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**Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories (A/71/352, A/71/315, A/71/321, A/71/355, A/71/364 and A/71/392) [item 50]**

Chair: Good afternoon, Distinguished Delegates, Excellencies, dear colleagues. The 19th Meeting of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee, Fourth Committee is called to order. This afternoon the committee will begin it's consideration of agenda item 50, Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories.

Distinguished Delegates, in connection with its consideration of this item, the Committee has before it the following documents: a note by the Secretary-General transmitting the 48th Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, and it's contained in document A/71/352. In addition to this report, before the committee are: five reports of the Secretary-General pursuant a General Assembly resolutions 70/87, 70/88, 70/89, 70/90, and 70/91, contained in documents A/71/315, A/71/321, A/71/355, A/71/364, and A/71/392 respectively.

I should first call on the distinguished Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka, Chair of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, to introduce the report of that committee.

Chair: And now, Distinguished Delegates, I open the floor for any questions and comments by members of the Committee on the reports just introduced. The floor is open. I give the floor to the State of Palestine. Please.

PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATIVE: I wish to begin by thanking you, Ambassador Drobnjak of Croatia, Chair of the Special Committee and Political and Decolonization Committee for presiding over this important meeting. I also wish to renew the State of Palestine's deep appreciation to the members of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories. Ambassador Perera of Sri Lanka, Chair of the Committee, Ambassador Ibrahim of Malaysia, and Ambassador Cisse of Senegal, for the report presented on the human right situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and the occupied Syria Golan and the serious recommendations made therein. And thank them for their efforts in upholding their General Assembly mandate.

We also thank the Secretary-General and Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights for their reports issued pursuant to the relevant General Assembly resolutions and thank Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, Mr. Andrew Gilmour, for his compelling presentation of these reports. These reports, along with recent reports of the Human Rights Council Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 and relevant reports by other UN bodies and agencies, including UNRWA, ESCWA, OCHA, and UNICEF portray with painful accuracy, the critical human rights situation in Palestine as a result of the illegal policies being pursued by Israel, the occupying power, since the onset of its nearly half century foreign military occupation. These reports examine the situation through the clear lens of the charter and International Law, including humanitarian and human rights law, all of which are applicable to the occupied Palestinian territory as determined by the General Assembly, Security Council, and International Court of Justice. We thus firmly reject any attempts to portray such reports as one-sided or biased; they are factual and based in the law. We deplore Israel's continuing refusal to cooperate with the Special Committee, and echo the Committee's calls for efforts to address Israel's long track record of non-cooperation with the UN and to accordingly hold it accountable.

Mr. Chair, the question I wish to propose to the Special Committee is indeed one concerning cooperation and respect for international law and the obligations arising therefrom. The Special Committee's recommendations to the international community in the reports before us focus heavily on the obligations of third parties in the face of Israel's violations of international law.

In occupied Palestine a number of Israeli and multi-national corporations have linked their business operations to Israeli settlements, enabling, facilitating, and profiting from the illegal construction and growth of the settlements. This is happening despite clear international laws and standards, including as reflected in the guiding principles on business and human rights, according to which businesses operating in conflict zones must ensure that their activities do not cause or contribute to violations of the bodies of law applicable to situations of armed conflict.

As such we wish to ask the committee what its views are on some of the possible measure that should be taken by businesses and home states to disengage from complicity in Israeli violations of human rights and international law in occupied Palestine, including East Jerusalem.

Once again I thank the members of the Special Committee and the Assistant Secretary-General, and thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chair: I thank the Distinguished Representative of the Observer State of Palestine. I give the floor to Distinguished Representative of Egypt.

Egypt: As is evident from the reports, the building of settlements has continued and accelerated. Obviously Palestinians in the occupied territories continue to suffer as a result. How in the opinion of the members of the Committee would you compare the socioeconomic opportunities of the Palestinians who are the original inhabitants of the occupied territories to the opportunities available to the settlers who live there illegally? Thank you.

Chair: I thank Distinguished Representative of Egypt. I give the floor to Distinguished Representative of Nicaragua.

Nicaragua: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. We have a question for the members of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices. In your report you refer to the excessive and indiscriminate use of force by the Israeli defense forces against Palestinian civilians. You also refer to extrajudicial killings and they're increasing at an alarming rate. Could you please elaborate on those statements? Could you please provide specific examples in which the victims represented no threat whatsoever to the lives of others through their actions? Thank you very much.

Chair: I thank the Distinguished Representative of the Nicaragua. I give the floor to Distinguished Representative of Indonesia.

Indonesia: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. In relation to this report I would like to highlight on restriction imposed by Israel to Palestinian residents of occupied East Jerusalem. Among the various restrictions that are conducted or imposed by Israel from daily movement restriction, near impossibility of legally constructing new homes caused by the non-issuance of permits and revocations of Jerusalem identity papers, and also the implementation of absentees’ property law are making the life of many Palestinians unbearable, and force them to leave the city.

And my questions in regard to this is what are the implications of these policies on Palestinian residents’ livelihood, freedoms, and human rights? And also how do we prevent the condition from worsening? I thank you, Chair.

Chair: I thank you for the question. Now I give the floor to Distinguished Representative of Cuba.

Cuba: Thank you very much, Chairman. This process of underdevelopment of Gaza, and this has been commented upon in a number of reports including on the report of the UN Country Team in this year. This is the result of the illegal and restrictive policies of the occupying power, including the nine- year blockade which is undermining the economic, social, and cultural rights of millions of Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip, and which affects every part of their lives.

This is an act of collective punishment. And this is in itself a violation. But I'd like to ask about the psychological and socioeconomic impact of this on the population of Gaza, its impact on their ability to continue to deal with this situation, and in particular here I'd like to focus on women and children. Thank you.

Chair: I thank Distinguished Representative of Cuba. I give the floor to Distinguished Representative of Tunisia.

Tunisia: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The policy of collective punishment pursued by Israel, like house demolition, preventing family reunification, closure of villages, is a blatant violation of international human rights. Does the – of international human rights law. Does the Special Committee perceive these acts as part of a deliberate policy implemented by the occupying power against Palestinian civilian population? If yes, what are, according to the committee, the intended objectives behind these – such policies? Thank you very much.

Chair: Thank you very much. And finally I give the floor to Distinguished Representative of Ecuador.

Ecuador: Thank you, Chairman, and good afternoon. I have a question for the Special Committee. In your report you indicate that based on reports that had been presented to you, that the situation of Palestinian detainees has deteriorated drastically this year. Ecuador would be interested in learning more about three aspects of this. Bearing in mind that the rights of children and the situation of children requires special policies, we would like to know about the real situation affecting children who are imprisoned in Israeli jails.

And also, what is the punishment – this – I'd like to ask about the stoning. And children can in fact be imprisoned or subject to house arrest for up to 10 years, even without the authorities verifying whether or not they have been engaged in such activities.

I would like to ask about the forced feeding draft law that is the draft law that is targeting Palestinian prisoners. Thank you.

Chair: I thank you very much. I give the floor now to Distinguished Permanent Representative of Venezuela.

Venezuela: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. The Special Committee was not able or denied access to the occupied territories. In addition to this, we learned in your support that there were threats and intimidation against human rights defenders. You mentioned that threats against non-governmental organizations, Palestinian organizations specifically, and we learned about this during the Arria-formula meeting recently. We learned about also attacks against the Israeli NGO, B'Tselem. We'd like to know how – what steps can be taken to guarantee a safe environment in which human rights defenders can work so that they can freely report on human rights violations in the occupied Palestinian territories and in Israel? Thank you.

Chair: I thank Distinguished Representative of Venezuela. I have no further requests for the floor, so I give the floor back to Distinguished Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I shall endeavor to answer as many of the questions that have been raised.

First, compliance with international law by states and private corporations. As recommended in the report of the Special Committee, the international community must ensure that corporations as well as states must respect human rights and cease to fund or enter into commercial transactions with organizations and bodies involved in settlements, or in the exploitation of security sources in the occupied territories. We heard fair amount of evidence of the practice of some corporations.

