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**General Assembly, Seventy-Second Session, 59th plenary meeting General Assembly Hall**

PRESIDENT: Good afternoon. The 59th plenary meeting of the General Assembly is called to order.

The General Assembly will consider Agenda item 38 entitled Question of Palestine. Under this item, the Assembly has before it a report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People which has been circulated in document A/72/35 and a report of the Secretary-General which has been circulated in document A/72/368. In connection with this item, the General Assembly has before it four draft resolutions, issued as documents A/72/L.13, A/72/L.14, A/72/L.15 and A/72/L.16.

I now deliver my opening statement. Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, dear colleagues, we are here in this hall today to discuss the question of Palestine. As you know, this item was placed on our agenda 70 years ago. The United Nations has changed a lot since then. Its membership has more than tripled in size. It has led the evolution of international laws and norms. It has expanded through new agencies, funds, and departments. Despite all of this change, the question of Palestine remains a question. And despite all of this change, the duty to resolve it remains as strong as ever.

I want to make three main points today to frame our discussion. The first is that there can be no alternative to direct talks. Over the last seven decades, a final agreement has at times seemed within reach. All of these times have had something in common: they have happened only when Israeli and Palestinian negotiators have been in direct negotiations. This is not unique to the Palestinian situation. In fact, it’s been a trend throughout history. The biggest breakthrough deals and agreements were not made by shuttling messages across different borders, nor were they made in big halls like this one. Rather, they came about when parties were in one room, around one table. So while today’s discussion and others like it play an important role, they much complement direct and meaningful talks which can lead to a two-state solution.

This does not mean that the efforts of the international community should be discounted, and this brings me to my second point, which is that there is a continuing need for political support from international, regional, and national actors. This support can bring us closer to a peaceful resolution of the Palestinian question. In particular, I want to acknowledge the work of the United Nations Special Envoy and his team, as well as the Quartet on the Middle East. International and regional tools for mediation and facilitation have led to some promising developments. Now is the time to recalibrate and strengthen them.

The international community has also rallied in response to the humanitarian needs of the Palestinian people, particularly those living in the Gaza Strip. Here I also want to emphasize the need for international and regional mediation in support of humanitarian access across the Middle East and in other parts of the world. I call for even stronger efforts to strengthen respect for international humanitarian law and to secure access to people who are in humanitarian need.

My third point today is that a positive momentum is building. We must maintain and increase it. I want to point in particular to progress seen with regards to intra-Palestinian reconciliation and to the contribution of Egypt in this regard. We should also look to the recent three-day opening of the Rafah border crossing as a positive sign. Here I’d like to acknowledge the commitments made by the Palestinian Authority under the leadership of President Abbas to further progress. All of this momentum has been driven by diplomacy and dialogue, and only through diplomacy and dialogue can it be maintained and increased.

Excellencies, as I mentioned, the General Assembly placed the question of Palestine on its agenda in 1947. Since then, many discussions have been had. We have talked about problems and solutions, obstacles and possibilities, stalemates and opportunities. We have heard positions from all parties. We have called for action and we have expressed hope for the future. Yet, we still haven’t answered the question of Palestine. And unfortunately, we are unlikely to answer it today.

So what should we do? Call off today’s discussion? Repeat our statements from last year and resign ourselves to hearing others do the same? If we do this, we fail in the task we set ourselves in 1947. More importantly, we fail the people on the ground. So even though this item has been on our agenda for 70 years, I urge you to see today as a new opportunity, because it is an opportunity for dialogue, and at any moment dialogue can take a new course. It can uncover new scope for compromise. It can reveal a new way of seeing things. This might be an old issue, but it demands a new perspective, and it demands dialogue.

I thank you.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Fodé Seck of Senegal in his capacity as Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People who will introduce draft resolutions A/72/L.13, A/72/L.14, A/72/L.15 and A/72/L.16.

H.E. MR. FODÉ SECK, CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF PALESTINIAN PEOPLE: Chair, ladies and gentlemen, Ambassadors, Delegates, on behalf of the Committee for the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, I should at the outset like to sincerely thank all delegations and, particularly, you, President, for your active and high-quality participation this morning in the special session for the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. The messages and statements of support during that session are proof, if it were needed, of the continued willingness and desire on behalf of the international community to support the realization of the rights and legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people.

Ladies and gentlemen, Your Excellencies, as under the mandate conferred upon it by this august assembly, the Committee which the Senegal has the honor of presiding will continue to strive to promote these rights and find a peaceful solution to the conflict between Israel and Palestine in cooperation with all stakeholders, that is Member States, international organizations, and civil society. To this end, we will continue to work via dialogue and consultation with the two parties, the Palestinian party and the Israeli party.

We welcome once again recent measures towards reestablishing and consolidating Palestinian unity and hope that this new dynamic will open a way to a global dialogue which can allow the Palestinian people to live alongside the Israeli people in peace, security, dignity, and justice. We will also continue over the upcoming months to encourage all Member States to support the efforts deployed to achieve a peaceful solution to the Palestinian question on the basis of the United Nations, the General Assembly, and the Security Council and their resolutions and the Madrid Declaration of Principles, the Arab Peace Initiative, the Middle East Quartet’s Roadmap; these long-standing documents. Our aim must be to continue and intensify diplomatic efforts in order to achieve the final objective of finding a two-state solution based upon the 1967 borders.

Ladies and gentlemen, I will now present to you the four draft resolutions approved by the Committee which have been distributed under this agenda item: A/72/L.13, A/72/L.15, A/72/L.14, and A/72/L.16. These drafts have also been the object of regional consultations, and these four draft resolutions are on the work carried out by the Committee for the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, a division of Palestinian Rights at the Secretariat, the activities of the Special Information Program on the Question of Palestine in the Department of Information, and the call for a peaceful solution to the Palestine question.

The three first drafts reaffirm the importance of the mandates that the General Assembly conferred upon these entities. Allow me to elaborate a little on some aspects of these resolutions. The draft resolution on the renewal of the Committee’s mandate, A/72/L.15, takes into account the 50 years of occupation and 70 years since the adoption of resolution 1812 of the 29th of November 1947, and calls upon the Committee to ensure that the international community redoubles its efforts to achieve a peaceful solution to the question of Palestine and provide a broad, multi-lateral platform in order to relaunch the peace process.

In the second draft resolution under code A/72/L.13, this is about renewing the mandate of the Division of the Rights of Palestinians in the Secretariat and calls upon the Secretary-General to provide the division with adequate resources. The draft resolution on the Special Information Program for the Department of Information, A/72/L.14, renews the mandate of the Department of Information, which aims to continue to encourage the media to create conditions propitious to peace between Israelis and Palestinians.

Finally, in the fourth draft resolution entitled Peaceful Resolution of the Question of Palestine, A/72/L.16, note is taken of the Sustainable Development Program 2030 of the General Assembly, and particularly Goal 16, which is of particular importance for the question of Palestine. As in the past, the Committee hopes that these resolutions will receive great support from the Assembly.

Thank you very much.

PRESIDENT: I thank the Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

I now give the floor to His Excellency, Neville Melvin Gertz of Namibia, the Vice Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to introduce the Committee’s report.

H.E. MR. NEVILLE MELVIN GERTZE, VICE CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE: Mr. President, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, it is an honor in my capacity as Vice Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to present to the General Assembly the annual report of the Committee contained in document A/72/35. The report covers developments relating to the question of Palestine, as well as details the work of the Committee between 4 October 2016 and 5 September 2017.

Allow me to summarize each section of the report as follows:

Following the introduction, chapter two of the report provides a review of the situation relating to the question of Palestine as monitored by the Committee to draw the attention of the international community to developments requiring urgent action, such as the impasse in the peace process, the 10th year of the blockade of the Gaza Strip, and the dire living conditions, ongoing illegal Israeli settlement activities, and adoption of Security Council Resolution 2334 adopted in 2016, extrajudicial killings, and excessive use of force by the Israeli occupying forces, as well as dealing with heightened tensions at the al-Haram al-Sharif Temple and Mount in East Jerusalem, and increasing house demolitions and displacements in the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem.

Under chapter three and four, the report outlines the mandate entrusted to the Committee by the General Assembly and contains information on the organization of the Committee’s work during the year.

Chapter five details the actions taken by the Committee, including its participation in the Security Council debates and its continued dialogue with members of the inter-governmental, inter-parliamentary, regional, and civil society organizations to mobilize support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. The chapter also informs about the various international meetings and conferences organized by the Committee, capacity-building trainings, and workshops conducted for staff of the government of the State of Palestine, including within the framework of South-South Cooperation, as well as other mandated activities.

Chapter six provides an overview of the special information program on the question of Palestine carried out by the Department of Public Information in pursuance of General Assembly Resolution 71/22 of 30 November 2016.

The last chapter of the report contains the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee to the General Assembly that I would like to summarize. Recognizing that 2017 marks 70 years of the adoption of Resolution 181 to partition Palestine for the formation of two sovereign states, and 50 years of the Israeli occupation that began in 1967, the Committee inter alia strongly, number one, urges the international community to redouble its efforts towards achievement of the two-state solution in accordance with the relevant UN resolutions.

Two, welcomes an expanded multi-lateral framework, including key regional partners, with a view to reviving the peace process and establishing a credible political horizon for a comprehensive regional solution such as offered by the Arab Peace Initiative.

Three, reiterates its request to the Secretary-General to present his subsequent reports to the Council on the implementation of Security Council Resolution 2334 in a written format, and to propose practical ways and means to hold Israel accountable for its illegal settlement activities and other violations.

Four, offers its services in support to local, regional, and international efforts to advance intra-Palestinian reconciliation process.

Five, recalling the upcoming 70th anniversary of the expulsion of Palestine refugees from their homeland in 1948, remembered as Nakba, the Committee strongly advocates for the right to return the Palestine refugees as provided for in Paragraph 11 of GA Resolution 194, and encourages all Member States to work collectively to ensure sufficient and predictable funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency.

Six, demands an end to the 10-year old Israeli air, land, and sea blockade of Gaza, and a lifting of all closures within the framework of the Security Council Resolution 1860 of 2009. Also calls upon international donors to fulfill without delay all pledges to expedite the provision of humanitarian assistance and the reconstruction process.

Eight, reiterates that violations of humanitarian and human rights law must be investigated, and perpetrators of such violations should be brought to justice; urges states and private entities not to contribute to grave Israeli violations of Palestinian human rights, particularly in respect of settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem.

Nine, urges Committee members and observer states and others to actively participate in its capacity-building program for Palestinian Qaedas, including within the framework of South-South and triangular cooperation, and through voluntary contributions.

Ten, encourage our civil society partners to promote the achievement by the Palestinian people of their inalienable rights, full recognition of the State of Palestine, and its independence.

In closing, I would like to seek the support of my esteemed colleagues for the four draft resolutions endorsed unanimously by the Committee for adoption by the General Assembly.

Thank you, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT: I thank the Vice-Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

I now give the floor to the Observer of the Observer State of Palestine.

PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATIVE: Mr. President, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, it is with sombre spirit that we gather in the General Assembly today in this debate on the question of Palestine, 70 years since the Assembly’s adoption of Resolution 181 (II) and decision to partition Palestine against the will and rights of the Palestinian people, and leading to their Nakba in 1948. The infinite consequences of this decision continue to be borne out in the injustices being endured and witnessed to this day, as the Palestinian people are still being denied their rights, including to self-determination and to return, and a just, lasting, and peaceful solution remains elusive.

