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Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

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**Report of the Committee on the Exercise
of the Inalienable Rights of the
Palestinian People**



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Note

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Contents

<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Page</i>
Letter of transmittal	4
I. Introduction	5
II. Overview of the political context relating to the question of Palestine	6
III. Mandate of the Committee	9
IV. Organization of work	10
A. Membership and officers	10
B. Participation in the work of the Committee	10
V. Action taken by the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 73/18 and 73/21	11
A. Introduction	11
B. Mobilization of the diplomatic community	11
C. Raising awareness of the question of Palestine	14
D. Cooperation with intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and United Nations system entities	16
E. Capacity-building	18
VI. Action taken by the Department of Global Communications in accordance with General Assembly resolution 73/20	19
VII. Conclusions and recommendations of the Committee	21

Letter of transmittal

[4 September 2019]

Mr. Secretary-General,

I have the honour to enclose herewith the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for submission to the General Assembly and circulation to all the competent bodies of the United Nations for necessary action, as appropriate, in accordance with paragraphs 2 and 10 of Assembly resolution 73/18 of 30 November 2018.

The report covers the period from 5 September 2018 to 3 September 2019.

(Signed) Cheikh **Niang**
Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the
Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

Chapter I

Introduction

1. The present report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People has been submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution [73/18](#), adopted on 30 November 2018. It covers the implementation by the Committee of its programme of work ([A/AC.183/2019/1](#)), formulated to promote the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination. Its objectives include maintaining international awareness, mobilizing efforts aimed at achieving a just and comprehensive solution of the question of Palestine and lasting Israeli-Palestinian peace, enhancing international solidarity with the plight of the Palestinian people until those objectives are achieved and supporting the Government of the State of Palestine in its capacity-building efforts towards a viable and sustainable future independent State of Palestine.
2. Chapter II consists of an overview of the political context relating to the question of Palestine during the reporting period, from 5 September 2018 to 3 September 2019.
3. Chapters III and IV contain an outline of the mandate of the Committee as set out by the General Assembly and information on the membership of the Committee and the organization of its work.
4. Chapter V covers the action taken by the Committee, including its participation in meetings of the Security Council and its continuing dialogue with intergovernmental organizations and civil society. It also covers international conferences, visits of delegations and capacity-building workshops organized by the Committee, as well as other mandated activities carried out and events held by the Division for Palestinian Rights on behalf of the Committee.
5. Chapter VI provides an overview of the special information programme on the question of Palestine implemented by the Department of Global Communications in accordance with General Assembly resolution [73/20](#).
6. The conclusions and recommendations of the Committee to the General Assembly are set out in chapter VII of the report.

Chapter II

Overview of the political context relating to the question of Palestine

7. During the reporting period, the deteriorating political, security, human rights, humanitarian and socioeconomic situation continued unabated as a result of the further entrenchment of the 52-year Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and diminishing prospects for realizing the two-State solution and a just peace.

8. Despite the demand reiterated by the Security Council in resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#), no steps were taken by Israel to immediately and completely cease all settlement activity in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. Settlement activity, facilitated through such measures as the approval of 6,000 additional housing units on 31 July, the seizure and demolition of Palestinian-owned structures and the forcible displacement of Palestinian families, continued and escalated across the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, not only in Area C, but also in Areas A and B, negatively affecting the Palestinian population, including women, girls and Bedouin communities. Those steps further undermined the contiguity of the Palestinian territory and the physical viability of the two-State solution based on the 1967 lines, making what is supposed to be a temporary situation of occupation indistinguishable from a one-State reality (see [A/73/447](#)).

9. To ensure accountability, the Committee and the wider membership reiterated calls for the implementation of relevant resolutions, including Security Council resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#), and for reports on the implementation of that resolution to include information on compliance with its paragraph 5, in which States are called upon to distinguish in their dealings between Israel and the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem (see [S/2019/251](#) and [S/2018/614](#)). They also reiterated their call for the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to publish in an expeditious manner the database of companies operating in Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

10. The 12-year illegal Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip continued to lead to human rights violations as well as humanitarian and socioeconomic distress among the Palestinian civilian population, which had no prospects for development or improved living conditions. The ongoing fuel and electricity crisis severely undermined the delivery of essential health, water and sanitation services, affecting women and girls in particular (see [E/CN.6/2019/6](#)). Moreover, demonstrations at the perimeter fence between Gaza and Israel continued on an almost daily basis. On 30 March 2019 alone, 18 demonstrators were killed and 703 wounded by Israeli security forces on the first anniversary of the Great March of Return, for which between 40,000 and 50,000 Palestinian protesters had gathered near the Israeli fence. In the report of the independent commission of inquiry established by the Human Rights Council to investigate violations committed during the large-scale civilian demonstrations held between 30 March and 31 December 2018, an investigation into possible war crimes and the prosecution of suspected perpetrators of international crimes were recommended (see [A/HRC/40/74](#)).