And apart from the corporations, the states have responsibility to ensure, through their domestic regulations and guidance provided to businesses, on the risks and their potential complicity in the maintenance and expansion of illegal settlements. Human rights due diligence is the responsibility of both companies and states, and the guiding principles on business and human rights provides the appropriate framework for the taking of effective measures against practice.

In the field of trade the full implementation of recommendations of the report of the fact-finding missions on Israeli settlements established in 2012 should be the starting point for Member States seeking to comply with their obligations.

The Special Committee has noted the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights has been mandated by the Human Rights Council to implement resolutions that follow up on the findings of the fact-finding commission. It is the responsibility and duty of each and every Member State to take appropriate action to ensure that trade relations do not contribute to the maintenance or expansion of Israeli settlements considered illegal under international law.

A question was raised, Mr. Chairman, on the psychological impact in Gaza, particularly on women and children. The committee has heard a fair amount of representations. The particular impact it has had on night raids, collective punishment measures, and we had set out some statistics in the report of the increase in suicide rates and the increase in recourse to violence among youth as adverse psychological impact of these practices.

With regard to whether some of these practices are isolated or deliberate policy, the Special Committee has formed the view, having regard of the testimonies that were made, that it has all the hallmarks of a deliberate policy rather than mere isolated incidents.

On the practice of force feeding, the law, the Special Committee has dealt with this aspect and we have come to the conclusion that waiting until it is almost too late, it becomes life threatening, to come to a negotiated settlement is not the approach and adequate measures must be taken before a person's life is in danger.

The creation of a safe environment for human rights defenders is also a matter which received the special attention of the Committee. The decision by B'Tselem in particular, a human rights organization with more than 25 years of experience, that it would no longer be filing complaints with Israeli Ministry Law Enforcement Systems is significant, and reflects how deeply entrenched is the lack of faith in the Israeli judicial system. The implications arising from this is that if other human rights organizations follow the decision taken by B'Tselem it would seriously question and erode Israel's claims that it has adequate domestic accountability mechanisms in place.

I think I've sought to answer as many of the questions that were raised. And I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chair: I thank Distinguished Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka for providing us with so many answers. And I also thank once again Mr. Gilmour for his statement.

I see no further requests for the floor, thus the Committee will now begin its general debate on agenda item 50. Before doing so I would like to propose that since the list of speakers for this item has been open for some time, since 13th of September to be precise, that the list be closed today at 6:00 p.m. Delegations who wish to inscribe but have not yet done so are encouraged to approach the Secretariat during this meeting. If I hear no objection, it is so decided.

Before we begin our general debate, I would kindly remind speakers to respect the time limit of 10 minutes for national statements and 15 minutes for statements made on behalf of a group of delegations.

The first speaker on the list of speakers is Distinguished Representative of the Observer State of Palestine, to whom I give the floor.

PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATIVE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, nearly 70 years have passed since the Nakba, the tragedy in 1948 by which the majority of Palestinians were forcibly uprooted from their homes and lands in mandate Palestine or fled in fear for their lives following massacres perpetrated by Israeli forces and terrorist militias against thousands of Palestinians in a clear act of ethnic cleansing. This injustice continues to this day as Israel persists with its five decade long occupation and subjugation of millions of Palestinians by all illegal means and methods, many of which are only comparable to colonization and Apartheid.

That we have entered the fiftieth year of this belligerent foreign occupation whereby three generations of Palestinians have known only the misery of a demeaning life under occupation, denied freedom, rights, and human dignity is incomprehensible. This situation not only undermines international law but tarnishes the international community and credibility of the international system as a whole, and remains a root source of the instability and turmoil in our region, a constant threat to international peace and security. As we approach the occupation's 50th anniversary, beyond reflection, it is high time for real action based on conscience, responsibility, and the rule of law to end this prolonged occupation and make peace a reality.

Mr. Chair, against the backdrop of continued international paralysis, however, Israel, the occupying power, has of course persisted with its deliberate, systematic, and gross violations with full impunity. As detailed in the relevant reports, the past year witnessed nonstop demolition of Palestinian homes, confiscation of land, expansion and construction of settlements and the wall, forced displacement of Palestinian civilians, and annexation threats by Israeli officials.

This year also witnessed daily military raids, often causing death or injury to Palestinian civilians, constant intimidation and humiliation of the population, settler terror and violence, provocations, and extreme incitement against holy sites, arrests and detention of civilians, particularly young men, and continuation of Israel's blockade of the Gaza Strip where 2 million Palestinian are being collectively punished, enduring extreme depravation and isolation that has inflicted a dire humanitarian crisis and socioeconomic conditions at their lowest point since 1967.

The persistence of this situation without consequence or remedy has inflicted immense human suffering and undermined all efforts to date for realizing a just peace based on the two state solution, and fulfilling the rights of the Palestinian people, including the Palestine refugees, in accordance with Resolution 194.

The international community must be firm in demanding respect by Israel of its obligations under international law as an occupying power. Given Israel's proven unwillingness and failure to investigate serious violations by its occupying forces, we call again for international accountability for these crimes, to end the culture of impunity, deter further violations, bring justice for the victims, and ultimately promote peace.

Mr. Chair, every passing day reconfirms that Israel is more interested in its colonial expansionist agenda rather than a just peace and security. Nothing demonstrates this more visibly than the settlement enterprise in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, pursued relentlessly by successive Israeli governments since the start of the occupation in 1967 in grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

Over the past year, Israel continued illegal construction of settlements and its network of Israeli-only bypass roads linking the settlements as well as construction of the wall, expropriation of vast land areas, and transfer of settlers, flagrantly pushing ahead with its plans to colonize and de facto annex more Palestinian land. Such plans have also involved the forcible transfer of Palestinian civilians, destruction of homes and infrastructure, denial of basic services, and obstruction of humanitarian assistance, and imposition of checkpoints and other movement restrictions accompanied by strict, so-called permit regime.

Other measures have been intentionally designed to segregate the indigenous Palestinian population and the Israeli settler population, privileging the settlers and institutionalizing a discriminatory regime aimed at altering the demographic composition of occupied Palestinian territory, particularly East Jerusalem, and facilitating the pillage of natural resources.

In absolute defiance of the international community's calls for cessation of all such policies and measures, Israel has persisted in contempt of international law, including humanitarian, human rights, and criminal law, UN resolutions, the 2004 ICJ advisory opinion, roadmap obligations, and the international consensus, which recognizes the destructive impact of settlement activities on the viability of the two- state solution based on the 1967 borders and the fact that they constitute a main obstacle to a peaceful solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

Moreover, this unlawful colonial campaign constitutes the main infringement of the Palestinian peoples' inalienable right to self-determination. As noted by the International Fact-Finding Mission on Israeli Settlements, "the existence of the settlements has had a heavy toll on the rights of the Palestinians. Their rights to freedom of self-determination, non-discrimination, freedom of movement, equality, due process, fair trial, not to be arbitrarily detained, liberty and security of person, freedom of expression, freedom of access places of worship, education, water, housing, adequate standards of living, property, access to natural resources and effective remedy are being violated consistently and on a daily basis."

Mr. Chair, Israel's illegal practices and policies in occupied Palestine indeed violate the entire range of the Palestinian peoples' human rights. With due consideration to the time constraints of the Committee, I will post the entirety of my statement to the committee's website and will only highlight some of the gross human rights violations and crimes committed during the period covered by the Special Committee's report.

As noted by the Chair of the Special Committee, Israeli occupying forces continued to carry out military raids in Palestinian population centers. This has deepened the protection crisis endured by our people. Since October, 2015, occupying forces have killed more than 220 Palestinians, at least 17 of them in cases of extrajudicial execution. As we also heard today, Israel continues withholding bodies of Palestinians killed in attacks, violating international law and denying dignity to the deceased and their families.

Occupying forces also continue to destroy Palestinian homes and civilian infrastructure, in violation of international law. According to OCHA, in 2016 alone 958 structures have been thus far demolished, and at least 1,447 Palestinians have been displaced, including 690 children.