The pain of this anniversary is only slightly eased by the compelling solidarity messages conveyed to the Palestinian people and leadership on this day, reflecting the principled unwavering support of countries from around the globe. For this we are deeply grateful, on this 40th commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. Your reaffirmations of solidarity and support strengthen our resilience and resolve, even in the face of diminished hopes and the immense challenges we continue to face 100 years since the Balfour Declaration, 70 years since the Nakba, and 50 years since the onset of Israel’s military occupation of the remainder of Palestine, and its vast repercussions and impact on our people, on the region, and on the international peace and security.

Confronted with continued disappointment and devastation, the same support and solidarity have helped reinforce our conviction in international law, and the authority and ability of the General Assembly, Security Council, and the international community as a whole to uphold the law and their responsibilities towards ultimately ensuring realization of our inalienable rights and a peaceful solution to this question that has been on the United Nations’ agenda since the organization’s inception. We are firm believers in international law and the inevitability of justice. If not, how could we come before this Assembly year after year, no less on this tragic anniversary.

Indeed, that conviction, along with a firm commitment to a peaceful solution and nonviolent means for achieving it, remain at the heart of our resolutions and appeals to the international community. Remarkably, both conviction and commitment have withstood despite the many crises, setbacks, and worsening conditions, as Israel, the occupying power, has continued to trample the law, to intensify its foreign occupation of our land and oppression of our people, and to reject peace.

Palestine’s respect for UN resolutions is proven, and the Palestinian leadership has cooperated with every peace initiative for over two decades, engaging in good faith, negotiations through every incarnation of the peace process. Israel, on the other hand, has undermined and even at times sabotaged all efforts to achieve the just solution that this Assembly has sought for decades, along with the Security Council, which just marked the 50th anniversary of its Resolution 242, and which in its most recent resolution—Resolution 2334—explicitly reaffirmed the terms of reference and parameters of this solution based on the relevant UN resolutions, the Madrid Principles, including the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative, and the Quartet Roadmap.

Mr. President, in the Assembly’s debate on this question last year, I expressed our hope that by now we would have achieved an end to the Israeli occupation, and could gather in this august hall to finally celebrate the independence of the State of Palestine, fulfilment of the rights and freedom of the Palestinian people, the establishment of genuine peace, security and coexistence between the Palestinian and Israeli peoples. Instead, we must yet again confront Israel’s deliberate contempt for the UN Charter, relevant resolutions, and international consensus in this regard.

Rather than allowing for progress towards a just and peaceful solution, Israel, the occupying power, has purposely obstructed efforts and driven us further away from this objective. It has blatantly ignored the demands to cease its illegal policies and practices in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, proceeding nonstop with its settlement activities and systematic destruction of the two-state solution based on the pre-1967 borders, and ignore the calls to reverse the negative trends on the ground, and bring an end to its occupation as called for by the Security Council in Resolution 2334.

The Israeli government is not only violating that resolution, but actually brags about doing so, repeatedly declaring its illegal intentions and publicizing its crimes, even war crimes, without shame, and all the while mocking the international community, including the Security Council, exploiting the impunity granted to it in the absence of serious accountability measures.

Thus, in 2017, we again witnessed Israel quadrupling its settlement activities in all manifestations throughout the West Bank, especially in and around East Jerusalem and the Jordan Valley, and persisting with its theft of Palestinian land, demolition of Palestinian homes and properties, forced displacement of Palestinian families, and attempts at forced transfer of entire Palestinian communities, repression of the defenseless Palestinian civilian population, including by military force, causing death and injury to civilians, including children arrest, detention, imprisonment, abuse and torture of thousands of civilians, and imposition of severe restrictions on movement and access and other freedoms and rights, including to education, health care, worship, development, and water.

The most hideous of such restrictions remains Israel’s illegal 10-year blockade of the Gaza Strip, where 2 million Palestinians are being collectively punished and inhumanely isolated and deprived, forced to endure a humanitarian crisis so dire that Gaza is predicted to be uninhabitable by humans by the year 2020, but seemingly sooner than that as revealed by the UN country teams alarming reports.

At the same time, Israeli settler violence and terror persists against Palestinians and Israel’s provocations incitement and inflammatory rhetoric against the Palestinian people and leadership are on the rise, one reinforcing the other.

Provocations also continue against other sites, especially in occupied East Jerusalem, most notably at al-Haram al-Sharif where Israel’s actions witnessed again this summer have repeatedly impairing the historic status quo in place for decades and threatened to completely destabilize an already tense situation with potentially far-reaching consequences, including ignition of religious conflict.

Moreover, the Israeli government led by the most extreme members of the Prime Minister's coalition and aided and abated by the Israeli justice system has been feverishly advancing discriminatory laws and racist policies, further demeaning and dehumanizing the Palestinian people rather than recognizing their rights to exist and to be free and advancing annexationist legislation further entrenching this half-century occupation and facilitating Israel’s schemes to acquire more territory by force rather than ending these illegal actions.

The reality is that Israel is in grave breach of all, not just some, of its obligations under international humanitarian law, particularly the fourth Geneva Convention, as evidenced in its unlawful destructive policies and actions in occupied Palestine. The human toll of this unrelenting disposition, military occupation and colonization is incalculable. Likewise, the occupations toll on the viability of international law and credibility of the international system is immeasurable. It has long ago crossed the threshold of illegality and has caused enormous damage to the rule of law and perceptions about justice, not just in our region but worldwide.

In this regard, we recall the recent report by Human Rights Council, and I quote: "Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Palestinian Territories Occupied Since 1967 and the Compelling Findings Regarding the Applicable Laws Relevant to ICJ Advisory Opinion and Obligations of the Occupying Power as well as States in the Situation". The report reflects on the illegality of this prolonged belligerent occupation as it persists in violation of the fundamental legal principles of occupation. This timely report requires serious follow-up. As Israel continues violating international law, the Charter, and UN resolutions, and impeding a peaceful solution as per the international consensus.

Mr. President, each state represented here in this assembly has the power to help bend the arc of history towards freedom, justice, and peace and has a political, legal, and moral obligation to use this power. Many lament the ongoing colonization of the State of Palestine, denial of the human rights of the Palestinian people, and destruction of the two-state solution and peace prospects, often wondering what more can we do? We believe that each state can and should do the following among other things to remedy this unjust situation and contribute to its peaceful solution.

Number one, uphold international law as it applies to the question of Palestine, including through support for relevant resolutions and international and regional fora, notably in the UN; mobilization of the political will necessary to actually implement those resolutions.

Two, a firm support for the Palestinian people and their inalienable rights, including through adoption of principle positions regarding Palestine at the UN and in other international and regional framework, recognition of the State of Palestine on the pre-1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital as an investment in peace. Provision of human development, economic, financial, technical support to ensure the strengthening and the viability of the Palestinian government, institutions, and civil society. Provision of support for the well-being and dignity of the Palestine refugees through UNRWA pending a just solution to their plight in accordance with Resolution 194, (III).

Three, ensure it is not in any way complicit with Israelis illegal actions, including through nonrecognition of the unlawful situation created by Israel’s policies and measures in occupied Palestine, including East Jerusalem, including as a result of the settlements and the wall; not rendering aid or assistance in maintaining this unlawful situation; distinction between the territory of the occupying power and occupied territory.

Four, ensure accountability including through: practical measures to implement the provisions of relevant UN resolutions and ensure respect for the Charter, ensuring respect for obligations under international humanitarian law as high contracting parties to the Geneva Conventions; provision of support for activation of international accountability mechanisms, and enactment of their decisions and recommendations, linking bilateral relations with Israel to its commitment to international law and the advancement of peace; undertaking measures to hold the Israeli government and Israeli organizations and individuals accountable for their actions at the political, diplomatic, economic, and financial levels. Such efforts, along with the steadfastness of the Palestinian people on the ground, the active role of the UN and the role of civil society should finally lead us to the day when we can stop commemorating this tragedy and instead begin peace building for a better, more stable, prosperous, and secure future for generations to come, a far better investment for the international community than the perpetuation of this conflict.

It is a simple equation. This occupation will continue as long as its benefits outweighs its costs. Israel’s disregard for the law and the UN could not have been possible without the impunity it has been accorded for so long. This contempt has found its ultimate expression in Israel’s brazen response to Security Council Resolution 2334 of the year 2016, which provided a clear compass towards peace and yet which Israel is systematically breaching like all prior resolutions without consequences. This must change. Israel cannot continue to be treated as a law-abiding member of the international community even as it tramples the law. True pursuit of accountability can change this.

Mr. President, the permanent responsibility of the United Nations and its member states to address this injustice and promote a just solution based on international law can, therefore, in no way be considered as a biased or one-sided approach to this conflict. That is not the problem, as falsely claimed by Israel and those who try to absolve it of its crimes. The real problem is the fact that, despite the clarity and authority of international positions, accountability continues to be delayed at best, denied at worst. Double standards persist, and Israel continues to be rewarded rather than punished for its illegal behavior. This must end and requires immediate action by governments and civil society alike.

In this regard, we renew our appreciation to all the members and observers of the United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for their commitment to uphold the law and obligations toward the question of Palestine; to support the realization of the Palestinian people’s rights and legitimate national aspirations to live in freedom, dignity, and stability in their homeland; and to positively engage in international efforts to achieve a just, lasting, comprehensive peace where the State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, can live side-by-side with Israel based on the pre-1967 borders and in lasting peace and security.

This Committee’s efforts are in full conformity with the relevant UN resolutions, the Charter, and all other relevant rules and principles of international law and we urge member states to cooperate with and support the Committee work towards attainment of these urgent objectives.

We thank Ambassador Fodé Seck of Senegal, Chair of the Committee, for his leadership, thank Senegal for undertaking this important role over the years, and thank him for his introduction of the resolutions under this item. We also thank the Rapporteur, in this case the Vice Chair Ambassador Neville Gertze of Namibia, for presenting the Committee’s annual report, and thank all other Bureau members: Afghanistan, Cuba, Indonesia, Namibia, and Nicaragua; and Committee members and observers for their principal support.

We also renew appreciation to the Division for Palestinian Rights and DPI’s Special Information Program on Palestine for their support to the Committee. We express thanks as well to Secretary-General Antonio Guterres for his report on the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine and his leadership of the broad UN efforts vis-à-vis the question of Palestine. We reiterate our appreciation for the work of His Special Representative and UN Special Coordinator Nicolay Mladenov and his team and for the tireless efforts of the many UN agencies assisting the Palestinian people: UNRWA, OCHA, UNICEF, UNDP, WFP, OHCHR, WHO, UN Women, UNFPA, UN Habitat, UN UNCTAD, and UNMAS.

With the generous support of states, organizations, and partners from around the world this humanitarian, socio-economic, developmental, and moral support has helped sustain the Palestinian people including the Palestine refugees through decades of conflict and remains vital until a just solution is achieved.

Mr. President, the people of Palestine will not disappear nor will they surrender to a dismal fate. They stood proudly alongside many of you in your own struggles for independence and freedom and are grateful that you continue to stand with them today. They want peace and are ready for peace, but peace cannot coexist with injustice, occupation, colonization, and apartheid. They have decided to be law abiding, even when the law has failed to protect them and failed to hold accountable those committing crimes against them. They have overcome despair time and time again, against all odds, preserving their humanity and tolerance.

If, despite all of this, they continue to believe that freedom and justice are inevitable and that peace is possible, then so should you. Let us work together to make them a reality.

And I thank you very much, Mr. president.

PRESIDENT: I thank the Observer of the Observer State of Palestine. I now give the floor to the Distinguished Representative of Israel.

