



# Security Council

Seventy-seventh year

**9021**<sup>st</sup> meeting

Monday, 25 April 2022, 3 p.m.

New York

*Provisional*

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<i>President:</i>	Mr. Roscoe . . . . .	(United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
<i>Members:</i>	Albania . . . . .	Mr. Macaj
	Brazil . . . . .	Mrs. Espeschit Maia
	China . . . . .	Mr. Liu Zhao
	France . . . . .	Mrs. Aubert
	Gabon . . . . .	Ms. Koumby Missambo
	Ghana . . . . .	Mrs. Hackman
	India . . . . .	Mr. Sharma
	Ireland . . . . .	Mr. Cahalane
	Kenya . . . . .	Ms. Nthoki
	Mexico . . . . .	Mrs. Buenrostro Massieu
	Norway . . . . .	Ms. Halle
	Russian Federation . . . . .	Mr. Khloponin
	United Arab Emirates . . . . .	Ms. AlMatrooshi
	United States of America . . . . .	Ms. Meyer

## Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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*The meeting was resumed at 3.05 p.m.*

**The President:** Before we begin, I would like to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than four minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work as expeditiously as possible. Flashing lights on the collars of the microphone will prompt all speakers to bring their remarks to a close after four minutes.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

**Mr. Sabbagh** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic is deeply concerned about the extremely dangerous incidents and developments on Palestinian territory, particularly in the Arab city of Jerusalem. We also condemn in the strongest terms the actions of the racist Israeli occupation forces and extremist Israeli settlers, such as the criminal and barbaric attacks on the defenders and worshippers in the Al-Aqsa Mosque/ Al-Haram Al-Sharif, which claimed the lives of several martyrs among innocent civilians and resulted in dozens of injuries and hundreds of arrests. The practices of the Israeli occupation authorities and settler groups are illegal and immoral. They reflect the true image of the usurping Israeli entity and pose a serious threat to the rights of the Palestinian people and the historic and legal status of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, which the occupying Power should respect. The unfair inaction regarding putting a stop to those aggressions — along with unlimited United States support for the practices of occupation, aggression, settlement, Judaization, killing and the destruction and confiscation of Palestinian territories — will not change the established history or make the Palestinian people relinquish their rights.

Syria affirms that the Palestinian question will remain its main priority. We reiterate our firm commitment to supporting the inalienable rights of our brother people of Palestine and to standing by their side in their legitimate struggle to defend their land and holy sites and restore their occupied lands and all their legitimate rights — especially the right to establish an independent State on their land, with Jerusalem as its capital, and the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homeland, in accordance with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions, chief among them resolution 194 (1948) — as well as to see Palestine granted full membership in the United Nations.

The continuing systematic Israeli attacks on Syria's sovereignty are a serious and grave threat to the security and stability of Syria and the region and require the immediate condemnation and urgent intervention of the Secretariat and the Security Council so as to protect the Syria-Israel Disengagement Agreement of 1974. The Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Syrian Arab Republic recently sent a letter to the Secretary-General in which he informed him of a series of repeated Israeli attacks on Syrian territories, the most recent of which occurred on 14 April around the city of Damascus. He warned that such attacks pose a threat to the security and stability of Syria and the region and stressed Syria's right to respond by appropriate means under international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

The silence regarding the repeated attacks by Israel, the occupying Power, on our people in the occupied Syrian Golan has emboldened the occupation authorities to continue their violations of international law and the Charter under the protection of successive United States Administrations, which have helped them to expand their occupation of Syrian territories and aggressions against them. Such acts jeopardize peace and security in the Middle East and undermine the credibility of the United Nations and the effectiveness of its competent bodies. In that context, my country reiterates its call to the Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process to carry out their duties in line with their mandates in that regard and in accordance with the legal position of the United Nations on the Israeli occupation of the occupied Syrian Golan and Israel's illegal aggression and practices. That would raise this serious issue in the Security Council and compel the Israeli side to respect the relevant resolutions of the Council, abide by the terms of the 1974 Disengagement Agreement and stop threatening regional and international peace and security.

The Israeli occupation authorities are continuing their provocative practices and violations of the basic rights of the people of the occupied Syrian Golan, in flagrant violation of various resolutions of international legitimacy, in particular resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1967) and 497 (1981). In doing so, they are disregarding their international legal obligations as the occupying Power, as well as the rules of international law and the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949.

The Syrian Arab Republic calls on the Security Council to urgently shoulder its responsibilities in order to bring an end to the Israeli occupation and its aggressive practices and hold the Israeli occupation authorities accountable for its crimes so that they do not go unpunished. We reaffirm our unwavering adherence to our right to restore the entire Syrian Golan, occupied since June 1967, by all available means guaranteed by international law, as an unbreakable eternal right. Syria underscores that all decisions and measures taken by Israel, the occupying Power, to change the natural and demographic features of the Golan, or to impose its laws, authorities and Administration on it, are null and void and have no legal effect under international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions, in particular resolution 497 (1981).

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of the European Union, in its capacity as observer.

**Mr. Gonzato:** Before I deliver my statement, I want to convey the deep concern of the European Union (EU) about the continued tensions in Israel and Palestine. We call on all sides to exercise maximum restraint, refrain from violence and avoid all forms of provocation.

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the European Union and its member States. North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Georgia align themselves with this statement.

The EU reaffirms its commitment to a just and comprehensive settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on a two-State solution, with the State of Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous, sovereign and viable State of Palestine living side by side in peace and security and mutual recognition, and with Jerusalem serving as the future capital of both States. The EU welcomes high-level contacts between the parties and encourages further engagement aimed at renewing confidence, restoring the political horizon and opening a path towards a relaunch of the peace process as soon as possible. The EU welcomes the recent measures that have been taken to improve Palestinian livelihoods and calls for the immediate implementation of the commitments that have been made, before the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee meets in Brussels on 10 May.

The EU firmly condemns the terror attacks in Israel that claimed 14 lives in recent weeks. We remain firmly committed to preventing and fighting terrorism

and violent extremism. The EU firmly condemns all acts of violence, including in East Jerusalem, and including the increasing settler violence, and calls for accountability for those acts. We are also concerned about the growing numbers of casualties, including among women and children, and affirm that the use of force must be proportionate, in line with international law and employed only as a last resort when it is strictly unavoidable in order to protect life.

As the end of the holy month of Ramadan approaches, the EU calls on all parties to exercise maximum restraint and refrain from violence. We recall the special significance of the holy sites and call for upholding the status quo put in place in 1967 for the Temple Mount/Al-Haram Al-Sharif, in line with previous understandings and with respect for Jordan's special role. The EU will closely monitor developments and their implications on the ground and remains ready to take further action to protect the viability of a two-State solution. We urge both parties to demonstrate their stated commitment to a two-State solution through concrete action and to avoid unilateral actions, which threaten it. The EU's opposition to Israel's settlement policy and actions taken in that context, including in East Jerusalem and especially in sensitive areas such as Har Homa, Givat Hamatos and Area E-1, is well known.

The EU reiterates that settlements are illegal under international law and calls for a halt to all settlement activities. Such actions as building the separation barrier beyond the 1967 line; demolitions and confiscations, including of EU-funded projects; evictions; forced transfers, including of Bedouins; illegal outposts; settler violence; and restrictions of movement and access severely threaten a two-State solution and will only escalate an already tense environment. The EU is concerned about increased demolitions and evictions, including in East Jerusalem. It will be important to refrain from proceeding with any planned demolitions, evictions or settlement expansions.

The EU reiterates how vital it is to consolidate the ceasefire in Gaza and its unequivocal position that rocket fire and the launching of incendiary devices and other attacks by Hamas and other terrorist groups are unacceptable. The EU welcomes the easing of some restrictions on Gaza, but since the measures taken so far have been shown to be inadequate to ensuring rapid stabilization and recovery, we call for the further lifting of restrictions, underlining the need for unimpeded humanitarian access to Gaza. The EU calls on all

the parties to take the necessary steps to produce a fundamental change in the political, security and economic situation in the Gaza Strip, including the end of the closure and a full opening of the crossing points, while addressing Israel's legitimate security concerns.

The EU welcomed the holding on 26 March of the second phase of local Palestinian elections as a step towards national elections, and reiterates its call to the Palestinian Authority to organize the postponed elections without further delay. Democratic Palestinian institutions based on respect for the rule of law and human rights are vital for the Palestinian people and, ultimately, for a two-State solution.

The EU urges all Palestinian factions to engage in good faith in the reconciliation process, adhere to previous agreements, renounce violence and terrorism, recognize Israel's right to exist and commit to democratic principles, including the rule of law. Palestinian civil society must be allowed to carry out its important task free from obstruction, harassment or intimidation by any party, and freedom of expression must be upheld. A full, independent investigation into the death of Nizar Banat must take place, and those responsible must be held accountable. The EU is proud of its continued support to civil society, which contributes to peace efforts and confidence-building between Israelis and Palestinians. We urge the parties to refrain from using anti-terrorism legislation to undermine civil society and its members' valuable work and contribution to the pursuit of accountability.

Until a just, fair, agreed and realistic solution to the refugee issue that accords with international law is found, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) remains crucial to providing the necessary protection and essential services for Palestine refugees and supporting peace and stability in the region. The EU will continue to support UNRWA in all its fields of operation, including East Jerusalem. We call on all partners to increase their contributions to UNRWA.