The occupying power has also continued to force – forcibly displace Palestinians from their homes and lands through other measures. The correlation to areas marked for settlement expansion is undeniable. As noted by the Special Committee, measures have been undertaken to create a "coercive environment" in the form of harsh living conditions for civilians in areas intended for settlement expansion. Currently 46 Bedouin communities in rural areas of the West Bank are at risk of forcible transfer.

Extremist Israeli settlers continue to terrorize Palestinians, particularly in the Nablus, Jenin, al-Khalil, Bethlehem, and Jerusalem areas. Palestinian families are routinely assaulted, harassed, and intimidated under the consenting eye of occupying forces. The Israeli government continues to fuel settler crimes through its rhetoric and incitement against Palestinians, and must be held responsible for the ensuing violence. Provocations under incitement have also continued against the holy sites, particularly Haram Ash-Sharif, threatening to ignite a religious conflict with grave impact on the security and stability of the entire region.

In the Gaza Strip the devastating impact of Israel's illegal blockage and the lasting impact of the trauma, destruction, and displacement inflicted by its military aggressions, the most devastating in 2014, continue to affect every human right and disrupt every aspect of life. This overt situation of massive collective punishment has led, among other things, to chronic de-development of Gaza, with unemployment at 42%, a shocking 60% for youth, food insecurity affecting over half the population, and 80% dependence on humanitarian aid. As noted in UN Country Team reports, if this situation persists the human habitability of Gaza by 2020 would be in doubt.

Israel has also continued the destruction of Palestinian agricultural land and other measures aimed at depriving Palestinians of sources of livelihood and food. It has also restricted access to the Mediterranean Sea off the Gaza Coast, preventing Palestinian fishermen from accessing sources of livelihood.

The occupying power has also continued entrenching a water and sanitation crisis. In the West Bank water resources continue to be diverted for Israeli use, including for the privilege of settlements, leaving Palestinians with an inadequate supply. And in Gaza the dire state of the water and sanitation infrastructure due to the blockade and military aggressions has rendered 95% of the water supply unfit for human consumption.

As we heard from the Chair of the Special Committee, more than 7,000 Palestinians remain in Israeli prisons and detention centers. This includes 700 administrative detainees, more than 400 children, 56 women, and 6 members of Parliament. Children as young as 12 are regularly seized, beaten, and prosecuted in the only juvenile military court system in the world.

Israel also continues to torture Palestinians for repressive and interrogative purposes, systematically using violent and abusive methods, with torture and medical negligence of Palestinian prisoners and detainees resulting in the death of over 200 prisoners over the years in addition to the traumatic impact on all the victims. The occupying power has also continued to harass, intimidate, and threaten human rights defenders and members of civil society organizations; numerous Palestinian NGOs, including Al-Haq, Al-Mezan, and Youth Against Settlements, face intimidation and harassment alongside Israeli NGOs such as the human rights organization, B'Tselem.

Mr. Chair, just these few facts reflect a systematic pattern of Israeli policies and practices approved at the highest levels, constituting clear violations of international law, many amounting to war crimes and crimes against humanity. The victims: children, women, and men, are too many to count; their lives marred by an intricate, unending web of violations, one linked to the other, one facilitating the other, one deepening the other, reaching the point we are at today where the occupation and the violations are one, synonymous and symbiotic. The occupation as illegal as the violations themselves.

As decade after decade has proven, this grave injustice will remain without remedy in the absence of accountability, prolonging this tragic conflict with further deterioration and destabilization of the situation, and greater human suffering. Seventy years since the question of Palestine was placed on the UN agenda, it is more than urgent that international law and the UN responsibility to ensure long-overdue justice and peace to our people be upheld and that action be taken to compel Israel's compliance with the law. We remain steadfast in defending and advancing our just cause with all the legal, diplomatic, and peaceful means available. And we remain committed to achieving a just and peaceful solution based on the two-state solution and in accordance with the relevant UN resolutions, the Madrid Principles, and the Arab Peace Initiative, a solution that will allow Palestine and Israel to live in peace, security, and genuine coexistence. We thus reiterate our call for the international community to act to end Israel's impunity and justly and comprehensively resolve this conflict. Here, we echo the Special Committee's recommendation to the international community to "give effect to its legal obligations as contained in the 2004 ICJ Advisory Opinion."

The Security Council and General Assembly have clear responsibilities as do states and international organizations which must pursue policies consistent with international law in regards to illegal Israeli policies in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, including by taking measures to end all support to the Israeli center – settlement enterprise aimed at ending this illegal situation. It is the collective duty of the international community to ensure Israel's compliance with the Fourth Geneva Convention, human rights covenants, and relevant UN resolutions. We believe this is fundamental for salvaging the prospects of peace at this critical juncture, finally bringing an end to the Israeli occupation and enabling the Palestinian people to realize their inalienable human rights and national aspirations to live freedom, security, peace, and dignity in their independent State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital.

I thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chair: I thank the Representative of the Observer State of Palestine for his statement. I give the floor to Distinguished Permanent Representative of Venezuela who will speak on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Venezuela: Thank you very much, Chair. I have the honor to speak on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. I am thankful to the Chair and members of the Special Committee to investigate Israeli practices effecting the human rights of the Palestinian people and other Arabs of the occupied territories. I commend them for their valuable efforts on the comprehensive report. We appreciate the role of the Chair of the Special Committee, his Excellency, Mr. Amrith Rohan Perera, Distinguished Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the United Nations, and other members of the Bureau; Ambassador Ramlan Bin Ibrahim of Malaysia and the Ambassador of Senegal in Geneva, [Mamaia Baba Siseh]. We commend them for having provided member states with a detailed report as contained in Document A/71/352.

Mr. Chairman, the Movement deeply regrets that the inquiries of the Special Committee continue to yield negative results as detailed in the report. It describes the worsening human rights situation in the occupied Palestinian territory and particularly with regard to the escalation of violence in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem and the ongoing dire humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip. In that regard, the Movement wishes to express its deep concern that Israel, the occupying power, again refused to cooperate with the Special Committee. It prevented the Special Committee from holding consultations with the relevant Israeli authorities and also prevented their gaining access to the occupied territories to meet with victims. The Non-Aligned Movement condemns Israel's continuing settlement, construction, and expansion throughout the occupied Palestinian territory including in and around occupied East Jerusalem as well as in the occupied Syrian Golan. This constitutes a grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention and various United Nations resolutions. All such measures and activities are illegal under international law and must cease.

These activities and measures remain at the core of many of the human rights violations being perpetrated by the occupying power. They constitute the main obstacle to peace and directly threaten the viability of the two-state solution based on the pre-1967 borders. These illegal colonization measures and other systematic violations by Israel, including the exploitation of natural resources, the demolition of homes, the forced displacement of Palestinian civilians, the arrest and detention of Palestinians, including children, unceasing violence, terror and provocations by Israeli settlers and extremists including at holy sites in occupied East Jerusalem, and in particular at the al-Aqsa Mosque, the obstruction of humanitarian access and attacks on medical personnel, further discrimination and lack of accountability in the justice system, all of these factors have worsened conditions on the ground, have further destabilized the situation and are exacerbating already high tensions.

It is high time to end this abhorrent Israeli occupation which has now entered its 50th year and which has brought so much suffering to the Palestinian people and which continues to be one of the most destabilizing factors at the regional and global levels. According to the report of the Special Committee, Israel's policies and practices continue to violate human rights and the dignity of the Palestinian people and other Arab peoples living under its occupation. The Non-Aligned Movement is seriously concerned about the disturbing findings of the report, including the refusal of the occupying power to return the dead bodies of Palestinians to their families for proper and dignified closure, the critical situation of Palestinian prisoners and detainees, including women and children in Israeli prisons, frequent military raids by Israeli occupying forces in Palestinian areas, including raids on homes and school premises during school hours, threats and intimidation against human rights defenders, and the vastly detrimental impact of the Israeli – the illegal Israeli settlement campaign throughout the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and the ongoing humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip due to the illegal Israeli blockade and the destructive impact of successive military aggressions.