ISRAEL: Thank you, Mr. President. Every day at the United Nations the countries of the world make choices, hard choices. With each resolution we adopt and with every vote we cast we chose between peace and war, progress and decay, hope and despair. Whether we intend them to or not, our choices, for better or for worse, will impact countless lives. Today the United Nations has made a choice. You, the nations of the world, have chosen, once again, to debate the so-called question of Palestine. Today as you return to these same seats, this same forum, you will make turns targeting Israel. You will vote on empty resolutions against Israel. And next November on this very day, a day that the world should celebrate, you will try to isolate Israel once more.

The 29th of November marks a pivotal moment of choice: it is the anniversary of the United Nations vote in 1947 that would determine the fate of two people. For one of those peoples it was a moment that turned an age-old dream of self-determination into a real-life miracle. For the other, the result of the vote triggered an aggressive and lasting hatred. In the General Assembly, the main hall of what is now the Queens Museum, Zionist delegates back in 1947 went from diplomat to diplomat. One by one we made our case. We explained why Resolution 181 was so crucial for the Jewish people, why passing this resolution which will call to create a Jewish State in the Jewish homeland was non-negotiable.

When the voting started Jews across the world crowded around radios to keep score. An eyewitness recalls that the vote, which only lasted three minutes, felt like the length of the Jewish exile. On that day in 1947, the United Nations made the right choice: the choice to correct an historic wrong, the choice that welcomed the establishment of a Jewish state in the land of Israel, the choice that would give Israel a new platform and an opportunity to do the most good.

On that same day, Jews and Arabs had the chance to build successful and prosperous communities. The Jews said yes, but the Arabs said no.

Despite all we have been through, despite all the calls to wipe us off the map, Israel has chosen the path of prosperity and peace. For the last 70 years, our small country of just 8 million have chosen to dream big. We have worked to help others and always seek to repair the world.

But for the Palestinians, it has been the exact opposite. I wish that were not the case. I wish I could stand here today and assure you that the Palestinian leadership wants prosperity and peace. But since that critical vote in 1947, the Palestinians have done nothing but try to harm Israel. The Palestinians are not anti-Israel because of borders or governments; they are anti-Israel because of who we are. The Palestinians have never accepted the existence of a Jewish state in the Holy Land, and they do not accept it today.

Through every lie they spread, through every life they steal, the Palestinian leadership always, always blames the situation on us, on Israel. But never, not even once have the Palestinian leadership tried to improve the lives of its own people. Palestinian leaders incite their teenagers to commit terror attacks against Israeli citizens. They exploit their international aid to build monuments for convicted terrorists. They abuse these funds to pay terrorists and their families monthly salaries for killing. The payments start at $3,000, and they only go up from there.

And that’s not all. The Palestinians have the audacity to lie about it. While they tell you—and you just heard—they want peace, that there would be peace if it were not for Israel. In reality, they are the ones who embrace terror. They are the ones who choose to kill.

Our proposition for the Palestinians, for every $1,000 you choose to spend on terrorists and their families, what if you spent that money on a high-tech Palestinian start-up? What if you sponsored a Palestinian student to study rather than to slave? What if you build cultural centers instead of terror monuments? And what if you used all that money received from other countries for development rather than destruction? The Palestinians make these choices every day. They have the opportunity to change the course of those choices toward progress, peace, and prosperity, or they can continue on the path of devastation and despair. Sadly, sadly, they have done the latter.

From 1947 to 2017, the Palestinians have rejected every opportunity for peace. I will give you one example. In 2005, the Palestinians once again could have made the right choice. They had the opportunity when Israel unilaterally pulled out of Gaza. We walked away and gave the Palestinians the chance for self-determination in Gaza. For those who do not know Gaza, Gaza is next to the Mediterranean Sea. Gaza could have been the next beach resort destination of the Middle East, a beautiful location. But instead, 12 years after Israel left completely, you have no settlements in Gaza, no occupation in Gaza. Twelve years after Israel left, Gaza has become a haven for terror. The current state of Gaza cannot be blamed on the Europeans or the Americans, the Arabs, or the Israelis. It was a self-inflicted wound.

So long as Hamas uses innocent Palestinians as human shields and deprive them of basic human rights, Gaza will remain imprisoned by its own brutal leaders. Hamas terrorists still try to destroy our cities. When construction materials come into Gaza, they are not used to build schools and housing. Instead, Hamas uses them to build its terror infrastructure. Hamas terror tunnels continue to be discovered under UN facilities, under schools, hospitals, and mosques. And they have one purpose: to kidnap and kill Israelis. Hamas has made a choice never to accept our right to exist.

But the Palestinian Authority, the PA, chose, too. In their latest of bad choices, they finally said yes. They finally chose to negotiate. They even signed an agreement. But not with Israel. The Palestinian Authority finally said yes to working with Hamas. It is the only choice to which they have not said no. Just listen to Saeb Erekat, the chief Palestinian negotiator. He did not hesitate when he said, and I quote: “Hamas is not and will never be a terrorist organization to us.” That’s right. Hamas is an internationally recognized terrorist organization, but in the eyes of Palestinian leadership it is the exact opposite.

Mr. President, today in 2017, this is where we stand, 70 years since that critical moment in history, that crucial choice to progress or regress. We still have no partner for peace, unfortunately. Israel can only negotiate with a partner that lays down its weapon and respects our right to exist. The only thing that should not exist, that has no right to exist, is the question of Israel’s existence.

What the Palestinians do not realize is that when they try to harm us, they really harm themselves. When we discover solutions to save lives, they direct their people to end their lives. As we surge towards future, they shove the people into the past. Had the Palestinians made the right choice, had they just said yes, we could have worked together, we could have partnered together in our big dreams, we could have had prosperity and peace.

But Israel does not lose hope. We still sit ready to negotiate, ready to find a solution. While we wait for that moment, Israel will not waste time. We have chosen the path of prosperity and peace. We have built a vibrant democracy where all of our citizens—Jewish, Muslim, [Jews], Christian—enjoy equal rights and protections under the law.

Under Israel’s watch, our people are free. Under Israel’s leadership, our hearts and minds are open. We seek peace and we dream big. Every day that passes, Israel chooses to empower more people, save more lives, and build toward the future. Our democracy is stable, our economy is growing. Every eight hours, by the time we will finish this debate, a new start-up emerges. And at every opportunity possible, we share what we have learned with our fellow nations. There is work to be done, and we can only move forward. The Palestinians will not better themselves by worsening us. It’s about time they make the right choice. At the end of the day, Israel will always choose prosperity. At the end of the day, Israel will always choose partnership. At the end of the day, Israel will always choose peace.

Thank you very much. I thank you, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT: I thank the Distinguished Representative of Israel. I now give the floor to the Distinguished Representative of Kuwait.

KUWAIT: Mr. President, Esteemed Delegates, ladies and gentlemen, peace be upon you.

Today, we are discussing, exactly like every single year, within the agenda of the General Assembly of the United Nations, and after 70 years of the adoption by the General Assembly of the resolution, again, we are discussing the question of Palestine, and we have a principled position and a mainstay of the policies of the State of Kuwait is to support the question of Palestine, and this is proved by our positions one year after another, as we are always supporting our Palestinian brothers and trying to alleviate their suffering. We are also advocating the right for their basic and fundamental freedoms and rights and to put an end to the Israeli occupation as well as the grave and flagrant violations by Israel of the international humanitarian law and the international law of human rights.

Mr. President, there is a host of UN resolutions and international resolutions on the question of Palestine. Maybe the purport of all these resolutions supports the Palestinian people. However, unfortunately, the intransigence of the Israeli party caused a lot of obstacles that hindered any concrete progress since the occupation started in 1967. Almost 50 years, half a century has passed since Israel started all its illegal practices and unethical practices in Palestine, and two generations of Palestinian young people have witnessed such occupation and they are only dreaming of breaking the shackles of this occupation.

Again, the savage policy of the Israeli authorities is renewed, as they are trying to force a demographic change of the Palestinian land and territories by way of forcible displacement, expropriation of land and property, and the embarkment on expanding their settlements. In addition to this and adding insult to injury, there is also transgression against the—on the Holy Mosque, and thus, they are depriving the Muslims from practicing their rituals.

Mr. President, the State of Kuwait supports all the endeavors and efforts made by the international community to find a fair and comprehensive solution for the Palestinian question, which could be based on the Arab Peace Initiative, the rules of the international law, and the UN resolutions. In this regard, we do welcome the French initiative calling for holding an international conference for peace with an outcome of a multilateral international mechanism which would pave the way for putting an end to all settlement activities, thus totally ending the Israeli occupation of the State of Palestine according to specific frameworks which would eventually also ensure the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and building their independent state with East Jerusalem as its capital on the borders of 4th of June 1967.

We have to be aware of the fact that the policies and practices of the Israeli occupation, a foreign power in the occupied territories, against the Palestinian civilians, including the illegal settlement activities and the siege on Gaza since 2007, together with the restrictions on the movement of persons and goods, and expropriation of land, all these policies aim to undermine any opportunity for the two-state solution, and thus, it perpetrates the occupation. Meanwhile, we assure that it’s of paramount importance to implement the Security Council Resolution 2334 which condemns all the Israeli practices that aim to expand settlements, expropriate land, demolish houses, and displace Palestinians.

Mr. President, given the foregoing, we would like to assert and ascertain actually the principled position of Kuwait vis-à-vis the Palestinian question, which enjoys a priority, and I think this priority coincides with the priorities of many Member States in the UN because the question of Palestine is the question of civil people who are under occupation and who are deprived of the axiomatic rights to living. And I would like here to sum up our position.

First of all, we do commend the steadfastness and struggle of the Palestinian people, and we do ascertain our principled commitment to support them until they manage to achieve all their legal, political rights and to establish their independent state on their territories with East Jerusalem as its capital and to put a time line for putting an end to the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories according to the international laws and systems.

Second, we do denounce the inhumane and illegal siege on Gaza, which is another violation by Israel of the Security Council Resolution 1860 and the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. And we demand that this siege is to be terminated immediately.

Third, we urge the international community through the United Nations agencies, especially the Security Council, to provide the Palestinian people with international protection in the face of the Israeli military machine and to immediately put an end to the occupation as soon as possible.

Fourth, we renew our call to all the parties concerned, especially the parties sponsoring the peace process in the Middle East, to intensify their efforts to pressurize Israel to bring it to accept the UN resolutions and to act thereby. And here we do reiterate the responsibility by the UN regarding the Palestinian question until a lasting, comprehensive, and fair solution is reached regarding all the issues related to the Palestinian question, including the issue of refugees.

Mr. President, I urge you today while we are celebrating the International Day of Solidarity with Palestine, and as Members to the General Assembly of the UN, and I also urge the Security Council to shoulder our responsibility and to support the Palestinian people and to support their fair cause, as this is incumbent on all of us. We have to support all those peoples that have long waited for the UN to accomplish an achievement regarding the chronic Palestinian cause, and we to have work hand-in-hand to bring Israel to put an end to its flagrant violations of the international humanitarian law in the occupied Palestinian territories and to bring it to apply—or to comply with the relevant Security Council resolutions regarding the two-state solution, as this would eventually lead to very positive effects in the Middle East region, and Godspeed.

Thank you, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT: I thank the Distinguished Representative of Kuwait, and I now give the floor to the Distinguished Representative of Libya.

LIBYA: Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, Your Excellencies. The Israeli occupation of Palestine as a crisis no longer confined to the national borders of the historical State of Palestine or to the region itself. This crisis has become part and parcel of the history of the United Nations.

