



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 28th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. NOWORYTA (Poland)

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AGENDA ITEM 77: REPORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE ISRAELI PRACTICES
AFFECTING THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE POPULATION OF THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

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The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 77: REPORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE ISRAELI PRACTICES AFFECTING THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE POPULATION OF THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES (A/43/694)

1. The CHAIRMAN drew attention to the documentation on the item under consideration and more particularly to a number of letters from the following countries: Jordan (A/43/63, A/43/118, A/43/166, A/43/213, A/43/273, A/43/275, A/43/277, A/43/278, A/43/323, A/43/348, A/43/386, A/43/393, A/43/420 and A/43/784), Tunisia (A/43/62, A/43/109 and A/43/340), Bahrain (A/43/115, A/43/116 and A/43/176), Mauritania (A/43/504, A/43/540 and A/43/573), Kuwait (A/43/90 and A/43/94) and Zimbabwe (A/43/613 and A/43/709), as well as letters from the representatives of Greece, Morocco, Spain, Israel, the Syrian Arab Republic, Algeria, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Iraq, Greece and Saudi Arabia, contained in documents A/43/60, A/43/114, A/43/177 and Corr.1, A/43/317, A/43/347, A/43/407, A/43/452, A/43/459 and A/43/549 respectively.
2. Mr. PERERA (Sri Lanka), speaking in his capacity as Chairman of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Population of the Occupied Territories, introduced the Committee's report (A/43/694) for the period 4 September 1987-26 August 1988. In spite of efforts made in that direction, the Government of Israel had persisted in its lack of co-operation with the Special Committee, which had been denied the opportunity to visit the occupied territories in order to inform itself of the situation in situ. The Committee had therefore based its report on oral evidence received through testimonies and written information gathered from various sources, including the views of the Governments concerned. In carrying out its mandate, the Special Committee had benefited from the co-operation of the Governments of Egypt, the Syrian Arab Republic and Jordan, and of the Palestine Liberation Organization. The above-mentioned constraints notwithstanding, the Special Committee had attempted to provide a faithful and composite picture of the human rights situation in the occupied territories.
3. As stated in paragraph 23 of the report, the Special Committee had relied upon the following international instruments in carrying out its mandate: the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 1949, the Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War of 1949, the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict of 1954, the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907 respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.
4. As the Special Committee stressed in its conclusions in section V of the report, the overall picture drawn from the information available to it reflected a new phase in the evolution of the situation in the occupied territories, characterized by a level of violence and repression without precedent in the 21 years of occupation. That tragic development stemmed from the fact that occupation in itself constituted a violation of human rights. As could be seen

(Mr. Perera, Sri Lanka)

from the information contained in section IV, that new phase, which had coincided with the start of the uprising of the Palestinian population against the occupation, had been marked by a further outburst of violence and repressive measures, resulting in constant unrest and disturbances, a heavy toll of casualties among the civilian population and a worsening of living conditions in the occupied territories. The Special Committee had noted the increasing recourse to collective punishment, such as the demolition of houses, the imposition of prolonged curfews, harsh economic sanctions, and various restrictions on such fundamental freedoms as the rights to freedom of movement, worship, expression, association and education. The period under review had also seen an unprecedented number of expulsions of Palestinians from the occupied territories in flagrant violation of the relevant provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention. The new situation in the territories had also engendered numerous detentions and an aggravation of already difficult conditions of detention.

5. In view of those developments, the Special Committee had stressed in its conclusions that the responsibility of the international community was more manifest than ever before and that urgent measures must be taken in order to prevent a further deterioration of the situation and ensure effective protection of the basic rights of civilians in the occupied territories. Such protection could only be assured, in the long run, through the negotiation of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict acceptable to all concerned. The Special Committee had referred to a number of measures which, pending such a settlement, could contribute to the restoration of the basic human rights of the civilians in the occupied territories.

