



# General Assembly

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## Seventy-sixth session

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**Israeli practices and settlement activities affecting the human rights of the Palestinian people and other Arabs of the occupied territories**

### **The occupied Syrian Golan**

### **Report of the Secretary-General**

#### *Summary*

The present report has been prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution [75/99](#) of 10 December 2020, in which the Secretary-General was requested to report to the Assembly at its seventy-sixth session on the implementation of the resolution. It includes a summary of communications received from the Governments of the Syrian Arab Republic, Iraq and Cuba.

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\* [A/76/150](#).



## I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution [75/99](#), adopted on 10 December 2020, in which the Assembly called upon Israel, the occupying Power, to comply with the relevant resolutions on the occupied Syrian Golan. The Assembly highlighted, in particular, Security Council resolution [497 \(1981\)](#), in which the Council, inter alia, decided that the Israeli decision to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration on the occupied Syrian Golan was null and void and without international legal effect, and demanded that Israel rescind forthwith its decision.
2. Also in resolution [75/99](#), the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to the Assembly at its seventy-sixth session on the implementation of the resolution.

## II. Implementation of resolution [75/99](#)

3. On 23 April 2021, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), on behalf of the Secretary-General, addressed a note verbale to the Government of Israel referring to resolution [75/99](#) and requesting information on any steps taken or envisaged to be taken concerning the implementation of the resolution. At the time of reporting, no response had been received from the Government of Israel.
4. Also on 23 April 2021, and on behalf of the Secretary-General, OHCHR addressed a note verbale to all permanent missions in Geneva to draw their attention to the resolution and to request information on any steps taken, or envisaged to be taken, concerning the implementation of the resolution. Responses were received from Cuba, Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic.
5. On the same day and on behalf of the Secretary-General, OHCHR addressed a note verbale to the competent United Nations organs, specialized agencies, international and regional intergovernmental organizations and international humanitarian organizations, bringing the resolution to their attention. At the time of reporting, no replies had been received.
6. On 3 May 2021, the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic addressed a note verbale to OHCHR, underscoring that the international community had been demanding for decades that Israel, the occupying Power, comply with United Nations resolutions concerning the occupied Syrian Golan, in particular, Security Council resolution [497 \(1981\)](#). That resolution stipulated, among other things, the invalidity of the decision of the occupying Power on 14 December 1981, to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration on the occupied Syrian Golan, and considered the decision null and void, with no legitimacy.
7. The Syrian Arab Republic noted that the General Assembly had rejected the occupation by Israel of the Syrian Golan since 1967, and demanded that Israel withdraw from the entire occupied Syrian Golan according to the 4 June 1967 border, including in the recent resolution [75/24](#).
8. The Syrian Arab Republic emphasized that, despite the repeated demands of the United Nations for the occupying Power to end its continued occupation of the Syrian Golan, to stop its daily repressive practices against the Syrian citizens living under occupation and to stop its violations of international law, the calls of the international community had had no deterrent effect. The Syrian Arab Republic asserted that Israel continued to act with impunity, protected from accountability by some members of the Security Council.

9. The Syrian Arab Republic reiterated its condemnation of the illegal decision by the then President of the United States of America, in which he recognized “Israeli sovereignty” over the occupied Syrian Golan. The Syrian Arab Republic asserted that that decision was a flagrant violation of international law, the Charter of the United Nations and relevant United Nations resolutions, the foremost of which is Security Council resolution 497 (1981).

10. The Syrian Arab Republic recalled international reactions condemning the action of the United States (see A/75/328, para. 9).

11. The Syrian Arab Republic noted that the residents of the occupied Syrian Golan had expressed their rejection of the attempt by Israel to impose its laws and establish its legitimacy in the occupied Syrian Golan by holding elections for local councils in the territory. The residents of the occupied Syrian Golan had boycotted these elections despite the Israeli authorities’ suppression of protests and the arrest of large numbers of persons.

12. The Syrian Arab Republic reiterated its condemnation of the project to build wind turbines on the private property of Syrian Arab residents of the occupied Syrian Golan, noting that the aim of the project was to perpetuate the occupation, including through the construction and expansion of settlements and the confiscation of agricultural land. The Syrian Arab Republic described how, under the project, Israel had granted an Israeli energy company a licence to build between 45 and 52 wind turbines on farmland in the occupied Syrian Golan. The Syrian Arab Republic warned of a range of specific issues in the context of the project, including the following:

(a) The project would be constructed on 6,000 dunums of private farmland owned by Syrian Arab residents of the Golan who live in the nearby villages, despite mass protests against the project by the area’s residents. It would restrict the growth of nearby villages, resulting in higher-density population areas in these already densely populated villages, and would lead to health, environmental and agriculture damage, which would negatively affect the livelihoods of the Syrian Arab population. The project would claim one fifth of all farmland available to the Syrian Arab residents of the occupied Syrian Golan;

(b) A high voltage power line to carry electricity from the wind turbines to the Israeli settlement of Katzrin, as well as a new power station, would also be established.