Eleven years after the beginning of the conflict in Syria, the situation remains extremely worrying. The Syrian people continue to suffer from huge levels of violence and hardship. After more than a decade of conflict, it is vital to ensure that the international community keeps up the search for a durable and comprehensive political solution and that the Syrian people are not forgotten, despite other ongoing

international crises. The European Union remains fully committed to that goal. We want to reiterate that a sustainable solution to the conflict requires a genuine, inclusive political transition in line with resolution 2254 (2015) and the 2012 Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex), negotiated by the Syrian parties within the United Nations-led Geneva process, with the full, equal and meaningful participation of women. The EU unequivocally supports the efforts of the United Nations Special Envoy to make progress on all aspects of resolution 2254 (2015), including on the issues of detainees and persons missing at the hands of the regime and the establishment of a safe and neutral environment for holding free and fair elections under United Nations supervision. The EU has responded positively to the Special Envoy's initiative for a steps-for-steps approach to help move the political process forward. We urge all the participants, particularly the Syrian regime, to engage in good faith in the political process, including the Constitutional Committee, with the aim of achieving meaningful progress on constitutional reform.

By some estimates, in 2021 alone as many as 1,500 civilians were killed in Syria as a direct result of the conflict. The continuing hostilities across Syria provoked by various actors render ordinary life impossible for the civilian population. The ceasefire agreed in March 2020 in the north-west is fragile and must be upheld without reservation. The EU once again echoes the calls from the Security Council for the implementation of a nationwide ceasefire. Civilians must be protected at all times, and attacks on civilian objects, including hospitals, must cease. The Syrian regime must cooperate fully with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), including in the OPCW's investigations of the use of chemical weapons in the conflict. The EU continues to call on the Syrian regime and its allies, and all parties to the conflict, to cease indiscriminate air strikes and the shelling of civilians and humanitarian workers. We strongly condemn the regime's attacks in the Idlib region on 4 March, which resulted in the deaths of four children on their way to school.

All parties responsible for breaches of international humanitarian law and human rights law — some of which may constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity — must be held accountable. The EU reiterates its call to have the situation in Syria referred to the International Criminal Court. Accountability and

justice for victims is essential to the achievement of a stable, peaceful Syria based on a credible, inclusive and viable political solution in accordance with resolution 2254 (2015). In the absence of international justice, the prosecution of war crimes under national jurisdiction where possible, now under way in several EU member States, represents an important contribution to securing justice. In addition, the Netherlands and Canada are engaged in an important initiative to hold Syria to account for breaching the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. The EU will continue to support efforts to gather evidence with a view to future legal action, including by the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011, and the work of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry.

Turkey is a key partner of the EU and a critically important actor in the Syrian crisis and the region. Turkey's security concerns in north-eastern Syria should be addressed through political and diplomatic means, not military action, and with full respect for international humanitarian law.

The underlying causes of the refugee and displacement crisis — 5.6 million Syrians are registered as refugees, and another 6.9 million are displaced within Syria — must be addressed within the framework of resolution 2254 (2015). The EU continues to warn against any further displacement in any part of Syria, as well as the potential exploitation of such displacements for the purpose of social and demographic engineering. The conditions for the safe, voluntary and dignified return of refugees and displaced persons to their places of origin, in line with the parameters defined by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and in accordance with international law, still have to be met. The EU will be in a position to support returns only once those conditions are satisfied.

The renewal by the Security Council of resolution 2585 (2021), for authorizing cross-border assistance in July 2022, will be vital. Recent reports by the Secretary-General show that there is no adequate alternative for meeting the immense, and growing, humanitarian needs in north-western Syria. All parties must allow rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access, including across conflict lines, to ensure that

humanitarian assistance reaches people in need through the most direct routes.

Early-recovery projects are also important for the dignity of the Syrian people and their future. EU-funded projects are intended and designed for those in genuine need. The EU will not fund early-recovery efforts that might support social and demographic engineering. Humanitarian needs in Syria continue to increase. More than 12 million people are food insecure, and an estimated 14.6 million are in need inside Syria. The EU and its member States are the largest donor in this area and have provided €25 billion to meet the needs arising from the crisis over the past decade. We will continue to demonstrate solidarity with the Syrian people and call on the international community to increase its commitments.

I would like to draw the Council's attention to the sixth conference supporting Syria and the region, which the EU will host in Brussels on 10 May, this time counting on the physical presence of the participants. As in the past, it will be held with the participation of Governments, international organizations and Syrian civil society. And as in previous years, the conference will enable the international community to renew its political commitment vis-à-vis the Syrian people and will provide an opportunity for fresh financial pledges and a platform for Syrians to be heard. The conference will enable us to continue our efforts to ensure that the Syrian people are not forgotten.

The EU reiterates its call for a political solution and emphasizes that no normalization, lifting of sanctions or reconstruction will be possible until the Syrian regime engages in a political transition within the framework of resolution 2254 (2015) and the Geneva process. In conclusion, the EU remains committed to the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Syrian State and calls once again on all the parties to the conflict to advance a credible, sustainable and inclusive political solution based on the full and comprehensive implementation of resolution 2254 (2015). It is the only route to a sustainable peace in Syria.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

**Mr. Takht Ravanchi** (Islamic Republic of Iran): The situation in occupied Palestine has deteriorated, as Israel's apartheid policies and brutalities against the Palestinian people continue unabated and with no accountability. The Israeli regime commits its atrocities

in full view of the international community, knowing quite well that it will not face any consequences.

We strongly condemn the recent incursions of Israeli occupation forces and extremist settlers within the Al-Aqsa Mosque during the holy month of Ramadan, which violated the Mosque's sanctity and rites of worship and constituted a brazen provocation with regard to Muslim feelings. More than 200 Palestinians have been injured and hundreds detained as a result of recent raids and attacks by Israeli occupation forces. United Nations reports indicate that in the first three months of 2022 the Israeli regime continued its oppressive and expansionist policies and unlawful criminal practices in the occupied Palestinian territory, killing innocent people, including women and children, requisitioning Palestinians' property, seizing and demolishing their homes and forcibly evicting them. In addition, as a collective punishment of the innocent people of Gaza, the inhumane blockade continues. That is a crime against humanity, a violation of all international laws and norms and a serious threat to international peace and security.

Any sacrilege or desecration of Muslim holy sites or offence to the feelings of Muslims around the world is repulsive and should not be tolerated. We warn about the severe consequences of such a reckless and dangerous escalation in assaults on religious sensitivities. The current alarming trend must be tackled immediately and seriously. If a tragedy with far-reaching effects is to be averted, the historic and legal status of these sacred sites must be preserved and protected under international law. We call on the international community to take the necessary precautionary measures to protect the Al-Aqsa Mosque, including its cultural heritage, from attacks by Israeli occupation forces and extremist settlers.

In the meantime, the Israeli regime has continued its destabilizing and malicious activities in the region by violating Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity and threatening openly to use force against other countries in the region. We condemn Israel's malevolent policies and destabilizing activities in the region, which are a real threat to peace and security.

The conflict in Palestine can be resolved only if the occupation ends and the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people are fully recognized, restored and protected, resulting in the full restoration of Palestinian sovereignty over the entirety of Palestine. However, that

will not be achieved until the Security Council's inaction is no longer an option. The Council's current stance has only encouraged and emboldened the Israeli regime to perpetuate its occupation and atrocities against the oppressed people of Palestine. The atrocities are well documented and irrefutable. They are regarded as war crimes under international law, and the perpetrators of those crimes must be brought to justice without further delay. The Security Council must therefore shoulder its obligation to uphold its mandate under the Charter of the United Nations for maintaining international peace and security and hold Israel accountable through all legal means at its disposal. It must also make certain that war crimes are not overlooked.

Finally, the representative of the Israeli regime has resorted to lies and misused this platform once again today to make bogus claims against my country, which we categorically reject. The baseless claims are designed simply to divert attention from the Israeli regime's ongoing aggression against Palestine and other countries in the region. They are an exercise in futility, as the international community is well aware of Israel's mendacity and deceit.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Tunisia.

**Mr. Ladeb (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*):** At the outset, I congratulate the United Kingdom on presiding over the Security Council for this month, and we wish you every success, Mr. President. I also thank Mr. Tor Wennesland, the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, for his briefing and his efforts to halt the escalation of violence in the occupied Palestinian territories and foster the chances for peace in the Middle East.

Tunisia reiterates its condemnation of the aggressive practices of the occupying forces and settlers in the occupied Palestinian territories, especially East Jerusalem. We also condemn the Israeli violations of the Al-Aqsa Mosque and its attacks on worshippers and desecration of holy sites during the month of Ramadan. We condemn all measures aimed at changing the demographic structure and the legal and historical status of the Palestinian occupied territory, including East Jerusalem, particularly the settlement policies whereby land is confiscated and Palestinian homes are demolished and Palestinians forcibly displaced. Tunisia once again urges the international community to assume its legal and moral responsibilities towards the

Palestinian people and reiterates the need to ensure the protection of the Palestinian civilian population from the violence of settlers and the occupation forces and their excessive use of force, including against women and children.