6. The Special Committee sincerely hoped that its report might serve as a means of assessing the gravity of the plight of the civilian population in the occupied territories and the urgent need to improve its conditions.

7. Mr. MANSOUR (Observer, Palestine Liberation Organization)* said that he was pleased and proud to address the Committee only two days after the birth of the independent Palestinian State and the proclamation at Algiers, at dawn on 15 November 1988, of the Declaration of Independence. He conveyed to the Chairman and the members of the Committee the greetings of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization, which had been entrusted with the responsibilities and powers of a provisional government pending the establishment of such a government. The Palestinian people and all friendly peoples were currently living through an historic moment.

8. On behalf of the delegation of the Palestine Liberation Organization to the United Nations, he paid tribute to the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Population of the Occupied Territories for the quality of its report (A/43/694). He particularly congratulated the

* This statement has been given full coverage in the summary record in accordance with the decision taken by the Committee at its 29th meeting.

(Mr. Mansour, Observer, PLO)

Chairman of the Committee, Ambassador Daya R. Perera, for his praiseworthy efforts, and his predecessor, Ambassador Wijeswardane. He reiterated the willingness of the Palestine Liberation Organization to continue to co-operate with the Committee in order to facilitate its task and enable it to perform its mission fully. Israel, for its part, persisted in its policy aimed at paralysing the work of the Committee and preventing it from visiting the occupied Palestinian and Arab territories, in renewed violation of the resolutions of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

9. In its statement to the General Assembly on 3 November 1988 during the debate on the uprising, his delegation had described in detail the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories. It would therefore be superfluous to repeat that description, and he invited representatives to refer again to the text of the statement in question. In that statement, mention had been made of the forthcoming nineteenth extraordinary session of the Palestine National Council, which had in fact taken place in Algeria from 12 to 15 November 1988. In view of the historic importance of the decisions taken by the Council and their direct relevance to the ongoing work of the Special Committee and the debate that would take place in the General Assembly when the item on the question of Palestine was considered, it was appropriate to quote the following passages from the Council's Political Communiqué:

10. "Our people has defied all attempts by the enemy authorities to put an end to our popular revolution, despite all the authorities' ploys of terror, oppression, killing, imprisonment, expulsion, desecration of Islamic and Christian holy places, violation of the freedom of places of worship, confiscation of land, demolition of houses, perpetration of deliberate crimes of murder, unleashing of armed settlers against our villages and our camps, burning of crops, severing of water and electricity supplies, beating of women and children, use of stinging gases - leading to thousands of deaths and miscarriages - and conduct of a policy of obscurantism through the closure of schools and universities.

11. Our people has paid the price for this heroic defiance with the lives of hundreds of martyrs and the sufferings of tens of thousands who have been wounded, injured, detained and expelled. The ingenuity of our people has always throughout these trying times been ready to invent ways and means of battle which enhance its defiance and resistance, its ability to confront the crimes and practices of the enemy and, consequently, to continue its heroic and determined struggle.

12. By means of its defiance, the continuation of its revolution and the escalation of its uprising, our people has proved its determination to continue the struggle, whatever the sacrifices, to the utmost limits. It does so armed with a magnificent fighting heritage, an unbending revolutionary determination and a deep-rooted national unity which has been further and further strengthened through and around the intifadah, both inside and outside the homeland, together with its all-embracing loyalty to its national leadership, the Palestine Liberation Organization, and the adherence of our people to the objectives of defeating and eliminating the Israeli occupation and attaining its inalienable national rights to return, to exercise self-determination and to establish the independent Palestinian State.

(~~Mr. Mansour, Observer, PLO~~)

13. Our people has throughout this process relied on the support of the masses and forces of the Arab community, their solidarity with it and backing of it. This has been demonstrated in the broad popular Arab support received by the uprising, in the official Arab consensus expressed during the Arab Summit Conference at Algiers and the resolutions adopted at that Conference, affirming that our people is not alone in confronting the racist Fascist assault and thwarting any possibility of its isolation by the Israeli aggressors, in view of the support provided to it by the Arab community and their backing of its holy war.

