith. In that context, we recognize

Israel's right to self-defence, while emphasizing that Israeli actions must be consistent with its obligations under international humanitarian law, particularly the principles of distinction and proportionality.

With regard to the situation in East Jerusalem, Argentina affirms Jerusalem's special status, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolution 478 (1980). We therefore reject all unilateral attempts to modify that status, particularly with regard to the Old City, which has special significance for the three great monotheistic religions. My country believes that the Holy City should be a place of gathering and peace and that Jews, Muslims and Christians should be guaranteed free access to the holy sites. Any attempt to deny or relativize the historic ties and profound significance of those places for any of those three religions is totally unacceptable and does not contribute to the goal of finding a solution to the conflict but rather strengthens prejudices and foments distrust between the parties. Argentina believes that Jerusalem's final status, among other things, must be defined by the parties in bilateral negotiations.

My country spoke out on several occasions during the escalation of violence in May, with the specific goal of achieving an immediate end to the hostilities and the establishment of a ceasefire to stop the attacks on civilians, which had resulted in dozens of victims, including innocent children. Thanks to the international community's efforts, a truce was reached after 11 days of violence.

In view of the financial difficulties facing the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), Argentina wishes to reiterate its full support for the work of the Agency, which is helping to prevent further deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territory. We also affirm the need for the international community to make appropriate efforts to secure the funds needed to ensure that UNRWA's services can continue uninterrupted.

Concerning the Syrian Golan, Argentina maintains a principled position regarding the illegality of the acquisition of territory by force and respect for the territorial integrity of States. We firmly believe in the principle of the peaceful settlement of disputes, and therefore consider it important to seek a negotiated solution to the conflict between Syria and Israel in order to put an end to the occupation of the Golan Heights as soon as possible, in accordance with Security Council

resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the principle of land for peace.

In conclusion, Argentina once again urges Palestinians and Israelis to act in good faith and resume peace talks, with flexibility and in accordance with international law and the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council, in the quest for an agreement on the pending issues relating to the final status of Palestine in all its aspects.

**Mr. Cherif** (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): Despite the wide international support for the just cause of the Palestinian question and the Palestinian people's demands for an end to Israel's occupation of their territories and the restoration of their legitimate rights, chief among them their right to self-determination and the establishment of an independent, sovereign State, the occupying Power has for decades continued to defy international will and violate international law with no accountability whatever.

The reports submitted to the General Assembly reflect the extent of Palestinian citizens' suffering. They also outline the discriminatory practices and systematic repression and aggression used against them, including by settlers. They review the scale of Israel's violations of international law, including through its settlement plans, confiscation of land, demolition of Palestinian homes, forcible displacement and violations of Palestinians' most basic rights, as well as attempts to change the legal and demographic character of Jerusalem. The existing situation in the occupied territories is entirely unsustainable and threatens to escalate further.

On 29 November, Tunisia, alongside members of the international community, commemorated the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People (see A/AC.183/PV.404). On that occasion President Kaïs Saïed of Tunisia addressed the community of nations with a statement of solidarity with our brother Palestinian people, which I will now quote.

"Tunisia affirms its unwavering support for the just Palestinian cause and will always stand by our brother Palestinian people in defence of their legitimate rights, with no statute of limitations, and first and foremost their right to the establishment of an independent State on their lands based on the 4 June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. We call on the international community



to assume its full responsibility for compelling the occupying Power to respect the resolutions of the United Nations and international legitimacy in order to end the occupation.

“Tunisia also affirms its categorical rejection of Israel’s settlement policy in all its aspects, whether through building new units, expanding them, expropriating land or demolishing homes in the occupied Palestinian territories, which are all in clear violation of international law and international humanitarian law. We call on the international community to intervene urgently and compel the occupying Power to end its settlement policy, as stipulated in the relevant international resolutions, the latest of which is Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), which forbids any changes on the ground and supports efforts to bring peace to the Middle East.

“The occupation authorities’ latest aggression against the occupied Palestinian territories, during the holy month of Ramadan, confirms the need to expedite the launch of serious, credible negotiations according to a specific timetable in order to establish a just, comprehensive and lasting peace that restores their legitimate rights to the Palestinian people and enables them to live in freedom and dignity in their own independent and fully sovereign State. In that context, Tunisia once again supports the initiative to convene a full-fledged international conference with the participation of all the relevant parties in committing to an authentic peace process on the basis of international law, the relevant United Nations resolutions, the agreed terms of reference and the Arab Peace Initiative.