Mr. Chairman, the Non-Aligned Movement deplores the continuation of Israeli settlement activities through a combination of illegal policies and practices, including the confiscation of land, construction of settlements and the Wall, the transfer of Israeli settlers, and the demolition of homes and structures, in addition to the forced displacement of Palestinian civilians, among them Bedouin and herder communities, and the revocation and denial of residency rights, particularly in East Jerusalem. These ongoing illegal colonization practices have accelerated recently in clear contempt of global calls being made for Israel's compliance with the law and for the cessation of all such activities. Israeli settler violence has continued to result in Palestinian civilian casualties and in destruction of property and was reported to be a factor that contributed to forcing Palestinians off their land.

These illegal activities are undermining the contiguity of the West Bank, jeopardizing similarly the contiguity of the Palestinian land and the future viability of the Palestinian State, and thus imperil the two-state solution. These actions violate the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination in addition to significantly affecting their social, cultural, and religious rights.

The Special Committee report highlights many examples of continuing illegal settlement, expansion, and activity in contravention of international law. For example, in the month of July 2016 alone, the same month in which the court had issued its report highlighting and calling for a halt to the destructive impact of Israeli settlement activities, in the month of July 2016, Israel had issued tenders for 1,093 units in occupied East Jerusalem and in the Gilo settlements. At the same time, the occupying power has employed several so-called legal and administrative measures to expand its control and to advance its de facto annexation of more Palestinian territory, including the declaration of areas as state land, the seizure of land for archaeological excavations, the creation of national parks, and the development of tourist activities on Palestinian land.

In the context of the usurpation of Palestinian territory by Israel, the Non-Aligned Movement deplores current trends of demolitions and evictions carried out under the occupying power's restrictive and discriminatory military orders in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. These activities are affecting hundreds of Palestinian structures including those of shelter, water, and sanitation facilities, livelihood-related structures, and community assets. It is outrageous that the monthly average number of structures demolished in 2016 in Area C of the occupied West Bank was almost three times higher than in 2015. This reflects Israel's continued defiance of the international community's calls to cease such illegal practices and human rights violations.

In addition, by July of this year, 981 Palestinians had been displaced from their homes in East Jerusalem and other areas in the occupied West Bank as a result of the Israeli policy of demolitions. This has generated a humanitarian impact that goes beyond the displacement of the Palestinian communities deprived of their shelter. It further destroys their livelihood and increases their poverty and dependence on humanitarian aid.

Likewise, the Non-Aligned Movement condemns the illegal exploitation of the natural resources of Palestine by the occupying power, which deliberately denies Palestinians the right to permanent sovereignty over their natural resources and their right to development and also perpetuates their state of dependence regarding water and energy resources. In addition to this terrible situation, those Palestinians who steadfastly remain on their land in the face of such brutal Israeli policies must also endure violent attacks. Many such attacks constitute acts of terror. These Palestinians are subject to constant intimidation and harassment against them and their properties by illegal Israeli settlers.

According to the report of the Office of the High – United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, between June 2015 and May 2016, there were 175 recorded incidents of settler violence against Palestinians with some attacks involving an exceptional degree of violence and which caused deaths, injuries, and substantial property damage. These abhorrent actions have led to the unanimous condemnation by the international community, including the Non-Aligned Movement, and this is particularly relevant when, as reiterated by the Secretary-General, Israel continues to afford impunity to its settlers and fails to enforce the law against violent settlers.

Only 7.3% of complaints of ideologically motivated offenses against Palestinians that were monitored by the Israeli NGO Yesh Din: Volunteers for Human Rights between 2005 and 2015. Only 7.3% of those complaints led to an indictment while 85% of investigations were closed owing to failures of the police during the investigation process. The Non-Aligned Movement thus reiterates its condemnation of all illegal Israeli settlement activities as well as the violence, provocations of terror, and incitement by groups of extremist settlers as well. NAM calls for urgent action and practical measures by the international community, in particular by the Security Council, to compel the occupying power to abide by all of its obligations under international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention, the many relevant resolutions of the United Nations, and the International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion. These steps are urgently needed to uphold international law, to avert further human suffering, to stop the escalation and to salvage the prospects for peace.

Mr. Chairman, as reflected in the report of the Special Committee, Israeli practices are affecting the human rights of the Palestinian people and other Arab inhabitants of the occupied territories. In that regard, the Non-Aligned Movement denounces the continued excessive use of force by Israeli occupying forces against the Palestinian civilian population. We further deplore the increase in the number of live ammunition injuries including in and around densely populated Palestine refugee camps. We further deplore the deliberate medical neglect of Palestinian detainees, attacks on medical personnel and ambulances, home demolitions as collective punishment, the imprisonment and detention of 7,000 Palestinians, including 450 children, and the continued practice of administrative detentions, currently 700 Palestinians in 2016, including women and children. The Non-Aligned Movement expresses its grave concern about the hardships and suffering caused to the Palestinian people as a result of such practices.

And in view of the above mentioned illegal practices by the occupying power, the Non-Aligned Movement at its 17th Summit which was held in Margarita Island, Venezuela, in September of this year, condemned Israel's unlawful and arbitrary detention and imprisonment of Palestinian civilians, including children, women, and elected officials. The Movement reiterated its call for their immediate release. Furthermore, the Non-Aligned Movement condemned the imposition of collective punishment on the Palestinian people which is carried out through various illegal measures and demanded that Israel immediately cease all such violations of international law, including of international humanitarian and international human rights law, and called for Israel to fully abide by its legal obligations including under the Fourth Geneva Convention.

Mr. Chairman, the report of the Special Committee highlights the fact that the continuing land closures and naval blockade by Israel in the Gaza Strip, which is now entering its tenth year constitutes, a form of collective punishment of the civilian population that deeply – or directly contradicts Israel's obligation under international humanitarian law and its responsibilities as the primary duty-bearer to meet the needs of a protected population under occupation. The displacement of Palestinians as a result of Israel's destructions of homes in Gaza ,the alarming level of unemployment, the psychosocial consequences for thousands of children who suffer from repeated trauma during hostilities, the rising suicide rate among young people, the lack of electricity, the absence of free access for Gaza's goods and services to end markets in Israel and the occupied West Bank, the restrictions imposed on agriculture and fishing activities, the chronic lack of construction materials, all of these are caused by the inhumane blockade and restrictions applied by Gaza to Israel, which destroy any possibility of development in the area as well as the exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms by the Palestinian civilian population of the Gaza Strip.

The Non-Aligned Movement calls upon Israel to promptly and unconditionally end its illegal blockade of Gaza and to open all its crossing points in accordance with international humanitarian law and all United Nations resolutions, including Security Council Resolution 1860 of 2009.

Mr. Chairman, turning to the Syrian Golan, the Non-Aligned Movement reaffirms once again that all unlawful actions since 1967 by Israel, the occupying power, including discriminatory and illegal policies towards the Syrian population, the continued deployment of land mines, and the presence of Israel army bases in and around Syrian residential and civilian areas, the construction and expansion of settlements, the forcing of a new curriculum and education system upon Syrians, and recent statements by Israel that it exercises sovereignty over the occupied Syrian Golan, all of these actions constitute a clear violation of international law, the Charter of the United Nations and relevant resolutions including Security Council Resolution 497 of 1981, and the Fourth Geneva Convention.

The Non-Aligned Movement demands that Israel abide by Resolution 497 and that it withdraw completely from the occupied Syrian Golan to the fore-June borders. Mr. Chairman, in conclusion, during the 17th Non-Aligned Movement Summit held on Margarita Island, Venezuela, heads of state and government stressed inter alia the urgency of achieving a just, lasting, comprehensive, and peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which is at the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and that this solution be reached on the basis of the two-state solution based on the pre-1967 borders. The Summit called for a concerted effort by all parties concerned to achieve that long-overdue objective. In this regard, the Movement reaffirms its unwavering commitment to the immediate restoration of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination and further commits to their right to their independent and viable State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital and to a just solution for the plight of the Palestine refugees on the basis of General Assembly Resolution 1943.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Chair: I thank Distinguished Permanent Representative of Venezuela for his statement. I give the floor to Distinguished Representative of the European Union.