It is deplorable that the international community's reaction to the situation in Palestine has been affected by the episodes of violence and escalation that continue to occur as a result of the occupying Power's practices, without focusing efforts on addressing the root causes of the situation, which are precisely the occupation and aggressive practices of the occupying Power. The Palestinian question has continued for more than seven decades, always marked by the suffering and violations that the Palestinian people have been subjected to, including through the general instability in the Middle East. We believe that the only way out is by taking the road of peace and international legitimacy. That will enable the region to restore security and stability by achieving a just and comprehensive peace in order to give the Palestinian people their legitimate rights in an independent and fully sovereign State within the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, as provided for in United Nations resolutions, the internationally agreed parameters and the Arab Peace Initiative.

Tunisia confirms the statement of the Arab Ministerial Committee and stresses that ending this situation, which is contrary to all international and humanitarian conventions, is an urgent need that cannot be delayed further. Tunisia therefore calls on the international community to pool its efforts in order to create the conditions conducive to relaunching serious negotiations based on a fixed timetable. We once again call for the strengthening of the Quartet and the efforts made by the Security Council, in line with its responsibilities. We also call on the parties concerned to respond positively to the call for the holding of a fully-fledged international conference to engage in a genuine peace process so as to resolve the conflict.

Given the deteriorating humanitarian and living conditions in the occupied territories, including in the Gaza Strip, Tunisia reiterates the need to increase assistance to the Palestinian Authority. We commend the efforts made by the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians and the support of the donor community to ease the crisis. We also urge the international community to further support the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the

Near East, given the vital role it plays as one of the most important foundations for stability in the region.

In conclusion, Tunisia reiterates its unwavering and principled support for the rights of the Palestinian people, which have no statute of limitations. We always stand ready to pursue our efforts to achieve a fair and lasting peace and end the long suffering of the Palestinian people.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Malaysia.

**Mr. Aidid (Malaysia):** I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this open debate. Malaysia would also like to thank Special Coordinator Tor Wennesland for his briefing.

We once again are witnessing the escalation of Israeli aggression and incitement and violations against Palestinian civilians and worshippers, including women and children, particularly in and around the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Malaysia condemns in the strongest terms those unprovoked and unjustified attacks. Indeed, such assaults are contemptuous of all humanity. We reaffirm our support for the custodianship of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan over Muslim and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem.

Malaysia believes that all conflicts must be resolved peacefully and in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and international law. Yet we have witnessed that the same strength of attention and action has not been accorded to Palestine's decades-long struggle in resisting Israel's occupation and aggression. The principles of the United Nations Charter and international law must be consistently applied to all conflicts. One cannot advocate to respect human rights, a rules-based order and the United Nations Charter, while, at the same time, ignoring Israeli atrocities towards the Palestinians. We call on all Member States to respect and implement the relevant United Nations resolutions to ensure that Israel is accountable for its crimes and grave human rights violations.

Malaysia also reiterates its call for the Security Council to revisit the recommendation contained in the Secretary-General's 2018 report A/ES-10/794 for the deployment of United Nations-mandated armed forces or unarmed observers to improve the protection of Palestinians. We also call on the Security Council and the Middle East Quartet to intensify efforts towards

creating the necessary conditions for peace talks between the relevant parties.

Every Palestinian is entitled to live in dignity, security and freedom. But the fact remains that Palestinians continue to live under brutal occupation and within a repressive blockade. Their fundamental rights are denied, while illegal settlements are being expanded. The systematic oppression of Palestinians and the discriminatory policies are equivalent to the crimes of apartheid. In his recent report last month, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories also concluded:

“With the eyes of the international community wide open, Israel has imposed upon Palestine an apartheid reality in a post-apartheid world.”  
(A/HRC/49/87, para. 59)

Various international human rights organizations also shared that conclusion.

Malaysia will not waver in its commitment to, and support for, the Palestinian people in realizing their inalienable rights to self-determination and independence. Our position is clear: only a negotiated political settlement of a two-State solution can create sustainable peace, based on the internationally agreed parameters, international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions. Malaysia will also continue to support the humanitarian efforts to ease the conditions of the Palestinian people, including through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

Tensions during the holy month of Ramadan take us back to the painful memories of the war in Gaza last year, which killed many innocent civilians, including women and children. We once again urge the Security Council to fulfil its duties, as enshrined in the United Nations Charter, take immediate and necessary actions to avoid another flood of bloodshed at this critical time and work towards ending the occupation.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer for the League of Arab States to the United Nations.

**Mr. Abdelaziz** (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on presiding over of the Security Council for the month of April. We also express our appreciation to Mr. Tor Wennesland for his comprehensive briefing to the

Council today and for his tireless efforts as Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process.

Our meeting takes place today as the Israeli Government persists in its strict colonial settlement policy, which is in blatant violation of the international will and Security Council resolutions, particularly resolution 2334 (2016). Against the backdrop of the lack of international accountability, Israel also persists in its racist escalatory policies. It continues its severe attacks against the Palestinian people and its flagrant violations of the sanctity of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, as well as its support for the extremist settlers, their attacks on worshippers at the Al-Aqsa Mosque and their physical abuse of them while they pray during the holy month of Ramadan, the holiest month in the Islamic religion. That represents blatant defiance of the followers of the Abrahamic religions, in particular at the holy sites in the occupied Palestinian territories, particularly in occupied East Jerusalem, the capital of the independent Palestinian State, without the slightest respect for international law, international humanitarian law or international human rights law, as well as the letter and spirit of the recent Abraham Accords.

The Arab League and its Member States reject all Israeli illegal practices seeking to change the historic and legal status quo of the Al-Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram Al-Sharif, which Israel aims at partitioning in time and in space. The Arab League condemns such practices, which constitute a blatant violation of international law and Israel's legal responsibilities as an occupying Power. The Arab League also strongly condemns the recent Israeli attacks and dangerous escalation, as well as the hundreds of injuries and arrests and the infliction of severe damage on the facilities of Al-Haram Al-Sharif.

At the same time, the League of Arab States emphasizes the need for Israel to respect the historical and legal status quo of the Al-Haram Al-Sharif as a place of worship for Muslims. We reiterate that the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is the sole, legally responsible entity entrusted with administering access to the Al-Aqsa Mosque for non-Muslims. We also stress the principal responsibility of the Security Council in implementing its resolutions relating to East Jerusalem, as well as its responsibilities to support institutional and Islamic work and intensify its support for Jerusalem and its residents, including the roles of the Al-Quds Committee and the Arab Ministerial Committee of the Arab League, entrusted with international coordination

to counter the illegal Israeli policies and procedures in occupied Jerusalem.

The League of Arab States also warns against the catastrophic consequences of the lack of a political horizon for a peaceful settlement, as per the international and regional agreements based on the principle of land for peace, the two-State solution and the Arab Peace Initiative. We would also warn against the escalation of economic pressure on the Palestinian people and the State of Palestine and on Palestinian refugees under the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

We call for an intensification of regional and international efforts to restore comprehensive calm and for the relaunching of serious, direct and effective negotiations aimed at restoring confidence in the international multilateral system, the United Nations and the peace process itself. The goal is a peaceful settlement that would put an end to the occupation and establish an independent Palestinian State along the borders of 1967, as an alternative to the violence and counter-violence resulting from the anger and frustration of the Palestinian people owing to Israeli increased violations and the lack of any political horizon for the peace process. That requires the international community to pay the necessary attention to the deteriorating situation in the Middle East, especially to the Palestinian question, which is central and primary cause for the Arab people.

The international community, and the Security Council in particular, should take into account the anger and frustration of the Arab peoples at the policy of double standards, especially given the contrast between how the international community is effectively dealing with recent European developments and their political, humanitarian and economic consequences on the one hand, and the dealing of the same international committee hesitantly with protracted Arab issues and their economic, humanitarian and political consequences, on the other, in particular the Palestinian question. That is also true concerning issues related to Syria, Yemen, Lebanon, Libya, Iraq, the Sudan and Somalia, as well as other crises and conflicts that have been escalating owing to the intervention in the affairs of Arab States by well-known regional and international Powers aimed at achieving their own national interests at the expense of those of the Arab States. The same Powers have also been exploiting

the current contradictions in international relations, including those within the Council.

The League of Arab States calls on the Security Council to seek justice in dealing with the Arab issues on its agenda and to accord them greater attention, in line with the approach adopted by the Council with perseverance and determination to other international issues. We also ask the Council to immediately intervene to stop any foreign interference by regional and international Powers in the internal affairs of Arab States, allowing those States to settle their issues through joint Arab efforts and cooperation among the United Nations, the Security Council and the Arab League.

In that framework, the League of Arab States reiterates the importance of the outcome adopted by the fourth meeting of the Arab Ministerial Committee for International Action against Illegal Israeli Policies and Measures in Al-Quds, held on 21 April, concerning the Israeli violations and measures against Al-Haram Al-Sharif, and we call on the Security Council to take the following urgent measures to restore its credibility in the eyes of Arab peoples, especially in terms of the way in which it deals with the Palestinian question.

First, the Security Council must decisively and immediately provide maximum protection for the unarmed Palestinian people from the brutality of the occupation forces and armed settlers, especially in the Al-Aqsa Mosque, and prevent the partition of the Al-Aqsa Mosque in time and in space. The Council should also support the historical and legal status quo of East Jerusalem, as one of the five final-status issues that can be settled only through direct negotiations.

Secondly, the Council should organize an urgent field visit to the occupied Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem, to witness the deteriorating situation and contribute to enhancing regional and international efforts towards calm and seeking the best means to return to direct negotiations between Palestine and Israel, under international observation.