The United Nations is an organization that is supposed to ensure justice and act in favor of all oppressed people in order to end the occupation and maintain international peace and security. However, in reality, what has the United Nations done for the Palestinian people? The Palestinian people who has a just cause as attested to in all reports of the United Nations and other international organizations.

The United Nations has adopted many resolutions on the question of Palestine. However, the Israeli occupation has flouted each and every one of them. What is even ironic is that this organization is the same organization that created the State of Israel and legitimized its occupation as per a promise given by a state that has no right to it. At the same time, the United Nations has adopted many resolutions calling on the state it established to end its occupation.

Mr. President, today, 50 years into the unjust occupation of the Palestinian territories, it has become incumbent on the international community and disorganization to uphold their historical and ethical responsibility and to admit that Israel, the occupying power, will not end its occupation. The international community has pressured the Arab world and tried to convince it to abandon its historical right to establish the State of Palestine and to accept all international initiatives. The Arab world has shown good faith and presented the Arab Peace Initiative based on international resolutions and the land for peace principle. However, Israel, the occupying power, has never reciprocated. The United Nations must admit this fact, given the fact that Israel will never reconsider its policies. Israel continues its policies of occupation and tries to play for time while adopting many Judaizing policies that would only lead to complete chaos in the region and beyond.

The occupying power has continued its policies of excessive use of violence. It is also introduced a new element into the equation, namely the Israeli settlers who are armed in order to provoke the rightful owners of the land. This is an attempt to portray the situation as a conflict between civilians from different nationalities and religions. Such an attempt will only lead to more deterioration and the Israeli occupation must understand that such a maneuver will be in no one's interest. It is high time for the international community to act if it is serious about ending the most heinous form of occupation. It should adopt genuine policies, including suspending the membership of Israel in this organization and offering international protection to Palestinian civilians who are so desperate they no longer differentiate between life and death.

We must answer to future generations for this occupation. If we don't, this occupation will continue until it engulfs all Palestinian territories and all other Arab territories. I would like to refer you to a statement by the so-called Minister of Social Equality in Israel, who said two days ago, and I quote: “The best place for Palestinians to establish their state is Sinai." This is a dangerous statement that reflects the general political atmosphere in Israel based on a belief in a promised land for a chosen people. This justifies Israel's continued occupation of the Syrian Golan is another step to make this Israeli dream come true. Will the international community standby while allowing Israel to continue his occupation for another 50 years?

Mr. President, Israel's illegal policies and the occupied Palestinian territory, including in Jerusalem, continue unabated. I will not go into examples. There are many of those in the reports of the Secretary-General and the reports of the United Nations. However, until the Palestinian people is able to establish its own free and independent state, the United Nations must promote Palestinian reconciliation and must provide all forms of support to the Palestinian government in order to improve the living conditions of Palestinian civilians. The international community must continue to pressure Israel to accept the Arab Peace Initiative and to find a just solution to the issue of refugees according to Security Council resolutions and other international resolutions and the settlement activities, namely, Security Council Resolution 2334 of 2016. The international community must also recognize Palestine as a fully fledged member of the United Nations. It must also consider the question of Palestine as a responsibility, because we as an international organization have contributed to the success of the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories, and we have left all Palestinians alone in this challenge.

In closing, Mr. President, some might say that Libya must not make such a statement on the issue of Palestine while it suffers from its own internal security struggles. I would like to note that the question of Palestine will always remain a priority for all Arab nations and all Arab citizens because we are well aware that this unjust occupation is the main reason behind the spread of terrorism and extremism in the Middle East.

Thank you, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT: I thank the Distinguished Representative of Libya. I now give the floor to the Distinguished Representative of the Maldives.

MALDIVES: Thank you, Mr. President. At the outset, I wish to reiterate the unwavering support of the government and the people of Maldives to the government and the people of the State of Palestine as we mark the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. The Maldives will continue to stand by the government and the people of Palestine in their struggle for justice, peace, stability, and prosperity.

Mr. President, this year marks 50 years since the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, which resulted in Israel's occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza. Next year, 2018, will mark the 70th year since Israel began its occupation of Palestine and the Arab lands, which caused the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians.

The continued illegal occupation of Palestinian lands by Israel is the biggest dent on the image of the UN that continues to hurt this organization's efforts in making peace around the world. The question of Palestine had just one answer. That is the establishment of an independent and sovereign State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, on the Palestinian lands with pre-1967 borders living side-by-side with Israel. That is the answer that the UN Security Council, in particular Resolutions 242 of 1967, 338 of 1973, and 2334 of 2016 demand. The Maldives therefore calls on Israel to fully implement the relevant UN Security resolutions to fully respect the legal obligations it undertook in the Oslo Accords and to implement that Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet Roadmap. Yet even today in Israel, we see a complete and total disregard for the UN resolutions and the international agreements it signed onto. Israel, in violation of its commitment in the Oslo Accords to treat the Gaza and the West Bank as a single territorial unit reserved for the Palestinian State, continues to designate the West Bank by another name and consider that as part of Israel in its laws, official statements, and in the media.

In practice then, Israel does not recognize the right of a sovereign, practicable, Palestinian State to exist. The day when Israel makes the strategic decision to choose peace instead of tactical challenges to the semantics in peace plans then we will be able to embark on the path to a lasting peace process that will bring a permanent solution to the conflict.

What else is expected in this case? What else are the people to feel when their hopes, their aspirations, their prayers, and indeed their rights are dismissed and trampled upon time and time again? We know that sustaining peace requires the rule of law, respect for human rights, representative institutions, and so forth. Why then do we continue to effectively hold to a double standard in the case with the Israeli occupation?

International law is not selectively applicable, nor its violations be justified or excused. As we, the international community, calls for peace and a lasting solution to the question of Palestine we must also denounce efforts to achieve peace through apartheid in the disguise of a semi-autonomy.

Mr. President, all that is fundamentally necessary then is for Israel at long last to join the international community in affirming the fundamental rights of the Palestinian people, ending its occupation, and recognizing the independent and sovereign Palestinian state. If this can be achieved, Mr. President, then we will have come a long way in achieving that allusive goal: peace in the Middle East and the lasting solution to the question of Palestine. I thank you.

PRESIDENT: I thank the Distinguished Representative of Maldives and I now give the floor to the Distinguished Representative of Qatar.

QATAR: Mr. President, at the outset I would like to thank you for convening this session. I would like to thank the Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for his statement and for all the efforts made by the Committee. I would like to seize this opportunity to express my appreciation to the efforts made by the Division for Palestinian Rights and the special information program on the question of Palestine of the DPI.

Mr. President, this year marks the passage of 50 years since the illegal Israeli occupation of the occupied Palestinian and Arab territories since 1967, including East Jerusalem. There are illegal and humanitarian results of this occupation. As a result there is a need to implement all international laws and resolutions to end this Israeli illegal occupation.

Mr. President, despite the many challenges to achieving peace in the Middle East, there are important developments that have taken place recently which heighten the hope in achieving peace and reconciliation in Palestine and in the Middle East. Qatar would like to welcome the signing of the reconciliation agreement between Fatah and Hamas as an important step towards achieving a reconciliation between all Palestinian factions in favor of the Palestinian people. We hope that all these developments will contribute to the efforts of peace.

Mr. President, on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the State of Qatar stress once again a solidarity with the Palestinian people and its support for all international efforts aimed at achieving a just, comprehensive, and lasting peace in the Middle East. In this regard, we reiterate Qatar’s position and support of the two-state solution to establish two states, Israel and Palestine, living side-by-side in peace and security within internationally recognized borders according to the borders of 1967.

Therefore, we must end the occupation and grant the Palestinian people their inalienable right, including their right to self-determination. We have to solve the issue of refugees according to General Assembly Resolution 194. We also stress that in order to achieve peace we must uphold the international law and provide the environment conducive to peace and security in order to avoid any escalation.

We condemn, once again, the violations of the occupying power, including those against holy sites, especially all attempts aimed at changing the legal status of the holy al-Aqsa Mosque and to divide it temporally and spatially.

Mr. President, the General Assembly adopts annual resolutions on the Middle East and the question of Palestine. These resolutions reflect the seriousness in which the international community address this issue. The international community calls on Israel, the occupying power, to end its unilateral occupation of the State of Palestine in violation of international law. These policies aim to change the legal and demographic status of Palestine. These resolutions also portray the invalidity of the measures taken by Israel stressing the invalidity of the occupation by Israel of the Syrian Golan calling on Israel to withdraw until the borders of June 4, 1967.

Mr. President, the Middle East is facing a number of challenges as a result of conflicts and confrontations which impact negatively the people of the region. Therefore, we must double our efforts to address the root causes of these conflicts and crises, especially terrorism and extremism. Therefore, igniting new crises in the region would lead to further complication and instability.

In closing, Mr. President, the State of Qatar will continue to support the legal rights of the Palestinian people in order to achieve peace in the Middle East based on international resolutions. We will continue our efforts to put an end to crises and conflicts in the region based on our foreign policy to settle peacefully all conflicts and disputes.

Thank you, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT: I thank the Distinguished Representative of Qatar. I now give the floor to the Distinguished Representative of Nigeria.

NIGERIA: Thank you, Mr. President. And, Mr. President, let me from the outset thank you for convening today’s plenary meeting on the situation in the Middle East, particularly the question of Palestine. This meeting provides an opportunity for reflection and developments in the entire region.

Mr. President, Nigeria is greatly concerned about the situation in many parts of the Middle East. It is in this regard that we call on all parties to make genuine efforts to find peaceful solutions and to cooperate closely with the United Nations and its relevant agencies to realize this objective.

As the international community continues to seek avenues to advance peaceful settlement of the Palestinian question, international efforts remain focused on paving the way for Israel and Palestine to return to meaningful negotiations.

Mr. President, Nigeria believes that achieving a just, lasting, and comprehensive settlement of the question of Palestine is imperative for the attainment of durable peace and stability in the Middle East. It is for this reason that we are pleased to note the statement by the Quartet on 20th September 2017, welcoming the efforts of the Palestinians to create the conditions for the Palestinian Authority to assume its responsibilities in Gaza, and stressing the importance of close and continued coordination of all efforts to achieve the common goal of the two-state solution in line with UN resolutions and international laws.

We also accolade the outcome of the Paris conference held on 15th January 2017, as 70 countries] and international organizations reaffirmed their support for the two-state solution and their readiness to continue to encourage both Israel and Palestine to return to purposeful negotiations.

Mr. President, the Israeli-Palestinian question has been longstanding, and the situation in the Middle East may be complex; however, the international community must remain undaunted in its commitment towards finding a lasting and sustainable solution, as the conflict continues to pose a threat to international peace and security.

As well, we acknowledge the inherent difficulty in the Middle East peace process, is the apparent lack of progress. In this context, we urge all parties to show more commitment to making peace a reality. All unilateral actions that have turned hope into confrontation, including settlement activities, violence, and inciting violence must stop.

Nigeria would like to see a genuine effort on the part of Israeli and Palestinian leaders to return to the negotiation table. Obviously, the current situation does not offer a sustainable solution to the question of Palestine. Indeed, it is creating desperation among the people of Palestine and causing anxiety among the people of Israel.

We believe there are numerous specific actions that are necessary to foster mutual respect and compromise, build confidence and pave the way for the realization of the two-state solution. In this regard, Nigeria encourages Israel to take concrete measures to freeze all settlement-related activities in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. On their part, Palestinian leaders must also signal their readiness to return to the negotiation table by making enhanced efforts to forge unity and deal with militancy and all internal security challenges. It is beyond doubt that neither militancy—mark, no militancy will resolve the protracted conflict.