14. In addition to this Arab solidarity, our people's revolution and the glorious uprising have enjoyed broad international endorsement, as demonstrated by the increasing understanding of the Palestinian people's cause, the growth of backing and support among the peoples and nations of the world for our just struggle and, in contrast, their condemnation of the Israeli occupation and its crimes, thus contributing to the disgrace of Israel, its increasing isolation and the isolation of its backers and supporters.

15. Security Council resolutions 605 (1987), 607 (1988) and 608 (1988) and those General Assembly resolutions which confirm Palestinian rights against the expulsion of Palestinians from their land, and against the repression and terror practised by Israel against the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territories, have constituted one of the strong manifestations of international public opinion's increasing support, including that of official opinion, for our people and its representative, the Palestine Liberation Organization, against the Israeli occupation and its racist Fascist practices.

16. General Assembly resolution 43/21 of 3 November 1988, which was adopted at a meeting devoted to the intifadah, provides further evidence that the overwhelming majority of the peoples and nations of the world oppose the occupation and support the just struggle of the Palestinian people and its inalienable right to liberation and independence.

17. The inhuman and abhorrent crimes and practices of the occupation have given the lie to the Zionist propaganda about democracy in the Zionist entity, which has deceived international public opinion for 40 years. The true face of Israel has been made apparent: a colonialist, racist, Fascist State based on the seizure of Palestinian land, extermination of the Palestinian people and, in addition, threats, aggression and expansionism in neighbouring Arab territories. What this means is that the occupation can no longer continue to reap its fruits at the expense of the rights of the Palestinian people unless it pays the price for doing so, either in the field or at the level of international public opinion.

18. Apart from those Israeli democratic and progressive forces which have rejected the occupation, condemned it, and deplored its oppressive practices and measures, Jewish groups throughout the world are no longer able to continue defending Israel or to remain silent about its crimes against the Palestinian people. Many voices have been raised within these groups in calls for an end to such crimes and for Israel's withdrawal from the occupied territories, in order to enable the Palestinian people to exercise its right to self-determination.

(Mr. Mansour, Observer, PLQ)

19. Among the gamut of results and effects at the local, Arab and international levels of our people's revolution and glorious uprising, there has been affirmation of the practical correctness of the Palestine Liberation Organization's national programme, which advocates defeat of the occupation, the right to return, self-determination and the independent State. It has also been affirmed that our people's struggle is the decisive factor in ensuring that our national rights are wrested from the claws of the occupation and that it is the authority of the popular masses, as represented by their committees, which controls the situation and confronts the occupation authority and its crumbling apparatus. It has also been affirmed that the international community is now more than ever prepared to help bring about a political settlement of the Middle East problem and the basis of that problem, the question of Palestine, and that the Israeli occupation authorities, with the United States Administration behind them, cannot maintain their policy of no response to the will of the international community, which is today agreed on the need to hold the International Peace Conference on the Middle East and to enable the Palestinian people to attain their national rights, including first and foremost the right to self-determination and to exercise its national independence in its own territory.

20. Accordingly, in corroboration of our people's defiance and its glorious uprising, in response to the will of our masses inside and outside the occupied homeland, and in faithful memory of those who have been killed, injured and detained, the Palestine National Council decides as follows:

1. With regard to the intensification and continuation of the uprising:

- (a) To provide all means and possibilities for the intensification of our people's uprising, at all levels and by all methods, with a view to ensuring its continuation and escalation;
- (b) To support the mass institutions and organizations in the occupied Palestinian territories;
- (c) To strengthen and develop the popular committees and the specialized cadres of the masses and the trade unions, in order to enhance their effectiveness and role, including attack groups and the popular army;
- (d) To consolidate the national unity which has displayed itself and taken root during the uprising;
- (e) To step up action at the international level with a view to securing the release of detainees, the return of those expelled and a halt to the operations of official organized repression and terror against our children, our women, our men and our institutions;
- (f) To invite the United Nations to place the occupied Palestinian territories under international supervision, in order to protect our masses and to terminate the Israeli occupation;