Thirdly, the Council should intensify efforts to reinvigorate the peace process in the Middle East and assist the Quartet at the ministerial level to start preparing for direct negotiations between Israel and Palestine, leading to the convening of the international peace conference that President Abu Mazen requested from the Secretary-General Guterres in his repeated

calls to the Council since 2018 and during recent sessions of the General Assembly.

Fourthly, the Council should provide maximum support for Palestinian refugees by continuously supporting the activities of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and guaranteeing access for Palestinian refugees to the Agency's services in host countries, as well as guaranteeing sustainable funding to UNRWA and its projects and programmes. The League of Arab States commends the internal reforms taking place within UNRWA and thanks the countries that have been voluntarily contributing to bridging the funding gaps resulting from global inflation, the coronavirus disease pandemic and the Ukrainian crisis. We particularly commend the contributions made by the Arab States that have been contributing on the basis of their Arab nationalistic sense of responsibility towards Arab refugees, although they are not responsible for the disasters and conflicts that have caused those refugees to flee their homeland and settle in refugee camps. The League of Arab States calls on the donor countries and international funding institutions to support UNRWA and its efforts.

Fifthly, the Council should help the Palestinian people complete the process of national reconciliation and organize the deferred national elections as soon as possible, so as to pave the way for bilateral negotiations with Palestine based on the two-State solution and the principle of land for peace, and also to support the unification of the Palestinian people in order to guarantee the success of the negotiating process.

Sixthly, and finally, the Security Council should invest seriously in the progress that has been achieved through the various negotiation mechanisms within and outside the United Nations and should build on what has been achieved, including by the Munich group and the six-party meeting of Foreign Ministers and the heads of intelligence services as well as other high-level meetings between the Arab and Israeli leaderships in order to relaunch the peace process.

The Security Council should coordinate and consult with international and regional stakeholders in order to revive direct negotiations between the two parties, based on the two-State solution, international agreements and terms of reference, including the Arab Peace Initiative, in order to establish an independent

Palestinian State along the lines of 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Peru.

**Mr. Rodríguez Cuadros (Peru)** (*spoke in Spanish*): The briefing by the Special Coordinator for the Peace Process in the Middle East, Mr. Tor Wennesland, confirms the fact that the Security Council is meeting at a critical juncture of increasing tensions, violence and human rights violations in the occupied Palestinian territory, including in East Jerusalem.

As has been stated, over recent weeks acts of violence have been committed, illegitimate restrictions imposed and the systematic, indiscriminate and unnecessary use of force employed in the Haram Al-Sharif Temple Mount complex by the Israeli authorities. The illegitimate and indiscriminate use of force and violence have extended to the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. We condemn all such acts, which contravene Security Council resolutions and the historical and legal status quo of Jerusalem and its holy sites.

The Government of Peru echoes the demand made by the international community for full respect for the historical and legal status quo of Christian and Muslim holy sites in Jerusalem, particularly the Haram Al-Sharif complex, which has been the target of unacceptable acts of violence by the Israeli authorities. It is imperative that those activities cease, and we must ensure full respect for the custodianship and access rights to holy sites conferred upon the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan by the international community.

Jerusalem is the centre of spiritual convergence of the three monotheistic religions and its status as a universal meeting point of religious freedom and inter-religiosity must be respected. Holy sites must not be desecrated by violence and the indiscriminate, illegitimate use of force.

Peru expresses its concern about the increasing tension, systematic violence and deteriorating situation in East Jerusalem and in various West Bank cities. It calls for an urgent halt to the escalation of violence that in recent weeks has cost the lives of numerous innocent human beings, including children. In that connection, we demand an effective and independent investigation to provide redress for the victims and to ensure that those responsible for violations are held accountable.

There are also ethical and legal mandates to end the illegal settlement policy, to guarantee the security and human rights of the civilian population and to remove the illegal blockade of the Gaza Strip. All settlement processes in the occupied territories must stop. At the same time, we condemn all acts of violence in Israeli territory, such as the firing of rockets from Gaza.

In 1947, Peru was a member and Vice Chairman of the Special Committee on Palestine, which proposed the creation of two States — Palestine and Israel. Consistent with that position, it has systematically condemned the illegal occupation of Palestinian territories by Israel, which continues to violate the Charter of the United Nations and international law, as it has now done for 55 years.

As part of our foreign policy, in 2011 the Government of Peru recognized the independence of the Palestinian State and established diplomatic relations with its Government. Our goal is to develop relations of friendship and cooperation with both States, within the framework of our obligations under international law.

In that context, Peru supports the full implementation of resolutions 242 (1967), which mandates the withdrawal of all occupying forces from Palestinian territory, and resolution 2334 (2016), which establishes the elements for a just and lasting two-State solution, on the basis of the 1967 border lines, with peace and secure borders for both States.

The current situation must be prevented from escalating and worsening. It is essential to make decisive efforts to defuse the current situation and, above all, to relaunch the peace process through direct negotiations between Israel and Palestine, with the participation of the Quartet and international mediators. Time and the cycles of escalation and de-escalation of violence and tension must not detract from the essential mandate to negotiate a just, firm and lasting peace.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of South Africa.

**Mr. Sithole** (South Africa): South Africa expresses appreciation to the United Kingdom for convening this meeting on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. We are also grateful for the detailed briefing by Mr. Tor Wennesland, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process.

South Africa is appalled by the increased violence and heightened tensions in Jerusalem, particularly at the

Al-Aqsa Mosque, as well as by the restrictions placed on religious sites. We strongly condemn the attacks against Palestinians, especially at a time of religious significance for all faiths in the region.

As Palestinians observe the holy month of Ramadan and Orthodox Easter, we appeal to the Government of Israel to allow Palestinians their right to worship and gather for prayers in peace. In that regard, we emphasize that the status quo of the holy sites must be fully respected. It is reprehensible that Palestinians are denied all sovereign and human rights over their sacred sites.

South Africa reiterates its view that the systemic subjugation that Palestinian men, women, children and the elderly endure under Israeli occupation is inhumane and in stark violation of fundamental human rights and internationally adopted norms and principles.

The scenes of Israeli brutality aimed at innocent, unarmed Palestinian civilians is a stark reminder to the world that, in Israeli society, some are more equal than others. We are particularly concerned about the Palestinian youth that languish in prisons and detention centres. The recent commemoration of Palestinian Prisoner's Day reminds us of the shackles that chain Palestinian youth to a destiny they did not choose. The youth, including women and minors, are held in administrative detention, without charges or trial, for an indefinite period, subjected to indiscriminate acts of torture and violence and denied access to due process. We shudder at the thought of the impact that this detention will have on the youth who are custodians of the future of this sacred land. We recall the youth of South Africa who were held in detention fighting for their fundamental rights.

These blatant violations of human rights and international law, which have been taking place for over 70 years, should no longer be condoned, and the international community, including the Security Council that is tasked with maintaining international peace and security, must act to ensure that States are held accountable for their actions. A solution must be found that is premised on a just settlement — with just, rights-based laws — that facilitates equality and equity for all who have a right to live in the territories of Israel and Palestine.

The Council has convened and discussed the situation in Palestine repeatedly over 70 years. The continued disregard of Council decisions by the

State of Israel is reflective of a blatant disregard for multilateralism and international law-based order, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. For us to maintain credibility, there must be consistency from the international community and institutions of global governance in upholding the international rule of law. The Security Council must also display consistency in its attention, vigour and decisive responses to matters on its agenda. It is concerning to raise alarms only when conflict and humanitarian law violations occur in one region, but then hesitate to act on others.

In conclusion, I wish to stress that South Africa is committed to being part of international efforts aimed at reviving a much-needed political process that will lead to the establishment of a viable Palestinian State existing side by side in peace with Israel and within internationally recognized borders that include sovereign equality between States.

In finding such a solution, all people on both sides of the Green Line — in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories — must be able to live under conditions free from racism, discrimination of any kind and violence.

**The President:** One hour has elapsed since our resumption, and we have managed to complete eight statements. We should be able to hear 15 statements per hour, ideally. We thank South Africa for its brevity. I would like to encourage everyone to try to fit their statements into the four minutes allotted. That will enable our interpreters to get home on time.

I now give the floor to the representative of Japan.

**Mr. Ishikane** (Japan): At the outset, I would like to stress Japan's commitment to supporting a two-State solution based on the relevant Security Council resolutions and internationally agreed parameters.

I have to start by expressing concern about the violence between Israelis and Palestinians, which has been escalating for weeks and could be a significant hindrance to the achievement of a two-State solution. Recent violent clashes at holy sites, in particular, are worrisome. Japan expresses its deep concern over the recent negative developments, stressing that the sanctity of the holy sites should be respected. Japan calls for restraint and reiterates that a solution cannot be achieved through violence, but only through negotiations and mutual trust.

The economic situation in Palestine is another concern. The negative impact of the Russian aggression against Ukraine on global food security has added to the economic difficulties from which Palestine has already been suffering. According to the World Food Programme, a significant rise in food prices has been recorded throughout the Middle East region, including in Palestine. Japan will address the global food-security crisis through a joint Group of Seven effort in close cooperation with relevant international bodies.

Considering the new context in Palestine, Japan decided on 1 April to contribute \$3.35 million to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to provide humanitarian aid, including food support. Japan's total support for UNRWA in 2021, \$50.5 million, was our largest contribution in the past five years. Japan will remain committed to supporting the people of Palestine so long as humanitarian and socioeconomic challenges remain there. Japan also calls for further international efforts, including those by countries in the region, to implement pledges and make fresh contributions to UNRWA, as the Agency continues to face chronic financial difficulties.