In concluding, Mr. President, we encourage both sides to take concrete steps to return to negotiations on the basis of the relevant UN resolutions, the Quartet Roadmap, the Madrid Principles, the Arab Peace Initiative, and the relevant agreements between them. Nigeria supports the efforts of the international community towards establishing an enabling environment conducive to a return to meaningful negotiations to end the occupation and resolve the long running conflict.

I thank you.

PRESIDENT: I thank the Distinguished Representative of Nigeria. I now give the floor to the Distinguished Representative of Argentina.

ARGENTINA: Mr. President, Argentina would like to make the following statement related to the situation in the Middle East and the question of Palestine, items 37 and 38 of the agenda of the General Assembly, which my country follows with concern.

Seventy years have passed since the establishment of a State of Israel and the adoption of Resolution 181 of the General Assembly, which established a plan for the partition of Palestine, and 50 years since the beginning of Israeli occupation. We would like to reaffirm once again our strongest support for a peaceful, definitive, and comprehensive solution to the question of Palestine based on a two-state solution on the basis of the borders of 1967 and what the parties decide upon during the negotiation process.

Argentina actively supports all efforts aimed at achieving peace and stability in the Middle East. We encourage the regional actors and the countries which are friends of Israel and Palestine to work in a constructive manner to assist the parties in moving towards a solution of their differences with a view to resuming the negotiations. The seriousness of the situation in the field demands a collective effort in order to work for a two-state solution as established by the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, and the Security Council, the Roadmap, and the Arab Peace Initiative.

President, Argentina reasserts its support to the alienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to becoming 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 neighbors within secure and internationally recognized borders. Moreover, Argentina reiterates its concern about the persistent and continuous growth of illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories and calls for a cessation of the expansion. As indicated on numerous occasions by the General Assembly, the settlements are contrary to international law and an obstacle to peace. They weaken the possibilities of a two-state solution, living in peace and security, and promote in this way perpetuation of an unsustainable status quo.

The gravity of this situation has recently been recognized by the Security Council in its Resolution 2334 of 2016. At the same time, the attacks against Israeli citizens are unacceptable and must stop immediately. My country condemns in the strongest terms all terrorist actions and is convinced that just as there is no military solution to the conflict, neither is there a terrorist solution. It is necessary that Palestinian leaders sincerely address the security concerns of Israel.

In that regard, Argentina has great expectations of the agreement signed in Cairo on the 12th of October 2017 which may be a very important step to achieving genuine progress in the reconciliation amongst Palestinians. It is our hope that the agreement could be a step towards recognition of Israel, the renunciation of violence, and the respect for the existing agreements by all the Palestinian factions.

We acknowledge the positive role of Egypt and call upon all the actors involved in the situation in Gaza to refrain from taking measures which could undermine the perspectives of a government of Palestinian unity. We note with concern the persistence of the excessive use of force by Israeli forces in the context of attacks and alleged attacks conducted by Palestinians and in combats as well as the acts of violence by the settlers.

Regarding the situation of East Jerusalem, Argentina reaffirms the special status of Jerusalem in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the United Nations. In that regard, it rejects any unilateral attempt in producing changes, and in particular, regarding the Old City, which has special significance for the three big monotheistic religions. My country understands that the Holy City should be a place of encounter and peace and that access to holy sites must be guaranteed for Jews, Muslims, and Christians. Any attempt to deny or relativize the historical link with and the profound meaning of these places for the three religions is completely unacceptable and does not contribute to the objective of finding a peaceful solution to the conflict. Rather, it reinforces prejudices and mistrust between the parties.

Mr. President, in relation to the Syrian Golan, Argentina upholds a position of principle regarding the illegality of the acquisition of territories by force and respect for the territorial integrity of states. We firmly believe in the principle of the peaceful settlement of disputes and, therefore, we consider it important to seek a negotiated solution to the conflict between Syria and Israel with a view to bringing an end to the occupation of the Golan as soon as possible in accordance with Resolutions 242 and 338 of the Security Council and the principle of land for peace.

To conclude, Argentina would like to urge once again Palestinians and Israelis to resume peace talks, acting in goodwill, flexibility, and in accordance with international law with a view to reaching an agreement on the pending questions regarding all aspects of the final status of Palestine.

Thank you.

PRESIDENT: I thank the Distinguished Representative of Argentina. I now give the floor to the Distinguished Representative of Brazil.

BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. President. As the international community celebrates today the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, Brazil wishes to reiterate once again its full support to the Palestinian people to self-determination. Brazil deeply regrets that exactly 70 years after the adoption of the General Assembly Resolution 181 approved during the session chaired by a Brazilian, [indiscernible], then president of the second UN General assembly and the former Foreign Minister of Brazil, the Palestinian ranked to a sovereign independent state has not yet been fulfilled. Brazil considers that a fair and lasting solution to the conflict can only be achieved through two-state solution. Leading to an economically viable and territorially continuous Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side-by-side in peace and security with the state of Israel within internationally recognized and mutually agreed borders based on the 1967 lines in accordance with international law, the UN Charter and established guidelines of the peace process, including the Madrid Principles, the Oslo Agreements, the Arab Peace Initiative, and the Quartet Roadmap, among others.

Mr. President, without prejudice to the fundamental responsibility of the Security Council, we underscore that the General Assembly can and should contribute to the implementation of the two-state solution in all its aspects. The annual resolutions of the Assembly on the situation in the Middle East and on the question of Palestine, including those to be adopted this year, represent an important aspect of international framework concerning the peaceful solution of the dispute. These decisions reaffirm the validity of crucial legal parameters, including the inalienable right to self-determination of Palestinian people, the applicability of the 1945 Geneva Convention to the occupied territories, the right to return of the refugees of Palestine and the need for a comprehensive, just, and lasting solution to the question of Jerusalem, taking into account the legitimate concerns of both Israelis and Palestinians and ensuring unhindered access to the holy places. We urge all parties to fully abide by this resolutions in good faith.

Mr. President, in accordance with international law and the Charter of United Nations, we reject the acquisition of territory by the use of force. In 1967, as an elected member of the Security Council, Brazil actively participated in the drafting of and supported Resolution 242, 1967, which demanded the withdrawal by Israel from Arab territories occupied during the 1967 conflict. The existence and expansion of Israel is settlements in Palestine as well as the retroactive legislation of some of the settlements constitutes an obstacle to the viability of the two-state solution and therefore undermine peace in the region. Having welcomes Security Council Resolution 2334 of 2016, Brazil stresses the need to implement all aspects of this mandatory decision, an important contribution to the financial legal framework on the question of Palestine.

Mr. President, significant steps have recently been taken towards the political reunification of the State of Palestine, an important element of peace process. Brazil welcome the Cairo agreements signed on 12th October as well as the measures to extend territory of the government of national consensus to the Gaza Strip. We recognize the role played by Egypt in the negotiations and encouraged Palestine’s political groups to continue their dialogue. Brazil hopes the Cairo agreement will contribute to immediately alleviate the grave humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip by facilitating the lifting of the blockade and allowing unimpeded access to humanitarian aid and reconstruction efforts in accordance with Security Council Resolution 1860 of 2009. We also expect the agreements will be a positive factor towards the resumption of direct and meaningful peace negotiations between Israel and Palestine.

Mr. President, several of the resolutions to be adopted by the General Assembly concerned the specific rights and needs of the refugees of Palestine as well as the activities of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine refugees in the Near East, UNRWA. As a member of the Advisory Commission of UNRWA Brazil reiterates its resolute support to the Agency which offers education, health care, housing, food assistance, psychosocial support, and other important forms of humanitarian and development assistance to over 5 million Palestinian refugees in the region. As a concrete expression of its unwavering solidarity towards the Palestinian people, Brazil has recently increased its cooperation with refugees of Palestine through voluntary financial contributions, regular food assistance, and implementation of social development projects, including those of the India, Brazil South Africa fund, IBSA fund, in Gaza and the West Bank.

Mr. President, in 2010, Brazil recognize the State of Palestine on the 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its P this decision was consistent with the principle of self-determination and also aimed at supporting the peace process. In the same spirit, today we reaffirm our collect of responsibility to reduce serious and meaningful negotiations towards the two-state solution.

I thank you, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT: I thank the Distinguished Representative of Brazil. I now give the floor to the Distinguished Representative of Japan.

JAPAN: Thank you, Mr. President. I thank you for convening this important meeting. I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the people of Palestine on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

Today, Middle East and North Africa region faces multitude of challenges, from the question of Palestine, an issue that existed from the time of the creation of the United Nations, to more recent regional challenges, such as Syria and Yemen. We continue to see mutual distrust prevail, and the outlook for the region remains opaque.

Japan, as a member of the Security Council for the past two years, has strived to deal with the issues of the region on a day-to-day basis. Japan has consistently called for the importance of the peaceful resolution of conflict, the need to implement international commitments, including Security Council resolutions, the need to promote confidence building and importance of focusing on humanitarian assistance and enhancing social resilience.

Mr. President, with regard to the question of Palestine, the future drawn in the Resolution 181, the future of two states, has not yet been realized. Obstacles to peace persist. The settlement activities continue in violation of international law, and Japan calls upon Israel to immediately freeze such activities. Settlement activities create facts on the ground and physically erode a two-state solution. Violence remains a major risk to peace. Escalation of tension at the holy sites this summer is a stark reminder of how a case of violence can snowball into larger crisis. Japan condemns all acts, incitement, and the glorification of violence as it is fundamentally incompatible with peaceful resolution of conflicts. Japan calls upon both sides to take concrete steps to reverse these negative trends. On the ground, we continue to see reconciliation efforts among the Palestinians. To achieve Palestine under single democratic and legitimate Palestinian National Authority, it is important to continue to encourage the implementation of the agreement signed in Cairo on the 12th of October this year.

Mr. President, a number of resolutions have been adopted at this session of the General Assembly. However, we should not be satisfied. The situation calls for actions that have impact on the ground, both by the parties and by the international community. Japan supports any initiative which will have positive impact on achieving a two-state solution. In this regard, we appreciate efforts by various parties to bring both sides closer to the negotiation table.

Japan continues its own efforts to create an environment more conducive to peace negotiations on the basis of the three pillars of political dialogue, confidence building, and economic assistance. Foreign Minister Taro Kono, in his speech at Japan-Arab Political Dialogue this past September, said that endurance with long-term foresight is Japan’s strength and we will move ahead, step-by-step, until harvesting fruit. Our efforts in this region may seem like a round-about way to promote peace but we believe it is important, nonetheless.

One such example is Jericho Agro Industrial Park, or JAIP, the flagship project of our Corridor for Peace and Prosperity initiative. This is Japan’s unique initiative to encourage and support the independence of Palestinian economy through regional cooperation with Israel, Jordan, and Palestine. We envisage the products produced at the JAIP to be exported through this corridor to the region and beyond.

We are pleased to report that the past year was a year of progress for JAIP with the number of companies in operation increasing from three to eight. We believe that a more sustainable Palestinian economy will make a two-state solution more viable. We would like to continue our cooperation with the partners of the project and demonstrate what cooperation in the region can achieve.

Japan is currently working on upgrading our Corridor for Peace and Prosperity initiative. We will expand it into IT sector, making it a new pillar of the initiative. There are plenty of talents in Palestine. Japan will offer its assistance so that they can fully utilize their potential.