(Mr. Mansour, Observer, PLO)

- (g) To call on the Palestinian masses outside the homeland to intensify and increase their support and to base such action on family solidarity;
- (h) To invite the masses, forces, institutions and Governments of the Arab community to increase their political, material and media support to the uprising;
- (i) To call on free and noble men throughout the world to stand by our masses, our revolution and our uprising in opposing the Israeli occupation, its methods of repression and organized official military Fascist terrorism, as practised by the forces of the occupation army, armed individuals and fanatic settlers against our masses, our universities, our schools, our institutions, our national economy and our Islamic and Christian holy places.

21. In the political field:

Pursuant to all the preceding remarks, the Palestine National Council - in accordance with its responsibility towards the Palestinian people, its national rights and its desire for peace, on the basis of the Declaration of Independence issued on 15 November 1988, and as an expression of the humanitarian desire to strive for the reinforcement of international détente, nuclear disarmament and the settlement of regional disputes by peaceful means - affirms the determination of the Palestine Liberation Organization to reach a comprehensive political settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict and of its essence, the question of Palestine, within the framework of the Charter of the United Nations, the principles and provisions of international legitimacy, the rules of international law, the resolutions of the United Nations - the most recent being Security Council resolutions 605 (1987), 607 (1988) and 608 (1988) - and the resolutions of the Arab summit conferences, in a manner that ensures the right of the Palestinian Arab people to return, to exercise self-determination and to establish its independent national State on its national soil, while also making arrangements for the security and peace of every State in the region.

22. With a view to putting this affirmation into practice, the Palestine National Council insists on the following:

- (a) The need to convene the international conference, which will produce effective results, on the subject of the Middle East problem and its essence, the question of Palestine, under the auspices of the United Nations and with the participation of the permanent members of the Security Council and all parties to the conflict in the region, including the Palestine Liberation Organization, the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, on an equal footing, with the provision that the said international conference shall be convened on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and of the assurance of the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people, first and foremost among which is the right to self-determination, in accordance with the principles and provisions of the Charter of the United Nations concerning the right to self-determination of peoples, the inadmissibility of seizure of land belonging to others by means of force or military invasion, and in accordance with United Nations resolutions concerning the question of Palestine;

(Mr. Mansour, Observer, PLO)

(b) Israel's withdrawal from all the Palestinian and Arab territories which it has occupied since 1967, including Arab Jerusalem;

(c) Cancellation of all measures of attachment and annexation and removal of the settlements established by Israel in the Palestinian and Arab territories since the year 1967;

(d) A determined effort to place the occupied Palestinian territories, including Arab Jerusalem, under United Nations supervision for a limited period, in order to protect our people and to provide an atmosphere conducive to a successful outcome for the international conference, the attainment of a comprehensive political settlement and the establishment of security and peace for all through mutual acceptance and satisfaction, and in order to enable the Palestinian State to exercise its effective authority over those territories;

(e) Solution of the Palestine refugee problem in accordance with United Nations resolutions on that subject;

(f) Assurance of freedom of worship and the practice of religious rites at the holy places in Palestine for adherents of all religions;

(g) The Security Council's establishment and assurance of arrangements for security and peace among all the concerned States in the region, including the Palestinian State.

23. The Palestine National Council expresses its profound gratitude to those States, forces and world organizations which support Palestinian national rights and affirms its desire to strengthen links of friendship and co-operation with its friends (the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China), the other socialist States, non-aligned countries, Islamic, African and Latin American States and other friendly countries. The Council is pleased to note the manifestations of a positive development in the positions of certain Western European countries and Japan with respect to increased support for the rights of the Palestinian people, and backing for that people. It welcomes that development and urges the promotion of efforts to extend it.