(c) The decision of Israel to allow the company to implement the project on agricultural lands owned by the Syrian Arab population reflected a continued discriminatory settlement policy, of which the project was clearly a part;

(d) On 12 July 2020, representatives of the company reportedly entered the agricultural lands belonging to the Syrian Arab residents of the occupied Syrian Golan with the escort and protection of large numbers of Israeli security forces. Roads leading to the lands of nearly 1,000 Syrian Arab farmers were closed in order to allow the company to begin its work. Hundreds of people gathered to protest and affirm their opposition to the project and its destructive impact;

(e) In response to the project, the population of the occupied Syrian Golan announced a general strike and went to the land in question to protest the decision and prevent the authorities and the company from beginning implementation of the project. Israeli security forces reportedly responded with repression and intimidation, and protestors were injured and subject to arrest.

13. The Syrian Arab Republic condemned what it described as pressure applied by the Government of Israel on the populations of Syrian Arab villages in the occupied territory to accept ownership deeds issued by the Israeli Land Registry instead of ownership deeds issued by the Syrian Arab Republic. The Syrian Arab Republic noted

that residents had been threatened with the confiscation of their land if they did not accept the property documents issued by the Land Registry. The Syrian Arab Republic also referred to demands by the Israeli authorities for submission of land ownership certificates of Syrian Arabs, in particular those in Ayn Quniyah and the industrial area in Majdal Shams. The authorities also reportedly threatened to confiscate those lands if the documents were not submitted.

14. The Syrian Arab Republic described several policies implemented by Israel aimed at perpetuating its occupation of the Syrian Golan, including the construction and expansion of settlements, the confiscation of agricultural lands and the establishment of an agricultural industry that supports Israeli settlers and aims to harm the agricultural industry of the Syrian Arab residents of the occupied territory. In particular, the Syrian Arab Republic highlighted the following:

(a) The regional council of Israeli settlements continued to announce, in its weekly bulletin, the expansion of settlements in the light of the increasing number of Israeli settlers. The pace of the construction of temporary homes or caravans was accelerating, with plans to create longer-term residences. This was also seen in the case of the settlements of Odem and Aniam. Work continued on the construction of so-called service facilities for the settlements in Katzrin, Kedmat Zvi, Nov, Kanaf, Neve Ativ and Yonatan. The number of settlers in Katzrin settlement has increased by 2,000 new settlers since 2019, according to the Central Bureau of Statistics of Israel;

(b) The implementation of a multi-year plan to develop and strengthen agriculture in the 33 existing Israeli settlements in the occupied Syrian Golan had begun, encouraging Israeli youth to join the agricultural sector;

(c) In April 2019, Israel announced plans to expand settlements, which included the construction of 30,000 housing units, the construction of new settlements and the transfer of 250,000 settlers to the occupied Syrian Golan, which would change the demographic composition of the area;

(d) Israel had supported the seizure of land by Israeli settlers and the exploitation of land by the settlements for the purpose of producing various agricultural products. The Syrian Arab Republic explained that that constituted an unbearable economic burden on the Syrian Arab inhabitants of the occupied Syrian Golan, noting that unfair competition due to discriminatory policies threatened the future livelihood of the Syrian Arab population, which depended on agriculture;

(e) In June 2019, a new settlement project bearing the name of former United States President Trump was started. The regional council of settlements announced the arrival of new temporary homes to accommodate 20 families of new settlers who were accepted to live in the settlement, out of 300 families who submitted applications. These families would be given a piece of land on which to build permanent homes in the settlement. The regional council of settlements started building infrastructure and social facilities in the settlement to receive these 20 families during the months of December 2020 and January 2021;

(f) Israel continued to impose restrictions on the Syrian Arab residents of the occupied Syrian Golan to prevent building and expansion of villages, especially in the village of Majdal Shams. The dense overcrowding of this area was exacerbated after the confiscation of more than 80,000 dunams, extending from north of Majdal Shams to Ayn Quniyah, reportedly in the name of the Hermon Protectorate project;

(g) Israel gave the necessary approvals to start building settlement neighbourhoods and associated facilities in the occupied Syrian Golan, which the planning and construction committee approved in its first meeting for the year 2021. Plans included the construction of a 200-room hotel and three tourist housing complexes next to the two largest nature reserves in the occupied Syrian Golan, in

addition to the establishment of a theme park with an area of 900 acres in the settlement of Katzrin, which is essentially built on the ruins of the Syrian village of Kasserine.