European Union: Mr. Chair, I have the honor to speak on behalf of the European Union. The candidate countries, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Albania, the country of the stabilization and association process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the EFTA countries, Iceland and Liechtenstein, members of the European economic area as well as Ukraine, align themselves with this statement.

Mr. Chair, as outlined in the last Security Council open debate on the Middle East, we are gravely concerned of the trends on the ground threatening the viability of the two-state solution. Over the last month, we have seen an acceleration of negative trends in direct contradiction with Quarters recommendations. The risk is to entrench a one-state reality of perpetual occupation and conflict that is incompatible with realizing the national aspirations of both peoples.

For the EU, there is no alternative to a negotiated two-state solution based on the parameters set out in the Council conclusions of December 2009 and July in 2014. A negotiated two-state solution that meets both Israeli and Palestinian security needs and Palestinian aspirations for statehood and sovereignty, hence the occupation that began in 1967 and resolves all permanent statehood issues in order to end the conflict.

Mr. Chair, the EU is extremely concerned by the escalation in violence and tensions in Israel and in the occupied Palestinian territories. We condemn any violence against civilians and all acts of terror. They are simply unacceptable. They can never be justified. We insist that all perpetrators of crimes, of acts of terror against the Israeli as well as against the Palestinians must be brought to justice. The response of security forces need to be proportionate and consistent regardless of who is the perpetrator.

Israel must conduct thorough investigations into cases in which lethal force has been used. Alleged violations and abuses of international human rights law and international humanitarian law by all sides must be investigated in accordance with international standards. The EU believes that compliant with international humanitarian law and international human rights law by states and by non-state actors, including accountability, is a cornerstone for peace and security in the region.

We are also concerned at recurring tensions at the holy sites. Jerusalem is a city sect to three religions. We renew our calls for upholding the status quo put in place in 1967 in line with previous understandings and with respect to Jordan's special role. Any change of the status quo will have deeply destabilizing effects. EU Member States have never recognized the annexation of territories occupied in 1967 including East Jerusalem. All discriminatory treatment of Palestinian in East Jerusalem must stop. A way must be found through negotiations to resolve the status of Jerusalem as the future capital of two states.

Mr. Chair, let me turn to settlements and recall here the long-held position of the EU that settlements are illegal under international law. They constitute an obstacle to peace and threaten to make a two-state solution impossible. Since early 2016, and particularly since the publication of the Quarters Report, there is an acceleration of Israeli settlement expansion. On 28th September, Israel announced plans to construct 98 new housing units in what is effectively a new settlement near the existing one of Shilo, which drew wide condemnation from the international community. This cuts deeply into the West Bank and further increases risks to the contiguity of a future Palestinian State. Other related policies negatively impact on the socioeconomic development of Area C, which is of crucial importance for the viability of a future Palestinian State.

As clearly illustrated by OCHA's data, Israeli demolitions of Palestinian structures in Area C including some funding by the EU and its member states, have vastly increased in 2016. This has led to evictions and the threat of forced transfers including of Bedouin communities. Such practices in settlement and planning policies constitute an obstacle to peace, a fundamental change of policy by Israel with regard to the occupied Palestinian territory, particularly in Area C, is necessary to prevent the irreversible loss of the two-state solution. Enabling accelerated Palestinian construction as well as social and economic development in Area C will serve to strengthen the prosperity and security of both Israelis and Palestinians. It will also significantly empower Palestinian institutions and enhance stability and security for both Israelis and Palestinians.

The EU and its member states reaffirm the commitment to ensure continued full and effective implementation of existing EU legislation and bilateral arrangement applicable to settlement projects. We also express our commitment to ensure that, in line with international law, all agreements between the State of Israel and the EU must unequivocally and explicitly indicate the inapplicability to the territories occupied by Israel since 1967. We express particular concern about measures which could amount to collective punishment such as for instance punitive home demolitions, the sealing off of Palestinian villages, and withdrawal of work permits. Recall once more the applicability of international humanitarian law in the occupied Palestinian territory including the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the protection of civilians.

Mr. Chair, militant activity and the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza fit general instability and constitute a recipe for a renewed conflict. Fundamental improvements in living conditions are needed, particularly as regards to most vulnerable, in particular children and older persons. While all international donors should swiftly honor their pledges made at the Cairo Conference, Gaza's humanitarian needs can only be properly addressed through political progress on the following three tracks.

First, all sides must respect the cease fire. All discriminate attacks are illegal, unacceptable and increase risks of escalation. Such activities threaten the lives of civilians, divert resources from humanitarian efforts and impede reconstruction and development. The illicit arms buildup by Hamas and other militant groups must stop. The EU unequivocally condemns all acts of terror and incitement. We urge all parties to work towards the de-escalation of tensions.

Second, the EU urges all Palestinian factions to engage in good faith in the reconciliation process on the basis of the PLO platform and quoted principles. A single legitimate and democratic Palestinian authority with full control over Gaza is critical for fulfilling the national aspirations of the Palestinian people and for achieving a viable Palestinian state. In this context, the EU encourages the prompt setting of a new date for the planned Palestinian local elections which, if held in line with international standards, could become an important step towards more Palestinian democracy and towards national unity.

And third, we reiterate our call on Israel for an end to the Gaza closure and a full opening of the crossings while addressing its legitimate security concerns. The lifting of restrictions on the movement of people, including for representatives of the international community, services, and goods, particularly those designated as dual-use items, is needed to allow reconstruction service, delivery, and international restorative projects. The EU urges both parties to promote confidence and trust-building measures. In this regard, the EU commends the Italian-Palestinian Electricity Agreement concluded in September.

Mr. Chair, as regards the specific issue before us today, the EU and Israel engage in regular dialogues on the protection of human rights in the framework of a bilateral relationship. The EU remains concerned about the extensive recourse by Israel to administrate detention without charge of excessive duration. The EU remains particularly concerned by the high number of Palestinian children held in detention by Israel, and by continuing reports of ill treatment during the arrest, transfer, and interrogation of child detainees in the West Bank. We call on Israel to continue its cooperation with UNICEF in order to ensure that all gaps between policy and practice are bridged urgently, and that the rights of children in Israel – in Israeli military custody are upheld at all times. Lastly, the EU calls on Israel to resume full cooperation with the Office of the High Commission of Human Rights, the Human

Lastly, the EU calls on Israel to resume full cooperation with the office of the High Commission of Human Rights, the Human Rights Council, and its special procedures.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chair: I thank Distinguished Representative of the European Union. I give the floor to the Distinguished Representative of Ecuador.

Ecuador: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We express gratitude for the statement delivered by the Chair of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories. We further thank ASG Gilmour for his briefing.

Ecuador endorses the statement delivered by Venezuela on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. Nevertheless, we would like to emphasize the following points. The Delegation of Ecuador feels it is deeply unfortunate that the Special Committee was unable to engage in consultations with the relevant Israeli authorities, nor was it able to access the areas that it needed to in accordance with its mandate. Ecuador has followed with great interest these statements that have been made in a number of formal and informal meetings on this topic, as well as statements in the open debates convened by the Security Council on the question of the Middle East, including on the question of Palestine.

The common denominator in all of these statements is Israel's settlement policy, which continues to unilaterally expand. This has been condemned on repeated occasions and very comprehensively by the international community. These are violations of international human rights law, and international humanitarian law, and resolutions of the United Nations. Israel's illegal expansionist policy, its financial investment into, for example, archaeological sites in the West Bank, its building of roads, and its expansionist settlement policy, all of this reflects a deliberate and targeted strategy to bring about the disappearance of a viable and contiguous State of Palestine.

Ecuador echoes the condemnation of President Barack Obama towards Israel with regard to its expansionist settlement policy and the building of new settlements. This runs counter to the two-state solution for the Middle East. The Middle East Quartet has also indicated that settlement construction and expansion in the West Bank is one of the impediments to the two-state solution. Ecuador expresses its concern with regard to Israeli citizens who enter or who live in occupied territories. This means that Israeli settlers live under Israeli law, regardless whether or not they live inside Israel.