24. The National Council affirms the fraternal solidarity of the Palestinian people and the Palestine Liberation Organization with the struggle for liberation and greater independence of the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America. It condemns all attempts by the United States to threaten the independence of countries in Central America and to interfere in their affairs.

25. The Palestine National Council expresses the support and backing of the Palestine Liberation Organization for the national liberation movements in South Africa and Namibia, under the leadership of the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO), and addresses a special greeting to Nelson Mandela in his struggle against the racist Pretoria régime. It urges that the peoples of those two countries be enabled to attain their freedom and independence. The Council also expresses its support and backing for the African front-line States and its condemnation of the racist South African régime's acts of aggression against them.

(Mr. Mansour, Observer, PLO)

26. As it watches with deep concern the continuing growth of Fascist forces and Israeli extremism, and the escalation of their overt calls for implementation of a policy of genocide and the individual and collective expulsion of our people from its homeland, the Council calls for the intensification of action and efforts at all levels to confront this Fascist threat. At the same time, the Council expresses its appreciation of the courageous role played by the Israeli forces for peace in their defiance and humiliation of the Fascist and racist forces and of aggression, in their support for our people's struggle and valiant uprising and in their endorsement of our people's right to exercise self-determination and to establish its independent State. The Council affirms its previous resolutions with regard to the strengthening and development of relations with those democratic forces.

27. The Palestine National Council also addresses an appeal to the various forums of the people of the United States to endeavour to halt the United States Administration's policy of denying the national rights of the Palestinian people, including its sacred right to self-determination. It calls upon all sectors of the United States population to work towards the adoption of policies which are consistent with international rules, conventions and resolutions on the subject of human rights and serve the desired purpose of bringing about peace in the Middle East and ensuring security for all its peoples, including the Palestinian people."

28. He then read out some excerpts from the Declaration of Independence:

"The State of Palestine shall be for Palestinians, wherever they may be, therein to develop their national and cultural identity and therein to enjoy full equality of rights. Their religious and political beliefs and human dignity shall therein be safeguarded under a democratic parliamentary system based on freedom of opinion and the freedom to form parties, on the heed of the majority for minority rights and the respect of minorities for majority decisions, on social justice and equality, and on non-discrimination in civil rights on grounds of race, religion or colour or as between men and women, under a Constitution ensuring the rule of law and an independent judiciary and on the basis of true fidelity to the age-old spiritual and cultural heritage of Palestine with respect to mutual tolerance, coexistence and magnanimity among religions.

29. The State of Palestine shall be an Arab State and shall be an integral part of the Arab nation, of its heritage and civilization and of its present endeavour for the achievement of the goals of liberation, development, democracy and unity. In affirming its commitment to the Pact of the League of Arab States and its concern for the strengthening of joint Arab action, the State of Palestine calls upon the members of the Arab nation for their assistance in achieving its de facto emergence by mobilizing their capacities and intensifying the efforts made to bring the Israeli occupation to an end.

30. The State of Palestine declares its commitment to the purposes and principles of the United Nations, to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and to the policy and principles of non-alignment.

(Mr. Mansour, Observer, PLQ)

31. The State of Palestine, in declaring that it is a peace-loving State committed to the principles of peaceful coexistence, shall strive, together with all other States and peoples, for the achievement of a lasting peace based on justice and respect for rights, under which the human potential for constructive activity may flourish, mutual competition may centre on life-sustaining innovation and there is no fear for the future, since the future bears only assurance for those who have acted justly or made amends to justice.

32. In the context of its struggle to bring peace to a land of peace and love, the State of Palestine calls upon the United Nations, which bears a special responsibility towards the Palestinian Arab people and its homeland, and upon the peace-loving States and peoples of the world and those that cherish freedom to assist it in achieving its goals, in bringing the plight of its people to an end, in ensuring the safety and security of that people and in endeavouring to end the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory.