Mr. President, this is not to say that economic development is an alternative to a future Palestinian state. Our goal is to generate trust which accomplishes other initiatives and leads to meaningful dialogue. Our hope is for the dialogue to lead to two states living side-by-side in peace and prosperity. Voices yearning for peace can be heard from both Israelis and Palestinians. For 20 consecutive years we have invited young, future leaders of Israel and Palestine to Japan. This year again the participants engaged in various activities together and exchanged their views. One participant said that it is not impossible for both sides to understand each other and live in peace. Japan will continue its efforts in order to live up to such voices.

I thank you, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT: I thank the Distinguished Representative of Japan. I now give the floor to the Distinguished Representative of Lao People’s Democratic Republic

LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC: Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, aggression of Palestine has been on the agenda of the United Nations for many decades. Despite an overwhelming support from the international community for a two-state solution, the Palestine has yet to become an independent, sovereign state and its people continues to suffer under the foreign occupation. It is, therefore, about time for the international community to exert greater efforts in order to create conducive conditions for parties concerned to return to dialogues and negotiations to find a lasting solution to this protracted conflict and end the occupation of the Palestinian Territory.

Mr. President, the [indiscernible] of the United Nations membership status and the right by the Palestinian people as a recognized state does not negate their firm commitment to resolving the conflict through peaceful means. We are well aware of the sufferings and struggle over the last several decades without any hope as the international community could not take a decisive action at the level where it matters most.

Mr. President, we are deeply concerned over the continued Israeli practice of the settlement expansion, despite growing a concern by the international community. Such practice not only destroys Palestinians’ properties, homes, and economic development in the occupied land, but it also violates the international humanitarian and human rights law and impedes the peace process and opportunities for negotiations and peaceful resolutions.

We encourage Israel to implement the resolutions of the Security Council, especially Resolution 2334, 2016, which stipulates that Israel immediately and completely ceases all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and fully respects all of its legal obligations in this regard.

My delegation is also concerned with the plight of the Palestinian people who have suffered from the blockade, especially in the Gaza Strip which has been imposed since 2007. The blockade has brought untold suffering to the Palestinian people that could lead to a humanitarian crisis if the situation continues unabated. We call upon the occupying power to lift the blockade as soon as possible and facilitate unimpeded humanitarian relief.

Mr. President, my delegation wishes to see a just, lasting, comprehensive, and peaceful solution to the Palestinian-Israel conflict. We strongly support the relevant United Nations resolutions and Quartet Road Map which envisages a sovereign, independent, and viable State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem, as its capital living side-by-side in peace with Israel within secure, internationally recognized borders.

In this connection, the Lao PDR joins the international community to call upon Israel to immediately cease all its unlawful occupation of the Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, place a complete and indefinite freeze on all settlement activities, and respond favorably and in good faith to the international consensus in order to pave the way that is conducive to the pursuit of peace as well as [indiscernible] the prospects of achieving a two-state solution as stipulated in the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions.

Mr. President, the Lao PDR has long recognized the State of Palestine and wishes to reaffirm its consistent support to the Palestinian people to attain the long-delayed goal of a viable, peaceful, and prosperous State of Palestine, a full-pledged member of the United Nations.

We take this opportunity to commend the role and the work of the United Nations agencies, especially the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East, UNRWA; one which has been there to assist millions of Palestinian people amid numerous difficulties. We also wish the Committee on the Exercise of Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People every success in its noble cause to find a peaceful, just, comprehensive, and lasting solution to the question of Palestine.

I thank you, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT: I thank the Distinguished Representative of Lao People’s Democratic Republic. I now give the floor to the Distinguished Representative of Bangladesh.

BANGLADESH: Mr. President, on behalf of the government and the people of Bangladesh, we reaffirm our unwavering solidarity with the brotherly government and people of the State of Palestine. Invoking our constitutional obligation, our Honorable Prime Minister has issued a statement on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. We thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report with pertinent observations. We also appreciate the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People where Bangladesh regularly participates as an observer. In keeping with our principal position, Bangladesh has co-sponsored the draft resolutions under Agenda items 37 and 38.

Mr. President, as Bangladesh is currently overwhelmed by the massive and unprecedented influx of forcibly-displaced people from Myanmar’s Rakhine State, we cannot but remain profoundly concerned over the protracted, illegal occupation and humanitarian situation faced by the Palestinian people. Bangladesh has been dealing with the Rohingya situation over the last three decades and is seeking the international community’s sustained and decisive initiative to lend support to the bilateral diplomatic efforts pursued by Bangladesh with Myanmar.

It is crucial that the United Nations Member States continue to pursue peaceful, just, and lasting solutions to all these protracted crises that otherwise continue to pose serious threats to international and regional peace and security.

Mr. President, the Secretary-General’s report is indeed a disturbing read, which is unfortunately becoming a norm rather than being an exception. The continued breaches of international humanitarian law and systematic human rights violations in the occupied Palestinian territories have given rise to an egregious culture of impunity. In the absence of effective international accountability, the occupying power continues to enforce violence on Palestinian citizens, imprisoning and abusing scores of Palestinians in its detention centers, and dispossessing and displacing thousands of Palestinian families through its construction and expansion of illegal settlements.

We share concerns over the reported lack of progress in implementing the Security Council Resolution 2234 of 2016. It is obvious that the illegal Israeli settlements as well as the wall in and around the occupied East Jerusalem are being deliberately pursued in order to fundamentally change the character, status, and demography of the occupied Palestinian territories. We wish to reiterate that the Council has an obligation to prevail upon Israel to immediately halt its illegal settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories, lift the blockade in the Gaza Strip, and put an end to all forms of occupation.

Immediate priority must be given to ensuring international protection for the Palestinian people suffering for decades from Israel’s policy of collective punishment. The hunger strike recently observed by thousands of prisoners in Israeli detention centers underscores the need for the international community’s sustained efforts to address their grievances and plight.

Mr. President, Bangladesh acknowledges the developments with political unity and reconciliation in Palestine which we consider to be a step in the right direction. As stated by our Honorable Prime Minister, the government and the people of Bangladesh would remain steadfast in our support for the just and legitimate struggle of the Palestinian people for their inalienable rights, including their right to self-determination and the establishment of an independent, viable, contiguous, and sovereign Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Bangladesh looks forward to positive signs to emerge from the various regional and bilateral initiatives being pursued to address the Palestinian question in the context of the two-state solution. We continue to urge all key actors to remain seized with their efforts to pursue a comprehensive solution to the Palestinian issue consistent with the relevant UN Security Council resolutions and in accordance with the Arab Peace Initiative, the Quartet Roadmap, and the principle of land for peace. We also add our voice to the need for ensuring enhanced, predictable, and sustainable funding for UNRWA in order for it to effectively carry out its humanitarian mandate in support of the Palestinian refugees.

I thank you.

PRESIDENT: I thank the Distinguished Representative of Bangladesh. I now give the floor to the Distinguished Representative of Pakistan.

PAKISTAN: Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, let me begin by commending the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for its valuable work to further the cause of the Palestinian people. We also wish to thank the Committee for its comprehensive report.

The report of the Committee represents an eerily familiar and deeply-disturbing pattern of systematic human rights violations that pervade all aspects of Palestinian life. Arbitrary administrative detentions, restrictions of movement, demolitions of homes, and other measures of socio-economic depravation have become grim, daily facts of the life of Palestinian people.

This year serves as a particularly distressing milestone in the political history of Palestine. Today, the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, marks the 70th anniversary of Resolution 181, the UN Partition Plan for Palestine. It called for creation of two states. One was created within months. The other remains a dream even after 70 years.

Earlier this month we marked the centennial of the Balfour Declaration. It is also the 50th anniversary of the illegal Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territories in 1967. And a decade of the oppressive siege of Gaza. Must we continue to commemorate these dates or do the Palestinians deserve better? While the international community continues to reaffirm its abiding commitment to the legitimate cause of the Palestinian people, nothing seems to have change on ground. Dark shadows of Israeli occupation of Palestine have only lengthened with time. And Israel continues to defy morality, international law, and global public opinion with impunity.

Mr. President, last year in a rare moment of international solidarity the Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 2334. It was an unequivocal signal to Israel that settlements in occupied Palestinian territory have no legal validity and remain a major stumbling block to the achievement of a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

Yet, instead of ceasing its illegal settlements Israel has in fact stepped up settlement activity in occupied territories. Nearly 10% of the Israeli population now lives in Israeli settlements. A viable, independent, and contiguous State of Palestine on the basis of internationally agreed parameters to pre-1967 borders, and al-Quds al-Sharif as its capital, is the only sustainable guarantee of enduring peace in the Middle East. There is no Plan B for the region.

We echo the call of the Committee that part to a negotiated peaceful settlement of the Palestinian issue is predicated on an end to illegal Israeli occupation, the realization of the rights of the Palestinian people, including to self-determination and independence, and achievement of a two-state solution. The role of the Security Council remains critical, for only through full implementation of its own resolutions on Palestine can the Council strengthen its credibility and further the ideal of global peace and security.

Mr. President, the political reconciliation forged between Fatah and Hamas in Cairo last month offers fresh reason for hope and optimism. It not only restores political unity within the Palestinian ranks but also provides renewed strength and vigor to the legitimate cause of the Palestinian people. We congratulate our Palestinian brethren on this singular achievement and hope this will lead to real progress. On its part, the international community must help sustain this positive momentum.

Mr. President, another dimension of the conflict in the Middle East is the Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan. Israeli settlement policy and illegal practices of controlling resources and changing the demographic composition and legal status of the occupied Syrian Golan again in blatant disregard to UN resolutions. The international community, Mr. President, cannot remain silent while Palestine continues to disappear before our very eyes. Pakistan remained steadfast in its commitment to the Palestinian cause. Their valiant struggle for freedom and dignity must be crowned with success. There is no alternative.

Thank you, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT: I thank the Distinguished Representative of Pakistan. I now give the floor to the Distinguished Representative of the United Arab Emirates.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES: Mr. President, I would like at the outset to express appreciation for you, Mr. President, for presiding over this important debate. I would also like to thank the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the Division for Palestinian Rights spirit for their unwavering efforts in supporting the Palestinian cause.

Also I would like to reiterate what His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan President of the United Arab Emirates reaffirmed in his message this morning to the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People on the occasion of International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People that the UAE has and always will fully support the Palestinian people at all levels and in all forms. And we will continue to promote the right to establish a Palestinian state on their land and based on the borders of 4th of June 1967, with Jerusalem as its capital.

Before the United Arab Emirates denounced the continued and unjust Israeli occupation of the Palestinian and Arab territories and subsequent aggressive policies against the fraternal Palestinian people. The UAE condemns Israel’s continued violation of the sanctity of the holy sites, destruction of Palestinian property, confiscation of land, and oppression, detention, and forced displacement of the Palestinian people, and restriction of Palestinian access to workplaces and schools. Furthermore, Israel continues to build and expand settlements in a flagrant violation of the international law and the relevant Security Council resolutions, including Resolution 2334.

These illegal practices pose a major obstacle to all international efforts to achieve a just and lasting peace and also it undermines a two-state solution. The Israeli occupation, which has been ongoing for decades, has also led to the deterioration of the humanitarian economic and social conditions in the Palestinian territories. To address the suffering of the Palestinian people, the international community must provide assistance in education, health, food, and infrastructure. This will enable the Palestinian community to address the challenges posed by the occupation and achieve the sustainable developmental goals. The UAE also hopes that the recent Palestinian reconciliation agreement will contribute to the realization of the aspirations of the Palestinian people in achieving an independent state. The UAE reaffirms its support for this important milestone and [indiscernible] the invaluable role of the fraternity Arab Republic of Egypt in supporting the Palestinian reconciliation efforts. Regional and international efforts must also be reinforced to ensure that Israel complies with its legal and international obligations, repeals all its unilateral actions, and ends its occupation of Palestinian and Arab territories. We reiterate that reaching a just and last resolution to the Palestinian question must be based on a two-state solution that conforms with all relevant international resolutions, the Arab Peace Initiative, and the Madrid Principles.