We also condemn the military law that prevails, which results in discriminatory policies towards the Palestinian people. Two peoples are living in the same territory but under one single system, and one population suffers as a result. After the 49 years of occupation, what we have seen is that the two-state solution is becoming increasingly difficult to achieve. The population is comprised of Israelis who are privileged and who have a number of benefits and who have a democratic government, but this comes at the cost of another population, which is deprived of its rights, which lives under foreign military occupation.

There is the ongoing lack of will and decisiveness to implement the relevant resolutions of the Secretary Council and the General Assembly. And the powers involved have shown indifference, and thus the international community has been unable to resolve the question of Palestine. The Declaration on the Right to Development will soon be marking its 30th anniversary. This is extremely important for all peoples of the world and particularly for the people of Palestine, who should not be deprived of their inalienable rights. The Declaration states that all peoples are empowered to participate in economic, social, and cultural development of their nation, and this involves the full enjoyment of their human rights.

The legal doctrine of Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention and the advisory opinion of the ICJ in 2004, numerous resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council, as well as reports of the Special Committee and of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, particularly the reports that have been presented today and their recommendations, all of these are tools that shed light on the situation and should impel the international community to fulfill its responsibilities and to do everything in their power to bring about a two-state solution.

Israel's security needs, need to be attended to, but there also needs to be a solution for the Palestinian people. We support a two-state solution, two states living side-by-side along the pre-1967 borders. This year, once again, we urge Israel, a member state of these United Nations, we urge Israel to not to disregard international law and the opinion of the community of nations. Year after year this community of nations has asked Israel to put an end to its expansionist policy and to the construction of settlements.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, we wish to reiterate that what we are dealing with here is a political issue that requires a fully political solution. Ecuador reaffirms its ongoing support, the people and government of Ecuador, we reaffirm our support to the people of Palestine, to an independent state along the pre-1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Thank you, sir.

Chair: I give the floor to Distinguished Representative of Kuwait.

Kuwait: The Delegation of Kuwait aligns itself with the statement made by the Representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. As Kuwait is speaking for the first time in the work of this Committee, I have the honor to express to you our most sincere congratulations on your election to chair the 4th Committee in the 71st Session of the General Assembly. I wish to express our thanks and appreciation to you, and I wish you every success as well as every success to the members of the Bureau in managing the work of this Committee.

I also wish to express my appreciation to the former chair and Bureau of the Committee for the continued efforts they expended. The Delegation of Kuwait also wishes to thank the President of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and other Arabs of the Occupied Territories.

We are very grateful to the members of the Special Committee for the efforts they have undertaken, which have shown the sufferings of the Palestinian people, and this despite the efforts by Israel to undermine the work of the Special Committee as they're undertaking a course of measures against the Arab people in the occupied Arab territories, and they're also doing the same in the in the occupied Palestinian territories. And as a consequence, these practices violate international humanitarian law.

The report also notes Israel's ignorance of international humanitarian law and international human rights law with its illegal settlements in occupied territories. Sir, the suffering of the Palestinian people continues to become worse, and conditions continue to deteriorate. We have noted Israeli aggressions against the inhabitants of Gaza. They would target children, women, and men. The humanitarian situation is tragic in a very real sense of that word. And the Gaza Strip is suffering for lack of essential services and other services due to Israeli aggression. And facing these humanitarian tragedies, we call on the Security Council to assume its legal responsibilities as laid out in the UN Charter. They must dissuade Israel and call upon them, force them to cease its aggressions so as to be in line with international law. Israel must be accountable for its practices and crimes. We call on Israel to assume its legal responsibility for all losses, both human and material, all the losses suffered by the Palestinian people because of these aggressions and atrocities.

We also condemn the racist discriminatory practices imposed by Israel to defenseless Palestinians. They're usurping the holy sites of the Palestinians, which goes – flies in the face of international conventions, including the Fourth Geneva Convention which protects such sites, as well as Resolution 1860 of the Security Council which calls for a rejection of the blockade on Gaza Strip. We must ensure necessary humanitarian aid to the inhabitants of the Gaza Strip. We call on Israel to implement Security Council Resolution 472 to withdraw from the occupied Golan and to come, return to the 1967 borders and to withdraw from all Lebanese occupied territories.

Sir, the solidarity of the international community with the Palestinian people sends a very strong message. This people who have suffered injustice and repression, but have – are resilient, and we must support the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to reach a definitive solution to the question of Palestine, but Israel, as usual, is pursuing its violations of international resolutions and is continuing to reject and ignore calls for solidarity with the Palestinian people. Therefore, we call on the international community to fulfill its commitments with a strong position that would show this solidarity with the Palestinian people who are suffering this unequaled injustice. The international community must force Israel to cease its aggressions against the defenseless Palestinian people, and it is crucial to undertake all measures necessary to oblige Israel to choose this option.

Beyond the hope seen in attempts to relaunch the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, the intransigence of Israel and its pursuits of aggressive tactics and provocations and its continued construction of settlements, all of these are practices that are undermining the peace process, and their efforts up to-date to achieve a just and lasting solution have yet to reach a true solution. We are seeing threats to regional peace and security increase. And in this context, we support the call from the State of Palestine to ensure the necessary protection to the Palestinian people and to end the Israeli aggression. And we must guarantee that Israel will fall in line with international law, and we call on Member States of the United Nations, notably, those in the Security Council. They must support this call by the State of Palestine for a permanent seat at the United Nations.

Sir, we are insisting on our support to our Palestinian brothers for their resistance and for their just cause, but from – in this statement, we wish to promise our material and humanitarian aid to the Palestinian people until there's elimination of these occupied territories and there is a true independent state with pre-1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital.

In conclusion, we welcome the resolution of the UNESCO Executive Council, Executive Board rather, to consider al-Aqsa Mosque as a purely Islamic Heritage Site, and we welcome this position which end any links by Israel to the Wall and to the al-Aqsa Mosque as well as the Abraham Mosque and the Bilal Mosque in Bethlehem. These are all Islamic buildings.

Thank you, sir.

Chair: ...for his statement. I give the floor to Distinguished Representative of Iraq.

Iraq: Sir, my delegation expresses its words of congratulations and gratitude to the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories. This documents the practices committed by Israel, their violations of international resolutions, and my country aligns itself with the statement made by Venezuela on behalf of NAM.

Sir, the occupying power's continued aggressions against the Palestinian people proves its ignorance of international decisions and UN decisions. This is why the United Nations must undertake its commitments to find any peaceful means possible for Israel to respect international law, international humanitarian law, and to allow the Palestinian people to exercise their right to self-determination and to create a recognized independent state within the pre-1967 borders. The United Nations must also pressure Israel to allow access by the Special Committee to the Palestinian territories. We must also facilitate missions by international organizations who are working in the humanitarian sector and who are helping the Palestinian people, sir.

The activities of expansion, these are one of the worst issues of where settlements are being built and these are principles and actions that violate UN resolutions, international law. These implantations of settlements, we denounce them. We denounce the racist Israeli laws to impose a new fait accompli. of coercive practices by the Israeli people and their systematic and arbitrary detentions. We feel it is necessary to force the occupying power to provide and ensure all legal rights to prisoners in line with international humanitarian law and international human rights law and we must end recurring attempts to alter the demographic composition of Jerusalem. My delegation also condemns the occupation by Israel of the occupied Golan since 1967 as well as its attempts to impose its law in the Golan since 1981 in violation of the UN Security Council resolution that states that decisions by the occupying power are null and void.

Sir, there is no doubt that the Palestinian and Israeli conflict is an international conflict that is, must be in line with the additional protocol on movements as well as international human rights law and the Fourth Geneva Convention. Therefore, there is a legal and political responsibility for the international community, the UN and the Security Council in particular as it charged with maintaining international peace and security. And here, I wish to recall the adoption by the General Assembly of a dozen resolutions about – regarding the responsibilities of UN members to the Palestinian people and how they must be supported until there is a just and lasting solution.

Many international organizations and international resolutions have called for an end to course of practices by Israel against the Palestinian people. In conclusion, the delegation reaffirms its position, its strong position, to support the rights of the Palestinian people, these unalienable rights, and its right to create an independent state with East Jerusalem as its capital. And we must respond positively to the call by Palestine to protect the Palestinian people.

Thank you.