33. The State of Palestine further declares, in that connection, that it believes in the solution of international and regional problems by peaceful means in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the resolutions adopted by it, and that, without prejudice to its natural right to defend itself, it rejects the threat or use of force, violence and intimidation against its territorial integrity and political independence or those of any other State.

34. On this momentous day, the fifteenth day of November 1988, as we stand on the threshold of a new era, we bow our heads in deference and humility to the departed souls of our martyrs and the martyrs of the Arab nation who, by virtue of the pure blood shed by them, have lit the glimmer of this auspicious dawn and who have died so that the homeland might live. We lift up our hearts so that they may be filled with light from the radiance of the hallowed uprising, of the epic resistance of those in the camps, in the dispersion and in exile, and of those who have borne the banner of freedom: our children, our elders and our youth; our prisoners, detainees and wounded based on the hallowed soil and in every camp, village and city; the valiant Palestinian women, the guardians of our life and our survival and keepers of our eternal flame. To the spirits of our righteous martyrs, to the masses of our Palestinian Arab people and our Arab nation and to all free and honourable men, we give our solemn pledge to continue the struggle for an end to the occupation and the establishment of sovereignty and independence.

35. We call upon our great people to rally to the Palestinian flag, to take pride in it and to defend it so that it shall remain forever a symbol of our freedom and dignity in a homeland that shall be forever free and the abode of a people of free men."

36. Mr. SALAH (Jordan) expressed the hope that the Special Committee's report (A/43/694), despite the concision imposed on it by financial constraints and the difficulties raised by Israel, would alert world public opinion to the indescribable suffering endured by the Palestinian people and the need to put an end to the occupation. The humanitarian aspect of the human rights situation in the occupied territories could not be dissociated from the political aspects of the question, namely Israeli designs on those territories.

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(Mr. Salah, Jordan)

37. Israeli policy towards the occupied territories and their inhabitants continued to be dictated by administrative, economic and security measures aimed at the annexation of the territories and the obliteration of the national identity of their inhabitants. That much was clear from the statement of Yitzhak Shamir that the occupied territories, including Jerusalem, formed a single entity and that it was a dangerous illusion to think that the Israeli people would ever cut itself off from those areas. In that regard, it was significant that the lands expropriated between June 1967 and August 1988 by the Israeli occupying authorities in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip represented approximately 54 per cent of the total area and that 170 Israeli colonies had been established in the West Bank and 20 in Gaza.

38. Terror, detentions, deportations, the use of live ammunition and of the weapon of hunger were all measures designed to force the inhabitants to leave their lands or submit to the occupiers and thus enable Israel to achieve its political aim of annexing the territories. Israel would convince no one by describing them as security measures made necessary by the uprising, since the same measures had been practised for more than 20 years. The "iron fist" policy was merely the logical consequence of a long process whereby Israel sought to repress the inhabitants of the occupied territories, whose presence it regarded as an obstacle to its aims of annexation.

39. Over the past 20 years, Israel had been guilty of systematic violations of the provisions of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilians in Time of War, the Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War and the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict. It had also violated the essential and inalienable human rights referred to in Security Council resolution 237 (1967).

40. Israel was infringing the right to freedom of movement by adopting such restrictions as prohibiting travel, imposing curfews, sealing off the occupied territories, and transforming some areas into prohibited military zones. It was also infringing the freedom of worship, since the occupying forces did not hesitate to invade mosques to attack worshippers and permitted Jewish rabbis to enter them. The same was true of the freedom of expression (prohibition of newspapers, arrest of editors, confiscation of typewriters), the freedom of education (closure of schools and faculties, attacks against students, etc.) and the freedom of association (searches, confiscation of property, arrest of members). Those practices were carried out by the authorities, by armed Jewish settlers and militia trained in racism and violence and acting with complete impunity.