15. The Syrian Arab Republic noted that Israel continued to exploit natural resources in the occupied Syrian Golan, and that Israeli and multinational companies played a central role in implementing the policies of Israel, which the Syrian Arab Republic described as colonial. Exploitation of water was raised as a particular concern by the Syrian Arab Republic, which noted that the occupying Power had adopted several methods for the confiscation of natural resources, including water, in violation of human rights, including the following:

(a) The confiscation of lands close to the ceasefire line and the planting of landmines in these lands;

(b) The confiscation of lands for the establishment of military camps and sites and for the construction of roads, including on lands far from the ceasefire line;

(c) The confiscation of land for the construction of settlements and agricultural and industrial facilities;

(d) The fencing off of 100,000 dunams of land, placed at the disposal of the Nature Protection Authority;

(e) The indirect confiscation of lands through the *meshkanta* process, which involved giving an agricultural loan against a mortgage to an Israeli bank and confiscating the property if the loan was not paid in full within a specified time period;

(f) The confiscation and sale of potable water, and the limiting of access of the Syrian Arab population to non-potable water sources only, with access to potable water only at an inflated price, as well as preventing Syrian farmers from digging wells and storing irrigated water;

16. The Syrian Arab Republic recalled the recent expropriation of tens of thousands of dunums of land in the Syrian village of Jubbata al-Khashab, which lay within the demilitarized zone established by the United Nations in 1974, with the aim of building trenches close to Syrian territory. According to the Syrian Arab Republic, tens of thousands of dunums of land belonging to the village were consequently inaccessible to the Syrian Arab population of the village.

17. The Syrian Arab Republic noted that Israel had continuously sought to impose Israeli identity and civil documents on the Syrian Arab population as a way to consolidate the occupation. Furthermore, Israel continued to prevent Syrian Arab residents of the occupied Syrian Golan from visiting and communicating with their families in Syria.

18. The Syrian Arab Republic noted that Israel continued to violate the human rights of Syrian Arabs in the occupied Syrian Golan, in particular the rights to health and work and agricultural and cultural rights. These rights were violated through a set of discriminatory practices and measures taken by Israeli forces.

19. The Syrian Arab Republic emphasized the need to address the right to health for the Syrian Arab residents of the occupied Syrian Golan and called on international organizations, in particular the World Health Organization, to provide urgent health and medical supplies in the context of the spread of the COVID-19 virus, in particular due to the lack of medical services in the occupied Syrian Golan as a result of discriminatory and racist practices implemented by Israel.

20. The Syrian Arab Republic reiterated its rejection of attempts to perpetuate the occupation of the Syrian Golan by Israel, and its continued violation of international law, in particular the relevant Security Council resolutions and the provisions of the

Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949 (Fourth Geneva Convention) in the occupied Syrian Golan. The Syrian Arab Republic further rejected any form of support provided by other Member States to this approach, which would be in violation of their international obligations as Member States of the United Nations.

21. The Syrian Arab Republic reiterated its call to Member States to promote international law to pressure Israel, the occupying Power, to end its occupation of the Syrian Golan, and not to recognize any legal situation arising from violations of peremptory norms of international law by Israel. Furthermore, the Syrian Arab Republic called on Member States to refrain from providing any assistance to the occupation.

22. The Syrian Arab Republic further called on the Secretary-General to compile and report on all business establishments and commercial companies involved in activities that have enabled or that would enable, directly or indirectly, and benefit from, the construction and growth of settlements in the occupied Syrian Golan, in violation of international law and Security Council resolutions, including resolution [497 \(1981\)](#).

23. The Syrian Arab Republic stressed, in particular, the need to refrain from providing political and economic support that would allow Israel to perpetuate its occupation of the occupied Syrian Golan, and to continue its violations of relevant provisions of international law, in particular Security Council resolution [497 \(1981\)](#) and the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention, highlighting, in particular, any assistance to the continuation of Israeli settlements and/or the establishment of new settlements in the occupied Syrian Golan.

24. The Syrian Arab Republic also called on the international community and international organizations to monitor the flagrant violations of international law by Israel, and called for effective and concrete measures to be taken to stop these violations, in particular those related to illegal settlement practices aimed at prolonging and perpetuating the occupation.

25. The Syrian Arab Republic reaffirmed that the occupied Syrian Golan was an inseparable part of the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic and that its recovery from Israel, by all means guaranteed by international law, was an eternal right that was not subject to bargaining, concession or a statute of limitations.