Mr. President, in conclusion, we affirm that international efforts to achieve peace in the region will not succeed without an end to the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian and Arab territories, which is being exploited by terrorist groups to spread extremism and violence in the region.

Thank you.

PRESIDENT: I thank the Distinguished Representative of the United Arab Emirates. Next I give the floor to the Distinguished Representative of Bahrain.

BAHRAIN: Thank you, Mr. President. At the outset, we would like to thank the Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, Mr. Fodé Seck, the Permanent Representative of Senegal. We would also like to thank all the members of the Committee for their work in the document A/72/35 and their unwavering efforts to support the Palestinian people to exercise their inalienable rights and to put an end to the Israeli occupation and establish their independent state with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Mr. President, in the message that was addressed by Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, the King of Bahrain, to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, he assured that we in the Kingdom of Bahrain, we do support the struggle of the Palestinian people in all international fora, and we do adopt their cause fully for the two-state solution. And this emanates from our desire for just and lasting peace in the Middle East which would eventually lead to prosperity for the peoples of the region.

Nevertheless, the subsequent negative impacts of the Israeli occupation represented in violation and killing and settlements is a flagrant challenge to the international community and a violation of the UN resolutions as they are totally indifferent to the plight and humanitarian suffering through which the Palestinian people are going, and thus they are threatening international peace and security, a matter that would eventually put the Middle East under the pressure of instability because any attempt to force the status quo will only lead to more tension and violence.

Therefore the Kingdom of Bahrain do support all the endeavors that aim to find a lasting and just solution for the Palestinian cause, based on the two-state solutions and the establishment of the independent State of Palestine along the borders of 4th of June 1967, with Jerusalem as its capital, according to the UN resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative. This would eventually create opportunities for all the peoples of the region for stability and development, and we would like to welcome the announcement of the Palestinian reconciliation, and we do commend the efforts of our brotherly country Egypt as this is the main guarantee for the achievement of the goals of the Palestinian people.

Mr. President, the oppressive Israeli practices against the Palestinian people is one of the biggest obstacles for the resumption of the negotiations of the peace process. And this is represented in one of the continuous arbitrary detention and the blockade against—on Gaza for more than 10 years, in addition to the continuous expansion of settlement in the Palestinian territories, especially in al-Quds al-Sharif, which is been occupied for more than 50 years, not to mention the partition of the Arab neighborhoods and the desecration of the holy mosque. All these policies and schemes which are very discriminatory and racist, which aim to change the demographic constitution and makeup of Jerusalem and to obliterate its identity, and also it’s an attempt on the part of Israel to isolate Jerusalem from the Palestinian territories. This is the reality. This is the day-to-day reality of the Palestinian people for decades. That’s why the Kingdom of Bahrain do value the recent UNESCO resolution, which affirmed that Islamic identity of al-Aqsa Mosque could in by putting Hebron on the UNESCO list. And this was done in its meeting last month, and this assures, or confirms, the rights of Palestinians in all these holy places.

Mr. President, in conclusion, Bahrain calls upon the international community to shoulder its responsibility by sparing no effort for securing the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the return by the Palestinian refugees to their homeland for comprehensive just and lasting peace according to the relevant UN resolutions, including the Security Council Resolutions 242 and 383 and 1397 and 1515 (I) of 2003 regarding the two-state solution so that all the peoples in the region would enjoy stability and peace.

And thank you, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT: I thank the Distinguished Representative of Bahrain. I now give the floor to the Distinguished Representative of Jordan.

JORDAN: Mr. President of the General Assembly, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen. At the outset, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for leading the 72nd session of the General assembly. I would also like to thank the Chair and members of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for their efforts and attempt to attract international attention to the question of Palestine and support of the rights of the Palestinian people.

Mr. President, this year marks the 50th anniversary of the Nakba. The Palestinian peoples continue to suffer from this long occupation with no prospects for progress. However, this current situation will not dissuade us from making every effort possible to end the Israeli occupation and to establish the independent Palestinian state along the lines of June 4, 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital based on a final and just settlement of the two-state solution in accordance with international rules and the Arab Peace Initiative. This is the only solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. His Excellency, or His Highness Abdullah II, has confirmed this reality and his letter to the chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people.

Am Arab summit was held in Amman last March, which ended in a declaration that confirmed the Arab world’s attachment to peace and to the solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict based on the Arab Peace Initiative as endorsed by the League of Arab States and by the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation. The Arab Peace Initiative is the most comprehensive plan to achieve a lasting peace, and it continues to await Israel’s cooperation.

We have always stressed the need for Israel to end its occupation of all Arab and Palestinian territories and end its illegal settlement activities and its discriminatory practices against Palestinians. However, the most important demand is to respect international law and the need for Israel to respect this law. This law has not been drafted by the Palestinian people. It has been established by this organization and its Member States, and we all have the responsibility to respect this law when it comes to all regional and international issues with no exception. Therefore, the question of Palestine is not only the question of the Palestinian people, it is a cause for us all. On this occasion we must uphold our responsibility and our obligation by making every effort possible to reach a political settlement which would allow this people to exercise its inalienable and legal rights.

Over the past decades, Jordan has spared no effort to meet the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people. We will continue to make every effort to create the conducive conditions for the resumption of serious negotiations to achieve peace for Palestinians and Israelis. Failure to reach this just solution will have regional and international impacts and will lead to further extremism and violence. Therefore, international attention must be accorded to this issue as a priority in order to grant the Palestinian people its legitimate and internationally recognized rights. Jordan will support any international efforts in this regard in order to achieve the two-state solution. We welcome the serious commitment by the US administration to move forward on the peace process and to relaunch genuine negotiations.

Jordan also welcomes the Palestinian reconciliation agreement, which would ensure national unity in support of the resumption of peace talks between Palestinians and Israelis. We stand ready to support all efforts made by Egypt, and we commend its role in ensuring Palestinian reconciliation.

We also support the efforts of UNRWA to assist Palestinian refugees. We urge the international community, the Secretary-General, and all parties to make every effort to provide urgent funding to UNRWA before the end of this year to allow this agency to carry out its humanitarian tasks. Providing funding for humanitarian organizations, including UNRWA is a collective responsibility for the international community as a whole.

In closing, Mr. President, Jordan stands in solidarity with the Palestinian people. As Chair of the current session of the Arab Summit and as a neighboring country of Palestine, we will continue our efforts to support and protect the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. We will exercise our historical right to protect the holy Al-Aqsa Mosque based on the Hashemite custodianship exercised by his Majesty, King Abdullah II over all Christian and Muslim holy sites in Jerusalem.

Thank you, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT: I thank the Distinguished Representative of Jordan. I now give the floor to the Distinguished Representative of Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

BOLIVARIAN REPUBLIC OF VENEZUELA: Thank you, President. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is taking the floor on this highly important day for the Palestinian cause. As we reach another anniversary of the approval of Resolution 181 (II) of the United Nations General Assembly, which established the plan for the partition of Palestine.

What seemed like an effort in good faith to resolve the situation in Palestine under the British mandate, this was a situation, resulting amongst other things, from the geopolitical desires of imperialist powers, did not produce the expected result. That would've been the creation of one Arabic and one Jewish independent state. Rather, it led to one of the most unjust situations in the history of time. The State of Israel was established and now received the support and protection of hegemonic powers, and this new Israeli state prevents the creation of a State of Palestine by all means. Moreover, Israel has become the occupying power of the Palestinian territory, one of the longest military occupations of modern times, and has led a colonization policy in the Palestinian territory and policies also of discrimination, apartheid, and oppression against Palestinian men, women, and children. All of this in the face of the indignation of those of us who value respect for international law and human rights and the passivity of those governments and organizations who with the option of action to avoid this tragic situation merely maintain complicit silence or shameful inaction.

A hundred years since the Balfour Declaration, which was demonstration of an arrogance where a distant nation gave itself the right to make decisions over a territory, which did not belong to it, to satisfy the needs and aspirations of one group whilst ignoring and betraying the legitimate aspirations of the whole Palestinian people to have their own state.

Seventy years since the plan of partition. Almost 70 years since the al-Nakbah, the catastrophe, the expulsion of the Palestinian people from their ancestral lands and the beginning of the terrible diaspora.

Fifty years since the occupation of the Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and 10 years since the inhumane and brutal blockade in the Gaza Strip began. It is with deep regret and powerlessness that we note that the human rights situation of the Palestinian people as merely worsened through the violent actions and destructive policies of Israel.

The occupying power has inflicted pain, tragedy, misery, and humiliation upon generations of Palestinians, and regrettably, the reports presented to the General Assembly are very precise with regard to the recent actions of the Israeli government against the Palestinian people. Without doubt, the occupying power is intending to continue its excretable practices with impunity.

In the occupied territories the illegal Israeli settlement policy continues in total disregard for the relevant resolutions of the United Nations which all for the operating power to bring an end to these colonialist actions and the practices of seizing land from the legitimate Palestinian owners. This land occupation takes place with legals or administrative sophistry, destruction of houses, expulsion and displacement of Palestinians in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and destruction of infrastructures and subsistent means for the Palestinian peoples as well the construction of this wall of shame which generates additional forms of separation, discrimination for Palestinians.

Security Council Resolution 2334 in whose adoption Venezuela was able to participate during our membership of the Council was a milestone in United Nations action on the expansion of Israel’s illegal settlements. But until this important decision is accompanied by actions and measures leading to the occupying power complying with this and other United Nations resolutions, its impact will be lessened. It will merely be just one more document which will be ignored by the Israeli government. The Security Council must step up to its responsibilities for a solution to the Palestine question, and this General Assembly must remain vigilant so that there are consequences ensuring that the collective voice of the people’s represented here is heard, peoples who voted by an overwhelming majority in favor of resolutions which seek to bring and end to the terrible situation for the Palestinian people oppressed by Israel.

President, flagrant violations of human rights of the Palestinian people by the occupying power and its abuses and crimes against Palestinian men and women continue. Palestinians are subjected day after day to attacks by Israeli military and security forces resulting in dozens of men, women, and even children being injured or killed through the use of indiscriminate and disproportionate force by Israel.

On top of this come attacks and humiliations by Israeli extremists settlers on many occasions. Often this has happened with the protection of police or military forces by the occupying power. These attacks are against Palestinians who have done no more than a firm their rights to their land, a land which Israel has ambitions upon. They wish to live in dignity against Israel’s insolence and violence. Moreover, pressure persists against the Palestinian people, putting obstacles in the way of their free movement and access to education and health. There are also arbitrary arrests carried out by Israel which lead to the unfair imprisonment of over 6,000 Palestinians. Five hundred Palestinians also subject to the practice of administrative detentions and 331 Palestinian children are imprisoned due to the irrationality of the occupying power. Venezuela demands that Israel bring an end to these reiterated violations of international law, international humanitarian law, the Fourth Convention of Geneva, and the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and Security Council. The brutal attempts of Israel to use violence and terrorism and to break the spirit of the Palestinians in this way are condemned to failure, but the international community must be firm in its condemnations and call for the immediate cessation of such practices.