“Tunisia believes in the pivotal role played by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East in alleviating the suffering of refugees and supporting stability in the region, and appreciates the collective commitment of the Agency and its host countries and international donors. Their funding enables the Agency to continue providing vital services for the benefit of Palestinian refugees. In that regard, we welcome the United States’ resumption of funding for the Agency.”

In conclusion, my delegation values the efforts of the United Nations and the international community to support the just Palestinian cause and renews its support to the Committee on the Exercise of the

Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and its role in mobilizing international efforts to reach a just, lasting and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian question and ending the suffering of the Palestinian people. We once again affirm that security and stability in the Middle East can be achieved only through a just and lasting solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict in all its dimensions.

**Mr. Koba** (Indonesia): I would like to thank the Vice-Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for presenting its annual report (A/76/35) and draft resolution A/76/L.14.

Indonesia believes that the agenda item on the question of Palestine and the draft resolution before us today are important to achieving a just and lasting solution to the Palestinian question. Indonesia has frequently expressed its concerns regarding the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, which continues to deteriorate and has led to tragic suffering for the Palestinian people. The occupying Power’s ongoing violations, including illegal occupation, settlement expansion, oppression, violence and forced displacement, continue to be daily realities for Palestinians. Such illegal actions deserve not only the strongest condemnation but decisive concrete action from the international community, as the report aptly summarizes. Such actions threaten the prospects for a two-State solution. In that regard, I would like to emphasize three points.

First, we must continue to pursue a just and lasting settlement. We must remain committed and united against all of Israel’s illegal actions, with a view to ending the occupation in Palestine and holding Israel accountable for its continued human rights violations against the Palestinian people. Indonesia reaffirms its unequivocal support for a just, comprehensive and inclusive resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through a two-State solution, based on the United Nations resolutions and internationally agreed parameters, with East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine. To that end, the international community, particularly the Security Council and the Middle East Quartet, should ensure the revival of that process.

Secondly, we call on Israel to respect its obligations under international law and cease its violations of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territory. Israel’s continued violations have caused dire insecurity and loss of life and undermine the prospects for a just

peace. The lack of accountability for such violations by the occupying Power fuels a culture of impunity and must be stopped. We therefore welcome the decision by the Human Rights Council to establish an independent international commission of inquiry to investigate all violations and abuses of international law since 1 April.

Thirdly, humanitarian assistance to Palestine is essential. The ongoing occupation, coupled with the spread of the coronavirus disease pandemic in the occupied Palestinian territory, has worsened Palestinians' living conditions. During this unprecedented challenge, we urge the international community to provide much-needed humanitarian relief and support for reconstruction and recovery. We would like to commend the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East for providing essential humanitarian and emergency assistance to Palestinian refugees. We believe it is crucial that the international community recommit to ensuring sufficient, sustainable and predictable funding in order to enable the Agency to fulfil its mandate effectively. We also call on Israel to completely lift its blockade on Gaza.

Lastly, Indonesia would like to reaffirm its unwavering support for the people of Palestine in their struggle to attain their legitimate right to realize a sovereign and independent State of Palestine.

**Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett** (Guyana): I would like to thank the President for convening this meeting on the question of Palestine. At the outset, my delegation wishes to acknowledge the work of Ambassador Cheikh Niang of Senegal and the other members of the bureau of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People in preparing and submitting the Committee's annual report to the General Assembly (A/76/35). We are also grateful to Secretary-General António Guterres for his report entitled "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine" (A/76/299) and his note on "Economic costs of the Israeli occupation for the Palestinian people: poverty in the West Bank between 2000 and 2019" (A/76/309).

The question of Palestine seems to have taken a regressive turn, which is quite unfortunate. In May of this year there was an escalation of violence in the occupied Palestinian territories and in Israel. Elections that would have allowed the Palestinian people the opportunity to exercise their democratic right to choose a Government were postponed. The coronavirus disease pandemic did not make any of this easier,

especially for Palestinian women and girls. Guyana remains deeply concerned about this continuing decades-long conflict, which has affected the rights of the Palestinian people in the most inhumane way. Guyana reiterates its recognition of Palestine as a free, independent and sovereign State, based on its pre-1967 borders, and restates its solidarity with the Palestinian people and their desire for a dignified existence in their own homeland. We call once again for constructive dialogue between the Israeli and Palestinian authorities to advance the peace process so that their peoples can coexist peacefully.