Chair: … go to Distinguished Representative from Jordan.

Jordan: Thank you. I wish to thank the President of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories. And I thank the Secretary-General for his reports.

We have listened to the various statements on illegal Israeli practices against the Palestinian people and that Israel continues to ignore international condemnation and to go against the international community and continues to flaunt international legal norms of practices are the main reason for an increase in the violence in occupied Palestinian territories. This continuation of systematic policies prevents us from responding to the aspirations of the Palestinian and Israeli peoples to live in peace and security. The last decades have shown that using for – violence only leads to greater violence and hatred between the two peoples.

We see this daily through the racist, hostile actions of the Israeli settlers and through events that take place every day in the Palestinian occupied territories. It is not too late for Israel to learn the lessons of the past and to respond positively to international calls and to review its own policies so as to translate its will and to prove its will to work towards peace within various international bodies. Israel must adopt serious policies on the ground. Israel must truly believe in the two-state solution as the only way to allow for the Palestinian and Israeli people to live side-by-side in peace and security.

It is no longer acceptable to launch these unfounded pretexts and say that the violence by the Palestinians is undermining the peace process. Here we need to ask for an explanation of the link between the settlements and the violence which continues in occupied territories. We know that these illegal settlements that are extending systematically in the Palestinian territories, they aim at disintegrating these territories and to undermine the creation of a viable Palestinian state. An end to this occupation would allow an end also to the cycle of violence and it would strengthen confidence between Israelis and Palestinians and would lead to a restart of sincere negotiations between the two parties.

The blockade on the Gaza Strip and other provocations, such as the demolition of and confiscation of lands and demolition of houses and the forced displacement of Palestinians, all these exacerbate the situation for Palestinians. The occupying power must assume its entire responsibility for these violations of human rights as well as other violations which fly in the face of the Fourth Geneva Convention and other international humanitarian laws. Unfortunately, the report of the Special Committee continues to mention the refusal of Israel to allow access by the committee to the Palestinian territories to investigate these violations of human rights. We hope that the Israeli authorities will cooperate with the committee and allow it to fully complete its mandate.

Jordan will continue to support efforts to end Israeli colonization of occupied territories and will support the Palestinian people in achieving their rights, including that of a Palestinian state. Therefore, we oppose any attempts to deal with the issues linking with the mosques, whether they are Israeli or Christian. We call for all diplomatic and political and legal means to be used in the Hashemite Kingdom. The last report made by UNESCO confirmed the correct appellations of the al-Aqsa Mosque and called on Israel to reestablish the historical status of the monuments as well as recognized the Waqf Department of Jordan as the proper body to be managing the mosque, and this shows the importance of Jerusalem for all religions and this without a negative impact on Jerusalem's legal status.

The occupying power must respect its commitments on international law and international humanitarian law. Here I wish to reiterate that certain states that support Israel, this is not a positive for Israel or for Palestine if they put up barriers to a beginning of new negotiations which would lead to a Palestinian state being created, one that is independent within the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as the capital in virtue of international resolutions and the Arab peace process. We call once again on the international community to assume its responsibilities to call on Israel to make the necessary steps forward in this direction. Coexistence with the Palestinian people is a pre-requisite to end this conflict and to create an independent state of Palestine.

Thank you.

Chair: ...Distinguished Representative of Jordan for her statement. I give the floor to Distinguished Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Syrian Arab Republic: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. At the outset, my delegation would like to express gratitude to the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories. We wish to thank the Chair of the Special Committee and the Special Committee's members for their efforts.

We are very pleased and satisfied with the role of this committee and we thank them for the report. We would have preferred for the report on the occupied Syrian Golan, A/71/355. We would've supported, or rather – correction by interpreter – A/71/392, the occupied Syrian Golan. We would've liked to have seen more details in this report and more details that had been provided by the Syrian Arab Republic and OIC. We endorse the statement delivered by Venezuela on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Since the first day of the occupation of Syria – of Syrian Golan by Israel, the United Nations has expressed its rejection of this odious occupation and in numerous resolutions the United Nations has repeatedly called upon Israel, the occupying power, to completely withdraw from the occupied Syrian Golan along the 4 June 1967 lines. And we call on Israel to abide by the provisions of Resolution 497 of 1981. The annexation of Syrian Golan by Israel, it was referred to in that resolution, and we call upon Israel to abide by the provisions of that resolution.

Israel responds to that request as follows. It continues to flagrantly violate the charter and also international agreements on this subject, particularly the 1949 Geneva Convention. The international community, meanwhile, does not obligate Israel, the occupying power, to put an end to its occupation of the Arab territories – of the occupied Arab territories. If Israel put an end – it has not put an end to its hostile practices, and that is because – this is the case because some influential countries in this international organization continue to support Israel and to support its pretext for this occupation.

Since the very first day of this odious occupation, Israel has attempted to change the legal and political status of the Syrian Golan. Israel systematically violates human rights. It attempts to impose Israeli nationality on the Syrian population, this resilient – this population that resides in the Syrian Golan. Israel has showed racial – it has displayed racial discrimination, discriminatory conduct. There are those who are imprisoned who are unable to have contact with their families. And this occupation has been – it is rejected under international law. There have been people who have been imprisoned for interminable periods of time without ever having been tried.

There is a militant, [Sikri al-Makkah], who was detained in 2015 by the Israeli authorities, and he was detained after having served 27 years in prison. And this is – he was released rather, after having served 27 years. He was released in 2015 because he cooperated with the Israeli authorities. We call upon the international community to make every effort to liberate this militant along with all other Syrian detainees who are currently being held in Israeli prisons.

The worst violations and attacks by Israel have been committed against those residing in the occupied Syrian Golan. These individuals have been deprived of their most basic human rights. They are unable to contact their families in Syria. They are often – fines are imposed upon them. In addition, there is a collective policy of isolation that has been imposed on this population. Arab villages in the Golan are isolated. It is as if they are islands. They are separated from each other. There are also those who are sick. They are unable to pay their medical bills, and even if they were, they're unable to go to Damascus to receive medical treatment. The inhabitants of the Syrian Golan are prevented from being able to build homes in their territory. And if they can build homes, these homes are sometimes demolished.

Israel has also – has taken actions that have adversely affected the present and the future living conditions of the population in the Syrian Golan. Many antiquities have been stolen. The rights of students in the Golan have been directly violated. Curriculums have been replaced. Syria has instead imposed its own curriculum. There are Israeli professors – have been also – the curriculums that they are teaching have been altered by the Syrian authorities, or rather by the Israeli authorities.

The impact has also been economic in nature. It has adversely affected the lives of the inhabitants of the Syrian Golan and their livelihoods.

More than three-quarters of the territory of the occupied Syrian Golan's agricultural land has been usurped. There are more than 21,000 Israeli settlers in the occupied Syrian Golan. The electricity grid and wind energy facilities have also been set up by Israel, and Israel is also utilizing, developing the natural resources in the Syrian Golan and is doing so in violation of international conventions and agreements, for example, those specifically prohibiting such development of natural resources in the Syrian Golan.

The resources of some of the major rivers are also being improperly used by Israel. There are some 450 million square meters of water resources that are being used by Israel to the detriment of the inhabitants of the Syrian Golan. Agricultural products, the inhabitants are prevented from selling those products to the Syrian government. This is another example.

The living conditions have deteriorated to unprecedented levels and this situation has been further exacerbated by the security situation in the region and by the activities of Jabhat al-Nusra, which has infiltrated the separation zone, and now terrorists are operating in that zone. This is why this occupation must be put to an end. Israel must stop its occupation. Israel should withdraw from the occupied Arab territories and withdraw to the pre-1967 borders on the basis of the Security Council Resolutions 242 and 497 and others.

Thank you, sir.

Chair: I thank Distinguished Representative of Syria for his statement. I give the floor to Distinguished Representative of Cuba.

Cuba: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Cuba endorses the statement delivered by the

representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

My delegation welcomes the work carried out by the members of the Special Committee to investigate Israeli practices affecting the human rights of the Palestinian people and other Arabs of the occupied territories. In particular, we recognize the work carried out by its chair, the Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka, as well as that of the Permanent Representatives of Malaysia and Senegal. The report that they have presented today eloquently describes the work carried out, the challenges encountered, and the work that remains to be done in the future.