President, the situation in the Gaza Strip with the inhumane blockade from Israel is a type of collective punishment upon the Palestinian inhabitants which take us back to actions which we believed were over for the rest of history. Almost 2 million people live under a ferocious siege and suffer from unjust restrictions on entry and exit, which has a very negative impact on the efforts of the Palestinian people and the international community to rebuild homes, hospitals, schools, farms, employment, and services in the area. This serious humanitarian situation suffered by the Palestinian people in Gaza means that 40% of the population lives below the poverty line and over 900,000 people depend on humanitarian aid to survive.

The illegal blockade in the Gaza Strip must be lifted as soon as possible. The security reasons which may be argued should not serve in any case to justify hundreds of thousands of Palestinians suffering from this infamous siege, which prevents them from having any economic growth opportunities or development communities in the area, and requires the unanimous repudiation by all nations. We equally condemn the occupation of the Syrian Golan and discriminatory and abusive practices against the Syrian people living under the unjustified occupation of Israel, including the expansion of illegal settlements under appropriation of lands. Withdrawal from the Syrian Gollum is an imperative that the Israeli government should comply with immediately.

On this International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, President, the international community must pass from words to action. We cannot continue to be passive witnesses to the dreadful acts of the Israeli occupying power against the Palestinian people. These acts are often equivalent to war crimes. It is enough to see how Israel benefits from the protection of powerful allies to pretend to practice with impunity their plans to bring an end to the two-state solution and make a Palestinian state unviable. This closes down peaceful and political ways towards a fair and lasting solution to the Palestine question and an end to the Palestine-Israeli conflict. The UN efforts, as well as those of specialized agencies such as UNRWA, and bodies such as the body for the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, amongst others, are useful and necessary, and we reiterate our recognition and support of them.

But without tangible steps and significant progress towards a solution of the Palestine question, all of these efforts will merely be temporary. We will not prevent the occupying power for making into reality its desire to destroy Palatine and bring it into the possibilities of a viable Palestinian state in clear violation of its obligations under international law. The only way which leads to peace and rights for Palestine to be a sovereign and independent nation is the two-nation solution. There is no other option possible other than the exercise of the inalienable right to Palestinian people to their free sovereign state, with East Jerusalem as a capital, and with a pre-1967 borders.

This must be a Palestinian nation which lives in peace with the State of Israel, with the recognized and safe borders, and which should be a full member of the United Nations. The United Nations and its Member States are morally obliged to honor the trust placed in the organization by Palestinian men and women and its political leadership for swift steps to be taken definitively towards tangible political processes to reactivate the peace process. Working towards a two-state solution, and in compliance with the United Nations Charter and the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council. We must not give in. We must not give way before the barbarity of the occupying power and the insolence of those who protect it. We must not contribute further to the huge failure which has thus far been the so-called Palestinian-Israeli peace process. We affirm our solidarity with the Palestinian people here and now. Present and future generations in Palestine and in our countries are counting on us to honor the ethical commitment which enables this organization to work for security, human rights, development, and peace for all peoples.

Thank you, Chair.

PRESIDENT: I thank the Distinguished Representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. I now give the floor to the Distinguished Representative of India.

INDIA: Mr. President, thank you for convening this important discussion on the question of Palestine today, as we mark the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. This is been a long struggle, and our support to the cause remains steadfast.

Mr. President, the Prime Minister of India, Sir Narendra Modi, in his message on this important occasion has reaffirmed India's long-standing support for the Palestinian cause while expressing hope for an early realization of a sovereign independent, united, and viable Palestine coexisting peacefully with Israel. India is proud to partner Palestine and the development and nation-building efforts. Prime Minister Modi’s message also refers to the significant upscaling of Indian contribution to the human resource development for Palestine.

Earlier this year, we had the honor of welcoming President Mahmoud Abbas on his third state visit to India. Our ongoing high-level engagement has included visits by our External Affairs Minister Mrs. Sushma Swaraj and Minister of State M.J. Akbar last year, and a visit by the President of India during 2015 to Palestine. These high-level exchanges have provided further impetus to India- Palestine development partnership. During the visit of President Abbas to India this year, agreements on promoted cooperation in the fields of agriculture, health care, IT, youth affairs, and media agencies were among those which were concluded. We are currently working together on several large development projects. These have included a Palestine-India techno park and a Palestine Institute of Diplomacy, both in Ramallah, as also an India-Palestine Center of Excellence in IT in Gaza. We are confident that these multimillion dollar projects will contribute to the long-term development capacity building.

Mr. President, India is also happy to collaborate with fellow developing countries Brazil and South Africa within the framework of IBSA in supporting other development projects in Palestine through the IBSA fund. This fund is being implemented in association with the UN office for South-South Cooperation here at the UN, and represents a unique form of South-South solidarity and cooperation. Five such projects have now been completed and three of them are slated for inauguration next month. Two of these projects, Al-Quds Hospital and Ata Habib Medical Center, are located in Gaza.

Mr. President, the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine, UNRWA, continues to do commendable work in serving the Palestinian refugees. As part of our continuing commitment to supporting that, India has also enhanced its annual core contribution to UNRWA to $1.25 million since last year.

Mr. President, may I conclude on this important occasion by extending our warm wishes to our Palestinian friends in their pursuit for peace and prosperity.

Thank you, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT: I thank the Distinguished Representative of India. I now give the floor to the Distinguished Representative of Turkey.

TURKEY: Mr. President, on the occasion of the Day of International Solidarity with the Palestinian People, I would like to start by saluting the noble struggle of the Palestinians against 50 years of occupation and oppression. The occupation has imposed a heavy burden on the Palestinian people. The Palestinians remain deprived of their right to have a decent life, dignity, and freedom. A negotiated settlement that will lead to the establishment of an independent State of Palestine within the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital remains the only way to lay the foundations for a just, comprehensive, and lasting peace. This also is the only way to achieve the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, the only way to ensure security for both sides. There is no alternative route. For any peace initiative to succeed, the parameters established by the UN resolution should be apparent. Israel’s practices in contravention of international law, particularly the somatic expansion of settlements, erode the viability of a two-state solution. Provocative steps aiming at the statutes and sanctity of al-Haram al-Sharif are not helpful for the possibility of a peaceful coexistence. All of these combined create desperation; alienated and radicalized people fuel extremism in the region.

Mr. President, amidst a challenging period the developments to watch national reconciliation and unity among the Palestinians gives us hope. We wholeheartedly welcome to the reconciliation agreement signed by our Palestinian brothers and sisters on October 12th. This significant step will enable them to express their legitimate demands with one voice. We will continue to support them in this process. Palestine is doing its part for a lasting peace. Israel is also expected to show political will towards the same end. The international community must respond to this resolute step by the Palestine. The recognition of the State of Palestine by more countries and its full integration with the international institutions is vital in this critical period. In this regard, we welcome the recent membership of the State of Palestine to INTERPOL. While the same people deserve a strong support for the two- state vision and genuine efforts to and the protracted humanitarian crisis in Gaza, here strengthening of UNRWA remains a primary goal. We need to recognize and commend the vital role of the Agency as a factor of stability in the volatile region. Pending the achievement of a just solution, it is the responsibility of all Member States to consolidate their political and financial assistance to the Agency’s mandate. Turkey will continue to address the plight of the Palestine refugees. We will also sustain our efforts to empower the Palestinian people and improve their living conditions through development and humanitarian assistance.

Mr. President, on the 50th year of occupation, we all agree on the need to revitalize the peace process. We see this as essential to grant a life and dignity to the Palestinian people and ensure stability in the region. In this regard, it is high time for the international community to uphold its responsibility and renew his engagement to reach a negotiated political settlement based on the two-state solution in accordance with the international law, relevant UN resolutions, and Arab Peace Initiative. Turkey will not cease its efforts to this end.

Thank you, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT: I thank the Distinguished Representative of Turkey. I now give the floor to the Distinguished Representative of Egypt.

EGYPT: Mr. President, the international community has agreed throughout the last 70 years that a perfect solution for the fair Palestinian cause is establishment of two states along the borders of 4th of June 1967. However, we are currently witnessing that there is a diminishing potentials of this solution on the ground due to the ongoing and growing Israeli settlement activities in 2017, including in Jerusalem, Hebron, and even some vital zones in Zone C. And notwithstanding the challenges of the diminishing possibility of the two-state solution and the frustration of the Palestinian people, especially after 23 years of signing the Oslo Agreement, which whereby the Palestinian State was supposed to be established within five years, Egypt managed recently to resume the efforts of Palestinian reconciliations and which culminated in signing an agreement to put an end to the Palestinian division in Cairo on the 12th of October. And it was acclaimed by the international community, and it also allowed the Palestinian government to—the legitimate Palestinian government to assume its role in Gaza for the first time since 2007. And this is a recognition of the unity of the Palestinians, both in the West Bank and Gaza Strip under one unified leadership, a leadership which recognizes the State of Israel and which insists on negotiations and a peaceful path for the two-state solution.

Mr. President, whereas we are making efforts with our Palestinian brothers to seize this opportunity to reunify their territories under the legitimate leadership, I would also like to call upon the international communities, especially the influential forces and powers, to seize this historic opportunity and to salvage the two-state solution. And this would only come through a comprehensive political scenario which is not temporary. Also, I would call upon them to realize the seriousness and consequences of the debacle such a solution for both the Palestinian and Israeli peoples. And for the whole region, not to mention the whole world.

In this regard, and given the call for peace and coexistence, which was addressed by the Egyptian President before the General assembly, we do urge the Palestinians and the Israelis to realize and to recognize that both peoples are here to stay on the holy land. Neither of them will vanish. So it’s their own choice either to coexist on the basis of equality in rights and obligations, or to surrender to the extreme opinions that might serve some. However, they will impose on both peoples for very long years very grave consequences due to refusing the rational solution.

Mr. President, settlement is not impossible. UN resolution special Security Council resolutions have decided already the determinants of settlement which is based on the international law and the UN Charter. And if we thoroughly read these decisions and resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative, which is a critical historical milestone, and which was supported by the Security Council in its Resolution 2334, we will realize that all issues and causes could be solved. The UN resolutions did not dictate any solutions on anybody, but they drew a context and frameworks to finally settle the cause by way of direct negotiations between both parties, and these resolutions were also very flexible.

In conclusion, Mr. President, I would like to reiterate our determination to continued working with both parties, the Palestinians and the Israelis, as well as the influential international powers, to be able to reach a just settlement which realizes the aspirations of the Palestinian people by establishing their state along the lines of 1967 with Eastern Jerusalem as its capital.

And thank you, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT: All right. I thank the Distinguished Representative Egypt for his statement. We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item for this meeting, and we shall continue the debate tomorrow morning at 10 a.m. in this hall.

Before concluding, I would like to draw the attention of members to the date of recess of the current session. Members will recall that under the second plenary meeting on the 15th September 2017, the General Assembly decided that the 72nd session would recess on Monday, 11th December 2017. However, in view of the work that remains to be completed for this part of the session, I would like to propose to the Assembly that it postponed the date of recess to Friday, 22nd December. If there is no objection, may I take that the Assembly agrees to postpone the date of recess to Friday, 22nd December, 2017?

It is so decided.

I should also like to consult members regarding an extension of the work of the Fifth Committee. Members will recall that the second plenary meeting on 15 September 2017, the General Assembly approved the recommendation of the General Committee that the Fifth Committee would complete its work by Friday, 8 December. However, I have been informed by the Chair of the Fifth Committee that the Committee requests an extension of its work to Friday, 22nd December in view that such an extension would facilitate reaching consensus on the pending resolutions before it. May I therefore take it that the General Assembly agrees to extend the work of the Fifth Committee until Friday, 22nd December, 2017?

There being no objection, it is so decided.

And the meeting is adjourned.