41. There had also been collective punishments, expulsions, deportations, economic sanctions, the occupation of hospitals and other forms of harassment inflicted daily on the Palestinian inhabitants. In Israeli gaols, Palestinian detainees mouldered in tiny cells and were subjected to all forms of physical and psychological torture. The Ansar 3 camp, known as the "camp of slow death", was a notorious example. The judicial system was harsh, summary and swift in dealing with Palestinians, even in cases where their guilt had not been established, yet was lenient and indulgent towards Israeli soldiers or settlers guilty of appalling crimes.

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(Mr. Salah, Jordan)

42. The uprising of the Palestinian people had disproved the Israeli premise that it was possible to guarantee peace and security by force and military might. It also showed that the occupation was itself a violation of human rights. Moreover, Israeli policy with regard to the Palestinian cause remained a source of acute tension in the Middle East. It was essential, therefore, to go beyond measures for the protection of the inhabitants of the occupied territories and deal with the root of the problem. Only the convening of an international conference under United Nations auspices would bring about a comprehensive, just and lasting solution.

43. Mr. BEDOUI (Egypt) said that the past year had brought an appreciable improvement in the international political climate. In many areas of the world, the prospects for peace were more promising than ever. Such was not the case, however, in the Middle-East, where no early end to the suffering of the Palestinian people seemed to be in sight.

44. The past 11 months had shown, however, that long years of occupation had not broken the spirit of the Palestinian people, which was more determined than ever to exercise its right to self-determination, like all other oppressed peoples who had acceded to independence. The events which had taken place during the last few months in the occupied Arab territories had also shown that the belief that peace could be built on injustice and the denial of the law was illusory.

45. The brutality shown by the Israeli authorities in the occupied territories since the beginning of the uprising raised many questions about the intentions of Israeli society and doubts as to whether Israel genuinely wished to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Middle East conflict.

46. Acting out of a heady sense of strength that was certainly an illusion in a constantly changing world, the occupying authorities were indulging in the most brutal and reprehensible practices. The murderous operations of the Israeli troops, the deportations, the administrative detentions, the economic sanctions and the collective punishments were only a few of the means to which they resorted to achieve their ends. Such brutality, however, would only reinforce the determination of the young Palestinians, who had known nothing but occupation.

47. Egypt continued to believe that, to break that vicious circle of violence, Israel would have to recognize the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, withdraw from the occupied territories and enter into negotiations with the parties concerned, within the framework of an international peace conference in which the representatives of the Palestinian people would participate.

48. While awaiting a peaceful settlement to the Palestinian question, which was the root of the Middle East conflict, it was imperative to ensure that the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention were strictly observed in all the occupied territories. The international community must assume full responsibility in the matter.

(Mr. Bedoui, Egypt)

49. The Middle East, cradle of the revealed religions with their message of love, tolerance and respect for human dignity, was paradoxically the one region in the world which currently had most need of peace and security. It was distressing to observe that while the Palestinian party was now more than ever disposed to work to that end, Israel stubbornly refused the hand being held out to it.

50. The Palestine National Council had just taken a historic decision that opened up enormous prospects for peace. In his delegation's view, the proclamation of a Palestinian State was a major step towards a peaceful solution to the crisis in the Middle East, and it was incumbent upon all to work to bring the two parties together and persuade them to recognize each other.

51. The Middle East was going through a critical period and it was more than ever necessary for the Israeli leaders to realize that violence could not guarantee Israeli society the security to which it aspired. On the contrary, it would only exacerbate the crisis of conscience running through that society and strengthen the extremist factions.

52. Since Israel was the party which had a State and an army and controlled the occupied territories, it was for Israel to extend its hand to the Palestinian people. Indeed, such an initiative demanded much more courage than to fire on defenceless adolescents.