In addition humanitarian aid, Japan will continue to provide assistance for Palestinian State-building efforts. We will continue to promote our own initiatives toward this end. The Jericho Agro Industrial Park is the flagship project of Japan's Corridor for Peace and Prosperity initiative. The Conference on Cooperation among East Asian Countries for Palestinian Development is also in Japan's portfolio of support for the people of Palestine.

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

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Saudi Arabia.

**Mr. Alateek** (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like at the outset to congratulate you, Mr. President, and the delegation of the United Kingdom on assuming the presidency of the Council this month, and I wish you every success.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reiterates its adherence to the constants of the Palestinian question, namely, ending the occupation, establishing an independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital and guaranteeing the right of return of the

Palestinian refugees. We also emphasize the need for a comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East as a strategic choice to end the conflict, based on the two-State solution, as provided for by international parameters and the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative, as well as the return of refugees and the end of the Israeli occupation of all Arab territories.

In this sacred month of Ramadan, we witnessed an incursion by the Israeli occupation forces into Al-Aqsa Mosque, closing its gates and attacking unarmed worshippers inside and outside of the Mosque. This aggression took place during the holiest month of the year for the Muslims. My country strongly condemns this act of aggression against holy sites and unarmed Palestinians. We believe that this act of systemic escalation is a flagrant violation of the Islamic Ummah and relevant international resolutions and conventions. The Kingdom calls on the international community, especially the Security Council, to play their role in holding the Israeli occupation forces fully accountable for these crimes and continuous violations against unarmed Palestinians, Palestinian territories and their holy sites. Without that, there will only be more violence and instability in the region.

Since the last century, the Palestinian crisis has been one of the most complex and long-standing conflicts in the world, and its settlement will lead to de-escalation in the region and give its peoples an opportunity to focus more on development and progress. Actions taken by the occupying Power, including provocations and hostilities against the Palestinians and their holy sites, have negative consequences for reviving the peace process in the Middle East and undermine the possibility of reaching a just solution to the Palestinian question.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia underscores the important role played by regional organizations, in particular the League of Arab States, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and its committees, and the Al-Quds Committee, chaired by His Majesty King Mohammed VI. We would also like to underscore the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan's guardianship of the holy Muslim and Christian sites in Jerusalem.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia firmly condemns the terrorist attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia perpetrated last month by Houthi militias, with Iran's support. We reiterate that, in keeping with international law, we have the sovereign right to take all measures

to defend our territories, citizens and residents against any terrorist threats.

With regard to our continued support for peace and stability in Yemen and achieving a comprehensive political solution involving all Yemeni parties to realize peace, development and prosperity for Yemen and its brotherly people, we welcome the announcement made by the former President of the Republic, His Excellency Mr. Abdrabuh Mansour Hadi Mansour, of the establishment of a Presidential Leadership Council, pursuant to the Yemeni Constitution and the Gulf Cooperation Council initiative and its implementation mechanism, for the purpose of completing the transitional phase while entrusting it with all the authorities of the President of the Republic. We also welcome the swearing in of the oath in Aden. We fully support the Presidential Leadership Council in implementing its policies to restore stability and security and put an end to the crisis in the Republic of Yemen.

In addition to the role played by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in supporting our brotherly Yemeni people, we recently announced a \$2-billion initiative, funded equally with the United Arab Emirates, to support the Yemeni Central Bank. We have also provided \$1 billion, of which \$600 million are earmarked for buying oil products and \$400 million for supporting various development projects. We have also provided \$300 million for the humanitarian response plan launched by the United Nations in 2022 to alleviate the suffering of the Yemeni people and improve their living conditions.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia values the efforts made by the United Nations and its special envoys to achieve a truce in Yemen and totally end military operations in the country and at the borders. We express the hope that through these efforts we will arrive at a political settlement that supports the international efforts to end the crisis in Yemen. My country also reiterates the need to urgently find a permanent and just solution to the *FSO Safer* oil tanker to avoid an environmental catastrophe in the region.

The most recent developments are an opportunity for the Houthis to reach the desired political solution, in order to avoid Yemen and its brotherly people further suffering and destruction. The Houthis must not be used as a tool to serve the Iranian agenda, which seeks

only to cause turmoil and strife in the region and serve Iran's expansion goals.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Maldives.

**Mr. Zuhuree** (Maldives): I wish to thank the United Kingdom for convening today's debate. I would also like to thank the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process for his timely briefing on this important issue.

The recent deterioration of the security situation in the Middle East is a cause for grave concern. The ongoing violence and hostilities have resulted in immense suffering and loss of life. Despite numerous debates and countless calls for action, the tension in the region remains high, with a high probability of an escalation into renewed conflict and unrest.

The people of Palestine have been suffering under Israeli occupation for 55 years. Settler violence in the occupied Palestinian territories, including forced displacement of Palestinians and the demolition and confiscation of their homes and properties, continues to undermine the rights and dignity of Palestinian people.

The Maldives condemns the recent escalation of religious tensions at the Al-Aqsa Mosque site and supports the call for immediate de-escalation and the maintenance of the historical status quo in the Old City of Jerusalem. Such instances make abundantly clear the urgent need for the Council to redouble its efforts to support the relaunching of the peace process and implement the Council's resolutions.

In that regard, the Maldives recalls resolutions 476 (1980) and 478 (1980) of 1980, which declare null and void the Israeli occupation of Palestine, the annexation of the holy city of Jerusalem, the shifting of the Israeli capital to Jerusalem and the decision by any country to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital and relocate their Embassies. Resolution 2334 (2016) calls upon all States to distinguish in their relevant dealings between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories occupied since 1967. It is imperative that the Council ensure that those decisions be upheld and respected by all countries. The very credibility of the Council depends on it.

The Maldives reiterates its steadfast support for any resolution that outlines the formation of an independent and sovereign State of Palestine, established on the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. We

firmly believe that that is the only viable solution to ensure an end to the conflict so that the people of both Palestine and Israel can enjoy meaningful and enduring peace and live side by side with dignity.

This past March, the conflict in Syria entered its eleventh year. Since the start of the conflict, hundreds of thousands of people have been killed. Millions have been displaced. Hospitals and basic infrastructure have been reduced to rubble. And entire cities have been destroyed, along with their cultural heritage. Currently, an estimated 14.6 million people are in dire need of humanitarian aid. The Maldives urges the international community to undertake urgent efforts to ensure that those people, especially women and children, receive the required assistance and do not perish in refugee camps.

The Maldives reaffirms its commitment to working with the Council and Member States to find long-term solutions to improve stability across the region and lay the foundation for lasting peace in the Middle East. Through collective action, we can create a world that is safer for us and all future generations to come.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Bahrain.

**Mr. Alrowaiei** (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I am pleased to congratulate you, Mr. President, for your appreciated efforts as President of the Security Council for this month. I thank you for holding today's important open debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question.

I also thank Mr. Tor Wennesland, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, for his valuable briefing.

Regional and international developments currently under way and their repercussions on security and stability in the region constitute shared concerns, which means that we must unite our efforts to address those challenges. We must strengthen our collective efforts to lay the foundation for peace, stability and security, combating terrorism and terrorism financing and enhancing joint cooperation in the area of development, in order to meet peoples' aspirations for peace, development and prosperity, while adhering to the principles of tolerance, coexistence and solidarity for the well-being of the peoples of the region.

The Kingdom of Bahrain has always cooperated with brotherly and friendly States to strengthen the foundation of peace and stability in the region. Our

approach is based on bolstering the values of peace, dialogue and coexistence and mutual respect. Those are the principles that make up the vision of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and the policies and programmes implemented by the Government, led by His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince and Prime Minister. In that regard, the Kingdom of Bahrain underscores the importance of bolstering efforts to bring stability and security to the region. We reiterate our principled position rejecting all forms of violence and terrorism, whatever their cause or justification.

With regard to the Palestinian question and current developments in Jerusalem, the Kingdom of Bahrain has reiterated its condemnation of incursions by the Israeli police into the Al-Aqsa Mosque and their repercussions, such as acts of violence and attacks on dozens of worshippers. We emphasize once again the importance of avoiding escalation and respecting the holy sites of all religions, as well as the freedom of religion. It is also essential to acknowledge and respect the guardianship of the King of the sisterly Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein, over holy sites and the Jerusalem Islamic Waqf, as provided for under international law and the historical status quo, as well as the importance of the role of the Al-Quds Committee, led by His Majesty King Mohammed VI of sisterly Kingdom of Morocco.

The Kingdom of Bahrain calls upon the international community to assume its responsibilities with regard to de-escalation and to open up serious prospects for a just and comprehensive peace process, on the basis of the two-State solution and the Arab Peace Initiative, while reiterating our firm position of supporting the rights of our brotherly Palestinian people in line with the relevant resolutions of the international legitimacy.

The Kingdom of Bahrain welcomes the recent important developments in Yemen, in particular the announcement by the Special Envoy for Yemen of a two-month truce, during which all military operations in Yemen will cease, as well as those along the border with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The Kingdom of Bahrain reiterates its full support for the Presidential Council in Yemen so that it can continue its efforts and missions to manage the State, complete the transition process and realize the aspirations of the Yemeni people for security, stability and development. We support putting an end to the crisis in Yemen through a comprehensive political solution among Yemeni parties

aimed at achieving peace, development and prosperity for Yemen and its brotherly people.