Similarly, Cuba welcomes the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights. We thank him for his comments and views with regard to the situation that continues to affect the Palestinian people and other Arab inhabitants of the occupied territories.

Mr. Chairman, the situation in the Middle East region, in particular the question of Palestine, is a source of grave concern for the international community. The Palestinian people continue to suffer extensively. More than – owing to the more than 50 years of Israel’s illegal foreign occupation and its illegal practices and policies, which gravely violate international law, including international humanitarian law and human rights law. The reports provided by the Secretary-General and the respective special committees provide abundant and dramatic information, and I think from this we can only draw but one main conclusion and that is, 50 years after the 4th of June 1967, the occupation continues and flagrant violations of human rights of the Palestinian people continue unabated.

It is unfortunate that the Security Council, the entity charged with maintaining international peace and security, has been unable to achieve an agreement that puts an end to the aggressive policies and colonizing practices of Israel. It is unfortunate that it is unable to prevent ongoing injustices in which the violations of an entire people are being violated. The inaction of the Security Council in the light of these facts is alarming.

Cuba reiterates its call on the Security Council to fulfil its responsibilities under the Charter to maintain international peace and security. Until such time as the Council assumes that responsibility, Israel will continue to entrench its occupation and make – thereby making the two-state solution unviable and affecting the possibilities of a just and peaceful resolution to the conflict.

Cuba appreciates regional and international efforts that are being made to resume peace talks between Israelis and Palestinians. As we have indicated in the past, the sole solution for the question of Palestine is peaceful coexistence of two independent states with the establishment of an independent, sovereign, and viable State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital and respecting the pre-1967 borders.

Cuba reaffirms its full support for Palestine’s joining this organization as a full-fledged member, and we call upon the Security Council to also do the same as has the General Assembly in this case. Otherwise the General Assembly will – the General Assembly will have to take very determined and firm action in order to resolve this issue.

Mr. Chairman, every day we receive very sad, unfortunate, and shameful statistics about the killing of Palestinians, including children, arrests and arbitrary detentions, unjustified imprisonments, escalating violence, demolition of Palestinian homes, while at the same time we hear news of new settlements being built in occupying territories. This could be happening in Palestine, in East Jerusalem, or even in the occupied Syrian Golan. We hear news of the expulsion of Palestinians from their land. We don’t need any more blockades that cause economic strangulation, that cause hunger and more need. This only serves to increase unemployment and increases the poverty rate as well.

This is not how we’re going to achieve the objective of international peace and security, which we so desire for this area of the world and which the Palestinian people are calling for. Cuba reaffirms its unequivocal solidarity with the Palestinian people and joins those who have called for the end – an end to the prolonged unfair and illegal Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory. We call for an immediate cessation of this blockade and the unconditional and total elimination of – again of the blockade. It is cruel, it is illegal – this blockade of the Gaza Strip. We call for free access and transit of individuals to and from the Gaza Strip as well as for resolution to difficult problems facing Palestinian refugees in accordance with international law and relevant resolutions.

Thank you, sir.

Chair: … for his statement. I give the floor to Distinguished Representative of China.

China: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Middle East is plagued by continued and unabated local conflicts and rising terrorism, with pronounced spillover effect. This is the cause of our serious concern.

The international community should remain united in this effort in urging the parties concerned to practice tolerance, turn sword into a plow, give peace a chance, so that people in the region can finally live in tranquility which serves the common interests of international community.

The Palestinian question lies at the heart of the issues concerned in the Middle East region. This question, if left unresolved, will continue to weigh upon world peace and stability. Safeguarding the legitimate national rights and interests of Palestinians represent the common responsibility of international community. As we speak, the Palestinian-Israeli peace talks remain deadlocked. Continued violent conflicts and unconscionable humanitarian disaster have made it all the more important and urgent to put an end to this current situation. Both Palestine and Israel should exercise restraint, prevent escalation of conflict while taking concrete steps to build mutual trust, meet each other halfway, build consensus, address differences, work to break the deadlock, so that talks can be resumed and positive outcome can be reached.

The international community should by no means stand by while the Middle East peace process stalled; but rather it should take action, push for an early realization of a two-state solution.

The international community has recently come up with a range of new ideas on this question. China welcomes and commends every effort conducive to the diffusion of tensions and early realization of the two-state solution. China is firmly committed to the just cause of Palestinian people. We are working tirelessly to advance the peace process.

Last January, while addressing at a headquarters of Arab League, President Xi Jinping reiterated China’s unequivocal support for restoring the legitimate national rights and interests of Palestinians, called for renewed political momentum to rekindle the peace process, and a greater process in economic reconstruction.

Last June, the Chinese foreign minister, Wang Yi, attended foreign ministerial meeting in Paris and put forward the China solution featuring three cessations and the three explorations. Last January, China decided to provided Palestine with RMB 50 million grant to improve the livelihood of the people in Palestine.

Going forward, China will continue to play a constructive and active role in pushing for a viable solution of this question. China takes very seriously the situation in the Middle East. It is our consistent position to respect the political systems and different pathways in the country chosen by the state and people in Middle East that are tethered to their national realities.

We encourage all parties to narrow their differences through dialogue, taking into account interests of all parties in pursuit of the most durable and sustainable settlement and solution.

We maintain that in addressing the situation in the Middle East, international community should uphold the principles and the policies of UN Charter, basic norms governing international relations. We are for a greater role of the UN on the issue of Middle East. We reject external military intervention and forced change of power. We believe international community should adhere to uniform standards, take concrete action to conquer terror threats.

A holistic approach should be taken to address both the symptoms and root causes and improve people’s livelihood through development, consolidate the capacity for economic and social governance, foster a culture of tolerance, and create conditions conducive to durable peace and stability.

China stands ready to work with international community and continue to work for peace, stability, development in the Middle East.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chair: I thank Distinguished Representative of China for his statement.

Distinguished Delegates, we have just heard the last speaker inscribed on my list for this afternoon’s meeting.

I should now like to reiterate the importance of meeting the deadline for submission of draft proposals relating to both items 49 and 50.

As delegations are aware, with the existing operating procedures, the Secretariat can only guarantee distribution of draft resolutions if they are received in a timely manner since all documentation is processed in the order in which it is received. In this regard, a minimum of 48 hours is required to ensure publication of draft resolution in time for consideration by the committee.

The Secretariat also requires sufficient time and a minimum of 48 hours to examine the possible program budget implications of draft resolutions.

So in accordance with these guidelines and with our program of work, the Secretariat would appreciate receiving all the remaining draft proposals no later than tomorrow, Tuesday, 1st November at 6 PM, which is the deadline set for the submission of proposals on all outstanding items.

At this juncture, I would also like to encourage members who wish to participate in the general debate on agenda item 50 and have not yet inscribed to kindly inscribe their names on the list of speakers as soon as possible.

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right to reply. In this connection, I remind delegations that the number of interventions in the exercise of the right of reply for any delegation on any item at a given meeting should be limited to two; and that the first intervention should be limited to 10 minutes and the second one to five.

I now give the floor to Distinguished Representative of Malaysia.

Malaysia: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Briefly in response to Israel’s intervention, the focus here today is our deliberation on the report of the Special Committee, and it must be noted that numerous opportunities have presented itself year after year for Israel to engage with the Special Committee and clarify its position, to allow the international community to understand and view things from their perspective.

Instead, Israel has not even recognized the Special Committee and has obstructed visits by the Committee rather than engaging with it. Therefore, it is deeply regrettable that the opportunity was not taken up by Israel in good faith. We look forward to engage with Israel when they act in accordance with international law and the values and principles of the UN Charter.

With this, I thank you.

Chair: I thank Distinguished Representative of Malaysia for her intervention.

I see no further requests for the floor; thus, I will bring our meeting to its end.

Next meeting will take place tomorrow, 1st November at 3 PM in this conference room and the Committee will continue its general debate on agenda item 50.

I wish you a nice evening. The meeting is adjourned.