53. Mr. WANG Shijie (China), briefly describing the deteriorating situation in the occupied territories, said that the uprising, the most massive demonstration thus far of the Palestinian population's resistance to the Israeli occupation, had shown that the younger generation was refusing to accept the fate of the preceding generation. The draconian measures taken by the Israeli authorities in violation of basic rights had not only galvanized the resistance of the Palestinian and other Arab peoples but had also aroused world-wide condemnation. The Security Council had reviewed the situation on several occasions during the past year and had adopted resolutions. The Israeli authorities had been enjoined to respect the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention and the relevant United Nations resolutions, to put an immediate end to their repressive policy and to withdraw from all the Arab territories occupied since 1967. The overwhelming majority of States had called for convening, under United Nations auspices, an international peace conference on the Middle East question, including the question of Palestine that was at the heart of the conflict.

54. The international community must no longer tolerate the Israeli policy of repression in the occupied territories. There must be strict observance of the relevant provisions of the United Nations Charter dealing with human rights and the right to self-determination of peoples and the principle of the inadmissibility of acquisition of territory by force. His delegation was strongly opposed to Israel's policy of expansion and occupation and to its repressive practices. The establishment of a just and lasting peace was contingent upon the withdrawal of the Israeli armed forces from all the Arab territories occupied since 1967, the restoration of the national rights of the Palestinian people and the enjoyment by all countries in the Middle East of the right to live in peace. The trend of the

(Mr. Wang Shijie, China)

times was to replace confrontation with dialogue and to settle regional disputes through peaceful negotiations. The Arab countries and the PLO had already made enormous efforts to bring about a peaceful settlement. His delegation hailed the Declaration of Independence that the Palestine National Council had just adopted at its nineteenth special session in Algiers and trusted that the positive steps taken at that meeting would help to promote the Middle East peace process.

55. It was China's hope that the Israeli Government would show some realism by abandoning its misguided policy and recognizing the legitimate rights of the Palestinian and other Arab peoples, which would be a first step towards settling the Middle East conflict in the interests of all the countries and parties in the region, including its own.

56. Mr. ZOWAWI (Saudi Arabia) said that the Special Committee's report (A/43/694) gave an idea of the brutality of the practices in which Israel indulged with full impunity, secure in the certainty that it had the support of its powerful protectors.

57. The Palestine National Council had just proclaimed an independent Palestinian State. At the same time it had expressed the hope for a successful outcome to the efforts towards a just solution of the Middle East problem that would permit the Palestinian people to exercise the rights of which it was deprived. The Israeli response had been to escalate its repressive measures and its terrorist acts in the occupied territories.

58. Those who unconditionally supported Israel should ask themselves what their reaction would be if their own children were undergoing the fate of the Palestinian children. The Special Committee had, in that respect, very properly reminded the international community of its duty to the Palestinian people, who had just declared its State and was looking to the international organization with enormous hope.

59. The Special Committee's report reflected the dramatic deterioration of the human rights situation in the occupied territories since the beginning of the Palestinian population's uprising against the colonization policy and the accumulated humiliations and sufferings endured for more than 20 years. The report described in detail the revolting behaviour of the occupation troops and the cruel punishments Israel was imposing on the Palestinian population in flagrant violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

60. The massacre of innocent civilians, the beatings, the arbitrary arrests, the torture, the curfews, the demolition of homes, the stifling of the Palestinian economy, the destruction of crops, the cutting off of water supplies and electricity, the closing of the schools and universities, the attacks upon freedom of instruction, the terror spread by the settler militias had, despite the muzzling of the international press, brought to light the true nature of the State that claimed to be an oasis of democracy in the Middle East.

61. Far from stifling the Palestinians' aspirations towards freedom, those repressive measures had only exacerbated their revolt.

(Mr. Zowawi, Saudi Arabia)

62. Some might argue that Israel was compelled to defend itself and protect its citizens. But the Israeli authorities were sadly mistaken if they thought that the means to which they were resorting would allow them to establish order. Many others, before them, had employed such methods in vain.

63. The Zionists must be told that the Palestinian people was not an easy prey. It had the support of all Arabs and of the Islamic nation, which would not rest until it recovered its rights.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

64. The CHAIRMAN drew attention to 10 draft resolutions relating to agenda item 76, which had just been distributed as documents A/SPC/43/L.14 to L.23.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.