26. Finally, the Syrian Arab Republic emphasized that the stability of the Middle East region and the credibility of the United Nations required measures to be taken to ensure the implementation of all international resolutions related to ending the occupation of the occupied Arab territories, including the Syrian Golan, and withdrawal to the line of 4 June 1967, following the relevant United Nations resolutions, in particular [242 \(1967\)](#), [338 \(1973\)](#), [497 \(1981\)](#) and [2334 \(2016\)](#).

27. On 26 May 2021, the Permanent Mission of Iraq addressed a note verbale to OHCHR affirming its position in support of the international prohibition on the acquisition of territory by force and also stressing the importance of all resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council regarding the identity of the occupied Syrian Golan, in addition to condemning the illegal Israeli occupation.

28. Iraq emphasized the need to respect the purposes and objectives of the United Nations related to the need to ensure respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of States and the application of international resolutions related to the occupied Syrian Golan.

29. Iraq reiterated its position rejecting settlement expansion and other commercial projects of Israel in the occupied Syrian Golan, in addition to rejecting all policies which impact the economic situation of the Syrian people of Golan.

30. Iraq affirmed the right of return of the displaced people, and stressed the illegality of the measures taken by Israel to impose its laws and jurisdiction on the lands that it occupied, including the occupied Syrian Golan. Iraq also rejected the local elections that were conducted by Israel in the occupied Syrian Golan and reaffirmed the importance of complying with the Fourth Geneva Convention.
31. Iraq expressed concern about reports of the United Nations that showed the extent of the suffering of the Syrian Arab people in the occupied Syrian Golan and requested the United Nations to exercise its role in ending this suffering and the illegal occupation.
32. The Permanent Mission of Cuba addressed a note verbale to OHCHR on 5 July 2021, noting that the international community had reiterated its concern about the suffering of Syrian Arab residents in the occupied Syrian Golan due to systematic and continuous violations of their human rights by Israel since 1967, and that the international community had demanded an end to the occupation of the Syrian Golan.
33. Cuba noted that it considered that all actions, measures or legislative or administrative provisions adopted by Israel or that it could undertake, aimed at modifying the legal status, physical character and demographic composition of the occupied Syrian Golan and its institutional structure, as well as attempts by Israel to apply its jurisdiction and administration in the illegally occupied territory, should be recognized as null and void, without legal validity or effect.
34. Cuba emphasized that it was unacceptable that the illegal military occupation of the Syrian Golan by Israel had continued since 14 December 1981, despite the sustained demand by the international community for the de facto Israeli imposition of laws, jurisdiction and administration of the territory to cease. Cuba emphasized, in particular, that the acquisition of territory by force was inadmissible under international law and prohibited by the Charter of the United Nations.
35. Cuba rejected practices by Israel aimed at controlling and seizing the resources of the occupied Syrian Golan, in contravention of the resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council regarding the permanent sovereignty of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over its natural resources.
36. Cuba strongly condemned the declaration of the then President of the United States recognizing the occupied Syrian Golan as territory of Israel, noting that this constituted a serious and flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations, of international law and of Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution [497 \(1981\)](#). Cuba emphasized that this declaration violated the legitimate interests of the Syrian people and the Arab and Islamic nations, with serious consequences for stability and security in the Middle East and the growing escalation of tensions in this region.
37. Cuba urged the Security Council to fulfil the responsibility provided for by the United Nations Charter for the maintenance of international peace and security, and to adopt the necessary decisions to stop action by the United States to support Israel in its intentions to annex the occupied Syrian Golan.
38. Cuba called on Israel to cease degrading practices contrary to the full enjoyment of human rights for Syrian Arab inhabitants of the occupied territory, and to desist from the application of repressive measures against them. Cuba further highlighted that foreign occupation, policies of expansion and aggression, racial discrimination, the creation of settlements, the creation of a so-called *fait accompli* and the annexation by force of foreign territories, as has occurred in the occupied Syrian Golan, were practices that violated international instruments and standards and that had a negative impact on the human rights of the Syrian people.

39. Cuba condemned violations of international humanitarian law committed by Israel in relation to Syrian Arab detainees in the occupied territory and reiterated its concern that these practices continue, highlighting, in particular, the maintenance of inhumane conditions in prisons created by Israel, an issue that has caused deterioration of health and endangered the lives of these people.

40. Cuba called on Israel to immediately withdraw from the entire territory of the occupied Syrian Golan up to the 4 June 1967 line, in compliance with Security Council resolutions [242 \(1967\)](#) and [338 \(1973\)](#), and renounce its intention to annex the Golan, territory which is under Syrian sovereignty. Cuba emphasized that the continued illegal occupation of the Syrian Golan, and its de facto annexation, constitute an obstacle to the achievement of a just, complete and lasting peace in the region.

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