In conclusion, the Kingdom of Bahrain reiterates our firm position based on good-neighbourly relations, mutual respect, understanding, dialogue, cooperation, peaceful coexistence, tolerance and rapprochement among peoples so that peace, security and stability may reign in the Middle East to ensure prosperity for its peoples, countries and the entire world.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

**Mr. Akram (Pakistan):** Pakistan welcomes the convening by the presidency of the United Kingdom of today's open debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question.

We express our grave concern about the most recent developments in the occupied Palestinian territories. In recent weeks, Israeli forces have killed dozens and injured hundreds of Palestinians in occupied Jerusalem, through raids and the use of tear gas by drones against innocent worshippers in the holy Al-Aqsa Mosque. Those assaults, coming as they do during the holy month of Ramadan, are egregious violations of humanitarian norms and human rights law.

On 15 April, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation group in New York, in its statement on the situation, condemned the intrusions by Israeli occupation forces and extremist settlers into the sacred Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Al-Haram Al-Sharif, which were marked by acts of aggression on worshippers and in violation of the sanctity of the mosque and worship rights therein. It warned of the dire implications of such reckless aggravation of religious sensitivities, which risk further destabilization of this fragile situation and could have a grave impact on regional and international peace and security. It demanded the immediate withdrawal of all occupying forces from Al-Aqsa Mosque and Al-Haram Al-Sharif, the immediate release of all detained worshippers and an end to all of those violations. It reiterated the absolute rejection of any attempts to alter the historical and legal status quo of the Islamic and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem, including Al-Aqsa Mosque and Al-Haram Al-Sharif, and it called on the international community — most notably the Security Council — to ensure the protection of Palestinian civilians.

Those recent actions by Israeli forces are a disturbing codicil to the Israeli aggression against the holy Al-Aqsa Mosque in May last year, which inflamed tensions and triggered the most serious outbreak of hostilities between Palestinians and Israel in several years.

Pakistan believes, first, that there is no question in anyone's mind that Israel's actions in the occupied Palestinian territories, including the seizure of land and properties for Israeli settlements; the violence against unarmed Palestinian children, women and men; the blockade of Gaza; and the desecration of the Holy Al-Aqsa Mosque all constitute grave violations of Security Council resolutions and international law, including humanitarian law.

Secondly, there is no moral, legal or political equivalence between Israel, the occupying State, and the occupied and oppressed Palestinian people. The Palestinian struggle for self-determination and the implementation of Security Council resolutions is legitimate, while the Israeli repression of the occupied Palestinian people is illegitimate.

Thirdly, the perpetuation of the Israeli occupation will not bring peace to the holy land. If history is a guide, even if they are dispossessed and disempowered by Israel, every succeeding generation of Palestinians will persist in seeking their freedoms and fundamental rights, including their right to self-determination.

Finally, the two-State formula, involving the establishment of a sovereign, contiguous and viable Palestinian State, living side by side with Israel within the recognized and accepted pre-1967 boundaries and with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, offers the only solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. A peace process to achieve that objective must be revived forthwith.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Qatar.

**Ms. Al-Thani** (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank you, Mr. President for convening this important meeting and take this opportunity to congratulate you on assuming the presidency of the Council. We would also like to thank Mr. Wennesland, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, for his briefing this morning (see S/PV.9021) and his tireless efforts.

The incursions by the forces of the Israeli occupation and extremist settlers into the holy Al-Aqsa

Mosque and the acts of aggression against and arrests of defenceless worshippers constitute a flagrant violation of international law, international human rights law and international legitimacy. Such events are in line with the previous systematic and recurrent acts of aggression against the people of Palestine and the holy sites of Muslims.

The State of Qatar expresses its strong condemnation of those practices, which are a provocation of the religious sentiments of millions of Muslims, especially during the holy month of Ramadan. Such events are also a result of impunity and lack of accountability, as the international community does not hold Israel accountable when it comes to upholding the rights of the Palestinian people and implementing international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

We reiterate that the attempts to alter the historical and legal status of the holy Muslim and Christian sites in occupied East Jerusalem, to Judaize the city and to divide the Al-Aqsa Mosque spatially and temporally, while restricting the prayers of Muslim in it, are rejected, null and void, as they contradict international law and United Nations resolutions. We reiterate the guardianship role of the sisterly Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and King Abdullah II to protect the Muslim and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem. We also reiterate the importance of supporting Jerusalem and its inhabitants, highlighting the role played by the Al-Quds Committee, chaired by His Majesty King Mohammed VI of the brotherly Kingdom of Morocco.

The international community, and the Security Council in particular, must uphold their responsibility to protect the Palestinian people and their holy sites and put an end to such flagrant acts of aggression. The continued escalation and the threat to peace, security and stability are major obstacles to peace. Such practices, including occupation and settlement activities in the occupied territories, must come to an end, as must the illegal annexation of Palestinian territories and the deprivation of Palestinians of their natural resources, as well as their eviction, the destruction of their homes and the arbitrary arrest of families and even children.

The State of Qatar remains steadfast in its support of the brotherly people of Palestine so that they can fully enjoy their legitimate rights. We continue to provide humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people in order to improve living conditions in the Gaza Strip under the ongoing, unjust blockade. Our efforts

in that regard include a financial aid programme and the provision of fuel and construction materials, as well as assistance with electricity generation. We helped funding hundreds of housing units that were destroyed during last year's escalation.

Moreover, we note that the State of Qatar has recently signed an agreement to provide vital resources to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East to the amount of \$18 million for the period 2021-2022. We reiterate the importance of the role played by the Agency and supporting it to provide basic services.

We reiterate our firm position in support of efforts aimed at resolving the Palestinian question and achieving lasting peace in the Middle East. A comprehensive, just and sustainable settlement requires an end to the occupation of Arab territories and the cessation of settlement activity. The issue of refugees must also be resolved and Palestinians must be granted their inalienable rights, including the right to self-determination and to create an independent State within the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in the framework of a two-State solution.

The success of all efforts to reach that solution will depend on the implementation of international law, the relevant United Nations resolutions, the principle of land for peace and the Arab Peace Initiative. That will require both the Palestinians and the Israelis to return to the negotiating table.

In conclusion, despite the deplorable recent events and escalation, there is still room to make progress towards a solution and overcome the crisis in the Middle East. The State of Qatar believes that only dialogue, diplomacy, mediation and other peaceful means can settle conflicts, in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations. The State of Qatar will continue to honour its commitment and support all efforts to that end.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

**Mr. Pérez Ayestarán** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We appreciate the convening of this quarterly open debate on a subject to which our country attaches particular importance, given its historic principled position and staunch support for the noble cause of the heroic Palestinian people. We are

also grateful for the briefing by the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process.

In recent weeks, we have observed with great concern how the situation on the ground has been deteriorating with each passing day. Tensions have further escalated, marked by provocations and deplorable acts of violence, with excessive, unnecessary and indiscriminate use of force against the Palestinian civilian population, including women and children. We have also witnessed repudiatory acts of vandalism against the holy sites in occupied East Jerusalem, such as the Al-Aqsa Mosque, even in the midst of what should be a time of reflection and peace for Christians, Jews and Muslims alike.

We reject this new onslaught by Israel, which is using the attention that the international community is devoting to other conflict situations in the world today to its advantage as a distraction and opportunity to step up its brutal aggression against Palestine. We further condemn the fact that, in the face of the painful and protracted Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the same determination on the part of some Western countries, including some members of the Security Council, is lacking not only to uphold the Charter of the United Nations and the norms of international law, but also to hold Israel accountable for its crimes and demand that it end its continued aggression against Palestine.

Similarly, we regret that the work of this organ continues to be paralysed by the obstruction of one single country — the United States of America — the Government of which refuses to allow even the publication of certain press releases, that is to say, the minimum possible step that the Security Council can take to reject the violence and acts of collective punishment against the heroic Palestinian people and call for dialogue, de-escalation and upholding the status quo. We are not surprised, however, for that is precisely the double standard embodied by those adamantly presenting themselves as champions of freedom, human rights and a supposedly rules-based system. The harsh reality is that, in their racist and supremacist view, the degree of human suffering apparently depends on the geographic location of the conflict.

Faced with that reality, however, we are duty-bound to continue urging the Security Council to play a constructive role in the peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in line with the powers conferred upon it under the Charter of the United Nations, including by fostering an environment conducive to

the resumption of the needed political dialogue and credible, serious and direct negotiations to achieve a just, comprehensive and lasting peace, based on the two-State solution, with both States living side by side in peace and security. To that end, we reiterate that it will be imperative for this organ to end once and for all the long-standing framework of international impunity that has been permitted by the Government of one of its permanent members and that ultimately results in encouraging the crimes committed daily by Israel.

We also call on the occupying Power not only to comply with its obligations under the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, cease its systematic violations of international law, end its policy of colonial occupation and apartheid and stop committing crimes against humanity and war crimes against the Palestinian people, but also and especially, end all unilateral approaches and actions, including the illegal expansion of settlements and the policy of evictions and the demolition of homes.

However, given the current reality and the gravity of the situation on the ground, while the Israeli aggression continues to be carried out with total impunity, with no accountability for the perpetrators of those heinous crimes before international justice, we stress that the time has come to adopt without further delay the measures needed to provide international protection to the Palestinian civilian population.