We must acknowledge the agencies that have supported the Palestinian cause. In that regard, Guyana recognizes the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, which has provided assistance to 5.7 million Palestinian refugees. My delegation also recognizes the work of the Department of Global Communications, which has been instrumental in implementing a special information programme on the question of Palestine.

As a member of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People since 1975, and one of the first Caribbean countries to support its work, Guyana concurs with the international consensus on a two-State solution to the question of Palestine and pledges its commitment to implementing the recommendations in the Committee's report (A/76/35).

In conclusion, we firmly believe that the people of Palestine deserve to enjoy their right to self-determination, national independence and sovereignty. We further urge Member States to contribute to resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by fulfilling their relevant obligations under international law, United Nations resolutions and international agreements related to the question of Palestine.

**Mr. Sithole** (South Africa): I thank the President for convening this plenary meeting on agenda item 39, "Question of Palestine". We also thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/76/299). South Africa is pleased to support the draft resolution under consideration (A/76/L.14), and we appeal for support for these important draft resolutions. We do so out of our conviction of the importance of fully complying with the letter and spirit of Chapter VI of the Charter of the United Nations, on the peaceful settlement of disputes that pose risks to international peace and security.

This year marks the fifty-fourth anniversary of the illegal Israeli occupation in 1967 of the Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, and other Arab territories. It is also the seventy-fourth anniversary of the General Assembly's adoption of the partitioning mandate in resolution 181 (II). And in May of this year we marked the seventy-third anniversary of the Nakba that tragically befell the Palestinian people in 1948. Considering those solemn occasions, it is regrettable that the international community has done so little to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. When we convened in this Hall this past Monday, 29 November, to mark the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People (see A/AC.183/PV.404), South Africa joined other peace-loving nations in renewing our shared commitment to a peaceful, just and lasting solution to the Palestinian question.

On the occasion of this plenary debate, we would like to underscore that South Africa reaffirms that it remains unequivocally committed to and values the efforts aimed at reviving a political process leading to the establishment of a viable Palestinian State, existing side by side in peace with Israel within internationally recognized borders, based on those existing on 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital and in compliance with all the relevant United Nations resolutions, international law and internationally agreed parameters. South Africa reiterates that any peace plan should not allow Palestinian statehood to devolve into an entity devoid of sovereignty, territorial contiguity or economic viability. In that regard, a solution must be premised on a just settlement with fair, rights-based laws that facilitates equality and equity for all who have the right to live in the territories of Israel and Palestine. That includes sovereign equality between the States.

Israel's recent designation of six Palestinian civil-society organizations as terrorist organizations is unjustified. In this regard, we call on the Israeli Government to stop its systematic disruption of the essential services provided by these organizations and reclassify them as non-terrorist organizations. South Africa calls on Israel to grant human rights organizations the necessary access to Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons and interrogation centres where Palestinian prisoners are detained. The international community must also intensify its call for international action, with the United Nations playing a leading role, aimed at eliminating the acts of discrimination and violations of basic human rights that Palestinians are subjected to on a daily basis under unjust Israeli laws.

South Africa remains concerned about the Government of Israel's recent pronouncement of its intention to further advance its annexation plans and continued expansion of illegal settlements, which contravene international law, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. The continued impunity for illegal practices and violations of international law and United Nations resolutions is a fundamental obstacle to a return to negotiations and a grave threat to the very existence of a future for Palestine, as well as to a safe and secure Israel and wider region. South Africa calls for the effective and immediate implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), which reaffirms that Israel's illegal settlements have no legal validity.

South Africa commends the contribution made by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, which has had a significant impact on restoring the dignity of the Palestinian people by improving their living conditions through the provision of emergency relief, health and social services, decent accommodation and access to education. The work of the Agency during the coronavirus disease pandemic should be applauded, as it has alleviated the already dire humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territories.

The situation between Palestine and Israel fits into the wider regional dynamics through its negative effect on peace, economic development, sociopolitical progress and security throughout the entire Middle East. Peace in Israel and Palestine is therefore inextricably linked to peace in the region.

Finally, South Africa believes that the only way to bring about lasting peace in the Middle East is through a two-State solution for Palestine and Israel, with an internationally recognized and independent State of Palestine based on the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, functioning within recognized and secure borders and living side by side in peace with Israel and its other neighbours, as endorsed in the Quartet road map, the Madrid Principles, the Arab Peace Initiative and the relevant Security Council resolutions.

**The Acting President:** We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item for this meeting. We shall continue the debate this afternoon at 3 p.m. here in the Hall.

*The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.*