In conclusion, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela reaffirms its unwavering position in support and defence of the independence and inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and the realization of their legitimate national aspirations. We reiterate our commitment to continuing to work towards the achievement of a free, independent and sovereign State of Palestine, within the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital and as a full Member of the Organization. In that regard, we reiterate that the two-State solution, which is the most just, sustainable and widely supported by the international community, is the only way to end one of the most painful conflicts that has faced humankind for more than 70 years.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Kuwait.

**Mr. Almunayekh** (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, let me congratulate you, Mr. President, and the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom to the United Nations on your successful presidency of the

Security Council during the month of April. We wish you every success for the remaining meetings this month. We would also like to sincerely thank Mr. Tor Wennesland, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, for his briefing. We renew our support for him and for all endeavours and efforts to achieve de-escalation and the restoration of stability in the region.

The international community has followed with deep concern the serious escalation in the Palestinian territories, owing to the crimes and aggressions perpetrated by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people. Unfortunately, we all witnessed the incursion by Israeli occupation forces into the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the aggression against worshippers few days ago. Those hostilities have escalated dangerously over the past several days, during the holy month of Ramadan, and led to the injury and the detention of hundreds of worshippers, including women and children, in addition to incurring severe damage to Al-Haram Al-Sharif. The State of Kuwait once again strongly condemns the incursions of the Al-Aqsa Mosque by the Israeli occupation forces, which attacked the worshipers and all unarmed civilians.

Such hostilities constitute a provocation vis-à-vis the feelings of Muslims and undermine the freedom of worship at Al-Aqsa Mosque. They constitute serious escalation and an egregious violation of all relevant international conventions and resolutions, leading to extremism and violence and undermining the stability of the region. The aggressions and crimes perpetrated by the Israeli occupation forces are part of the crimes and violations perpetrated by Israel, the occupying Power, against Security Council resolutions, including resolution 476 (1980), 478 (1980) and 2334 (2016), which reaffirm the inviolability of Jerusalem and seek to prevent any change to the demography or status quo of Al-Quds Al-Sharif. The occupying Power must respect the historical and legal status of Al-Haram Al-Sharif. We call on the international community, especially the Security Council, to shoulder its responsibility and hold Israeli occupation forces fully accountable for the repercussions of the perpetration of such crimes and illegal and provocative practices in Jerusalem and Al-Haram Al-Sharif, as well as the violations against unarmed Palestinian people, their land and holy sites. It is imperative for all of us to pool international efforts to restore comprehensive de-escalation and focus on the prospects for peace in the Middle East.

Such Israeli policies and practices reaffirm yet again that Israel seeks only to continue its occupation and that it does not aspire to a comprehensive and just peace. As United Nations reports unfortunately underscore, the continued violations perpetrated by Israel and the increased settlement activities in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, have led to the displacement of many Palestinian families after dispossessing them of their property. All of that is happening without accountability and with impunity. Undoubtedly, impunity and the lack of accountability anywhere and anytime will lead to further crimes. That is currently taking place in the occupied Palestinian territories, where people are suffering from daily crimes. We call on the international community to subject the perpetrators of those crimes to accountability and to compel Israel to uphold all its legal commitments.

In conclusion, the State of Kuwait reiterates the importance of upholding the Arab, Islamic and international position, which stresses that peace is a strategic option and that a lasting, comprehensive and just solution must be based on the two-State solution, in accordance the agreed terms of reference — namely, relevant Security Council resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative — leading to the Palestinian people's recovery of all their legitimate political rights and establishing their independent State on their land, with East Jerusalem, as its capital.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of the Republic of Korea.

**Mr. Bae** (Republic of Korea): My delegation would first like to thank the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Mr. Tor Wennesland, for his briefing, and to reaffirm my Government's full support for his efforts and dedication.

It has been nearly one year since the May conflict between Israel and Palestine, which resulted in hundreds of civilian casualties. Today the Government of the Republic of Korea is again deeply concerned, as we have been witnessing numerous acts of violence this year in Israel and Palestine, especially at Al-Haram Al-Sharif, also known as the Temple Mount. As the Secretary-General appealed recently, we call on all sides to refrain from actions and incitement that escalate tensions, particularly at this time of heightened sensitivity. My Government reiterates its position that the status quo of the holy sites in Jerusalem must be respected and supports the active engagement of the

international community and neighbouring countries to prevent further deterioration of the situation.

My delegation condemns all terrorist attacks in the strongest terms and highlights that nothing can be achieved by terrorism. Any violence against civilians, by either terrorists or authorities, cannot be justified. It must stop immediately. And those who are responsible for such acts must be held accountable.

Despite that grim context, my delegation welcomes the confidence-building measures between Israel and Palestine, including the issuance of identity documents for Palestinian reunions. We strongly encourage such measures for building trust and confidence to be continued and expanded. Furthermore, we take note of the second round of the municipal elections in Palestine.

My delegation believes that reconciliation, unity and consensus among Palestinians are crucial to achieve a peaceful, independent, sovereign and democratic State. We remain concerned about the possibility of further deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip due to the hikes in food and energy prices. The Republic of Korea expresses its strong support for ongoing efforts by the international community to meet the Palestinian people's humanitarian and development needs and reaffirms its continued support and contributions, both bilaterally and multilaterally.

The Republic of Korea reaffirms its support for a two-State solution, in accordance with relevant Security Council resolutions, international law and bilateral agreements. We strongly urge all sides to resume peace talks and reiterate our support for the mediation efforts of the Quartet and the international community.

Taking this opportunity, my delegation would like to touch on the positive developments in Yemen. My Government welcomes the agreement of a truce and the establishment of the Yemeni Presidential Leadership Council. We reiterate our support for Special Envoy Hans Grundberg for a peaceful resolution of the Yemeni crisis. My Government will provide \$20 million in humanitarian assistance this year for Yemen.

The Republic of Korea, as a staunch supporter of diplomatic efforts by the international community, including the Security Council, to establish lasting peace in the region, reaffirms its commitment to continue its constructive role to that end.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Indonesia.

**Mr. Koba (Indonesia):** Indonesia is alarmed by the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, which continues to deteriorate. We strongly condemn the excessive violence perpetrated by Israeli security forces, particularly during this holy month of Ramadan. We call on Israel to uphold international law and respect the status quo of the holy sites. We recall the call by Pope Francis and the Chair of the Al-Quds Committee on the important role of Al-Quds/Jerusalem as a city of tolerance and mutual respect and the need to preserve its future as a city of peaceful coexistence.

We are extremely concerned about the continued human rights violations by the occupying Power, including illegal settlement expansion, oppression, violence and forced displacement. Despite the repeated calls by the international community, Israel's acts of aggression continue unabated, in violation of national law and numerous relevant United Nations resolutions, including resolution 2334 (2016). Those actions have added to the root of the violence in the region.

In that regard, allow me to emphasize three points.

First, it is crucial to immediately defuse tensions and prevent the worsening of the situation. We call on all parties to exercise restraint and prevent further escalation. The Special Coordinator must take urgent action to de-escalate the situation and to ensure protection for Palestinian civilians. We also call on the international community to exert pressure on Israel to stop its use of excessive force against Palestinian civilians.

Secondly, we must put an end to the illegal occupation and illegal actions by Israel. Illegal occupation and territorial expansion by a State Member of the United Nations is a violation of international law, whether in the Middle East or another part of the world. The response of the international community must therefore be consistent. Moreover, violence and the seizure and demolition of Palestinian property, as well as human rights violations based on ethnicity, which many have referred to as amounting to apartheid against the Palestinian people, must stop. Those illegal acts constitute a serious challenge to the realization of a two-State solution based on United Nations resolutions and internationally agreed parameters. It is important

to send a clear message that such acts will not be left unchecked without accountability.

Thirdly, the Security Council must not lose sight of the plight of the Palestinian people. The current situation and crises elsewhere must not prevent the Council from taking decisive action in ending the Israeli occupation, which has been going on for more than five decades. We must show the same resolve and conviction in addressing the Palestinian issue as we have in addressing the issue in Ukraine. We concur with the Secretary-General that there must not be a double standard when it comes to peace and ending human suffering. As the cycle of violence has continued for so long, it is necessary to pursue a just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the question of Palestine. The Security Council must assume an effective role to revive the peace process to end Israeli occupation and realize a two-State solution based on internationally agreed parameters.

Lastly, I would like to reiterate that Indonesia remains steadfast in its commitment to the people and the State of Palestine. In that vein, earlier today, Indonesia initiated an open-ended extraordinary meeting of the OIC Executive Committee at the headquarters of the OIC in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, to discuss the ongoing Israeli aggression against the Al-Aqsa Mosque. We stand ready to mobilize in support of the Palestinian people and efforts towards achieving lasting peace in Palestine.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the Vice-Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

**Mr. Gertze:** On behalf of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, I would like to congratulate the United Kingdom for its able presidency of the Security Council this month. We also thank Mr. Tor Wennesland, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, for his briefing.

As we gather at this quarterly Council debate on the question of Palestine, the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory is deteriorating, with particular intensity in occupied East Jerusalem, where tensions are dangerously heightened.

The core problem is well known. Israel's ongoing occupation of Palestinian territory and its continuous human rights violations and use of excessive force

against Palestinian civilians fuel desolation among a population already despairing from 55 years of military occupation. The 15-year land, air and sea blockade of Gaza continues to create additional immense suffering for over 2 million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, despite recent easing of access and trade, affecting all aspects of life, and is at the root of the dire humanitarian crisis afflicting the population.

On 15 and 17 April, during a sacred time when religious holidays for Muslims, Jews and Christians overlapped, the world witnessed unconscious scenes inside the Al-Aqsa Mosque when Israeli police forcibly removed worshippers and used excessive force against Palestinians, causing injury to more than 150 people, among them women and children, and causing damage to the mosque. The Committee shares the Secretary-General's deep concern over the situation in Jerusalem. The Committee also appeals to political, religious and community leaders to help to restore calm.

The Committee further calls on Israel to uphold and respect the historic status quo of the holy sites and its obligations under international humanitarian law, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention. The Committee recalls that Israel is the occupying Power in East Jerusalem and the rest of the Palestinian territory it has occupied since 1967 and bears no sovereignty rights therein and that all measures to alter the demography, character and status of that territory, including East Jerusalem, are illegal, null and void. In that regard, the Committee recalls the relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolutions 476 (1980), 478 (1980) and 2334 (2016), and calls for their full respect and implementation.

The Committee reiterates its calls for calm and restraint and calls on the Israeli and Palestinian authorities, as well as armed groups, to avoid violence, de-escalate tensions and prevent inflaming the already tense situation of the past few weeks.

Indeed, on 19 April and 22 March (see S/PV.9000), the United Nations Special Coordinator expressed concern over the situation and reported that, between 10 December 2021 and 18 March 2022, a total of 24 Palestinians were killed, four of whom were children, and 2,966 injured. The Committee is equally concerned about the killing of Israeli civilians.

We strongly condemn any violent act against civilians, including recurring settler attacks against Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territories,

carried out with passive acquiescence and even the support of Israeli security forces. In its report (A/HRC/49/85) to the forty-ninth session of the Human Rights Council, held between 28 February and 1 April, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights noted a total of 502 such incidents. The Committee calls for the protection of civilians, in line with the Council's relevant resolutions on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, and specifically calls for the protection of the Palestinian civilian population, in accordance with international humanitarian law.

The Committee reiterates that the Israeli occupation is the main driver of human rights violations and conflict in the occupied Palestinian territories. Faithful to its mandate to raise awareness about such issues, on 27 April the Committee will host a discussion with civil society organizations on the impact of the Israeli occupation and settlements on Palestinian rights.

As repeatedly stated by the overwhelming majority of the international community and in the Security Council, Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, are illegal under international law. The expansion of illegal Israeli settlements, especially in and around East Jerusalem, adversely affects the contiguity of a future Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and is the source of countless other human rights violations against the Palestinian people.

In that regard, the Palestinian people also continue to face forced displacement, evictions and the destruction of their property and structures. The negative effects of those violations, especially on Palestinian women, was echoed at the Committee's event on the margins of the sixty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

Speakers gave testimony on the plight of Palestinian women in the East Jerusalem neighbourhoods of Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan, where Palestinian families also face relentless settler violence. Such acts of infringement and violence disintegrate families and heighten tensions on the ground. They run counter to resolution 2334 (2016), which, in paragraph 6, calls for "immediate steps to prevent all acts of violence against civilians, including all acts of terror, as well as all acts of provocation and destruction".

The Committee stresses the decisive role and responsibility of the international community, and the Security Council in particular, in resolving this

conflict. To that effect, the Committee continues to engage with Member States to garner support for the resumption of peace negotiations. Also, the Committee Chair, Ambassador Cheikh Niang of Senegal, addressed the 48th session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), which took place in Islamabad, Pakistan, on 22 March. There, he called on the OIC to help encourage broader international engagement for the realization of a just and peaceful solution to the question of Palestine.

New global crises and conflicts should not divert the United Nations and the international community's attention from the grave situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, where Israel, the occupying Power, promotes policies and practices that are turning into a de facto annexation with different and discriminatory rights and legal systems applying to the population under its control.

On 30 March, the Bureau of the Committee met the President of the General Assembly and explored alternative ways to revive the Middle East peace process and international efforts to address this injustice, which in May will mark 74 years since the Nakba that befell the Palestinian people. The Bureau issued a statement after the meeting, warning against diverting international attention from the question of Palestine and also appealing for assistance to ensure that Palestine meets its 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development targets.

In conclusion, the Committee reiterates its commitment to work towards the end of Israel's occupation and the realization of the rights of the Palestinian people, including self-determination and independence, in accordance with international law and all relevant United Nations resolutions and past agreements. Resolving the question of Palestine is long overdue. That question has at its core our unfulfilled promise to the Palestinian people. It remains an ongoing source of injustice, fuelling instability and violence and endangering human lives. At a time when new conflicts shake the international community, we must not ignore this open sore. Peace and stability in the Middle East depend on the international community, all of us, taking decisive action to support a just and peaceful solution to the question of Palestine.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Oman.

**Mr. Al Hassan (Oman)** (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President,

and your friendly country, the United Kingdom, on presiding over the Security Council for this month. We thank you for convening this meeting during the critical circumstances facing the occupied Palestinian territories.

In its statement, my delegation will focus on the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories. We would first like to welcome the briefing by the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process. We also welcome the statement just made by the Vice-Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. My country hopes that the various parties will engage positively with the mandate entrusted to the Special Coordinator and show the cooperation required to restore calm, security and stability to all the occupied Palestinian territories, particularly Al-Quds Al-Sharif. We look forward to a more effective international role so as to put an end to the Israeli occupation of the occupied Palestinian territories, in line with the resolutions of international legitimacy, in particular resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

Various reports, including those of international organizations, have emphasized that the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories is not reassuring and is heading towards further escalation. That is due to the unjustified and repeated Israeli acts of aggression against the Palestinian people and violations of international law, resolutions of the Security Council and other relevant United Nations resolutions. My country, the Sultanate of Oman, denounces and condemns Israel's illegitimate, provocative practices and the incursion by the Israeli occupying forces into the Al-Aqsa Mosque and Al-Haram Al-Sharif. We also denounce and condemn the aggression against unarmed worshippers, which is a blatant violation of international law, humanitarian values and human rights.

My country expresses its condolences to the families of the victims and the injured, and calls on the international community once again to assume its responsibilities to ensure that justice is done, enforce the law, put an end to the occupation and achieve peace by restoring the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to establish an independent State on all the territories occupied since 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The situation in the occupied Palestinian territories is grave and concerning. The fact that the Security Council has not been able to adopt practical and tangible

measures to protect the Palestinian people encourages the Israeli occupying authorities to engage in further acts of aggression and violations. We hope that the Council will live up to its commitments and implement the resolutions of international legitimacy.

In conclusion, I would like to say that it is high time to put an end to the occupation and to impose peace.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Cuba.

**Mr. Romero Puentes (Cuba)** (*spoke in Spanish*): We endorse the statement made by the representative of Namibia in his capacity as Vice-Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

Day after day, we receive with indignation news confirming the intensification of Israel's policies of annexation of the occupied Palestinian territories and the continued increase in its illegal settlement practices.

The construction and expansion of settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory continue, as do punitive demolitions, the forced displacement of hundreds of civilians, the blockade of the Gaza Strip and plans to annex the Palestinian territories of the Jordan Valley and other parts of the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

We condemn the assault by Israeli forces on the Al-Aqsa Mosque when hundreds of worshipers were at prayer. It is regrettable that the Security Council remains unable to adopt measures to put an end to the Israeli military aggression and occupation of Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, pursuant to its resolution 2334 (2016).

The United States continues to hinder a just, lasting and comprehensive solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, ignoring the historical claims of the United Nations, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, the League of Arab States, the Organization for Islamic Cooperation and other international actors. It has repeatedly obstructed the efforts of the Security Council, thus granting impunity to Israel and preventing this body from fulfilling the responsibility entrusted to it under the Charter of the United Nations for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Moreover, the proposed so-called deal of the century, which rejected the two-State solution, thus threatening the future of the State of Palestine pursuant

to the pre-1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The unilateral decision of the Government of the United States to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and to establish its diplomatic representation in that city, with no respect for its historical status, and to recognize Israel's sovereignty over the Syrian Golan constitute serious violations of the Charter of the United Nations, international law and the relevant resolutions of the Security Council.

The current Government of the United States has not reversed those decisions, which reduce still further the likelihood of a negotiated solution. Its aggressive, unilateral and unjustified actions in the Middle East continue to severely jeopardize the legitimate interests of Arab nations and lead to a dangerous escalation in the region.

We reiterate our call to put an immediate and unconditional end to the arbitrary and illegal unilateral coercive measures imposed against sovereign nations.

Cuba maintains its steadfast position in defence of and solidarity with the just cause of the Palestinian people. We reaffirm our unrestricted support for a just, lasting and comprehensive solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Palestinian people must exercise their right to self-determination and enjoy an independent and sovereign State within pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and that guarantees the right of return for refugees.

We support full membership of the State of Palestine in the United Nations and the call by its President to hold an international peace conference. We call also for the full and unconditional withdrawal of Israel from the Syrian Golan and from all occupied Arab territories.

We call for a cessation of external interference in Syria and full respect for its sovereignty and territorial integrity, while supporting the quest for a peaceful and negotiated solution to the situation imposed on that sisterly nation.

We reiterate our support for the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action with Iran and for the inalienable right of States to the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

Cuba will always defend multilateralism, peace, the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

*The meeting rose at 5.10 p.m.*