11. The protection of civilians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory continued to be an issue of the utmost concern (see General Assembly resolution [ES-10/20](#)). Regrettably, on 29 January, the mandate of the Temporary International Presence in Hebron was not renewed, and the international monitors left the city, removing an

essential element of protection for the local population.¹ The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict has continued to report on the violations suffered by children, verifying that the past year witnessed the highest number of Palestinian child casualties since the 2014 Israeli war on the Gaza Strip, and the continued arrest, interrogation, detention and imprisonment of Palestinian children by Israel, the occupying Power (A/73/907-S/2019/509, paras. 84–97).

12. The implementation of the Egyptian-brokered reconciliation agreement of October 2017 among Palestinian factions to advance the reunification of Gaza and the West Bank under a single, democratic and legitimate national Government remained stalled. In addition, a resolution to the serious financial crisis of the Government of the State of Palestine was not reached following the decision of Israel to punitively withhold Palestinian tax revenue from March 2019 onward, in violation of international law and existing agreements, in particular the Protocol on Economic Relations between the Government of the State of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (see, e.g., S/PV.8583). The support announced by the League of Arab States (LAS) and some Member States in April 2019 is expected to provide much-needed funding to ensure continuity in the functions of the Government of the State of Palestine.

13. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and its core programme of providing educational, health, relief and social services and emergency assistance, including food aid, to more than 5.4 million Palestine refugees registered with it continued to be imperilled as a result of the lack of a reliable and sustainable funding arrangement. Notwithstanding the additional \$60 million contributed by donor countries and organizations at the pledging conference on 25 June, the Agency's 2019 budget shortfall remained at \$151 million, and resource mobilization efforts continue.

14. Israel continued to pursue measures to alter the legal, demographic and historical multicultural and multireligious character and status of Jerusalem and to consolidate its control over the city and its surroundings. Those and other violations of the basic rights of Palestinians in East Jerusalem, including the lack of freedom of movement and worship, exposed the fragility of the status of the city. Tensions at the flashpoint area of Haram al-Sharif continued, including during the last day of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, resulting in the loss of Palestinian lives. The Committee, as well as world leaders, including Pope Francis, the King of Jordan and the King of Morocco,² reiterated that the historic status quo of the holy sites in Jerusalem must be respected and that their preservation was the shared responsibility of the international community.

15. The relocation of embassies and diplomatic offices from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem by a small number of Member States, with recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, was met with a strong response from the international community. The Committee, the European Union and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) were among the many entities that considered those actions to be a flagrant violation of international law and relevant United Nations resolutions and reiterated calls for all Member States to comply with, inter alia, Security Council resolutions 476 (1980),

¹ United Nations, "UN chief hopes for new agreement after Israel concludes international observation mission". Available at <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/02/1031892>.

² Report on the International Conference on the Question of Jerusalem, Rabat, 26–28 June 2018, annex III. Available at www.un.org/unispal/document/international-conference-on-the-question-of-jerusalem-rabat-morocco-26-28-june-2018.

478 (1980) and 2334 (2016) and to refrain from establishing diplomatic missions in Jerusalem.³

16. The United States of America, as part of its efforts aimed at achieving Israeli-Palestinian peace, organized the “Peace to Prosperity” workshop in Manama on 25 June 2019. Representatives of the international community reiterated that the solution to the conflict remained political and that economic support for the Palestinian people would not succeed without a political plan that addressed the historic injustice of occupation and the fulfilment of their inalienable rights, including to self-determination and independence.

17. The international community, including the African Union, the European Union, OIC, LAS and the Non-Aligned Movement, continued to reaffirm overwhelmingly the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and uphold the long-standing parameters of the two-State solution for a viable and just solution to the conflict, with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security, based on the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Palestine and with negotiated outcomes for all final status issues, in accordance with international law, relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid principles and the Arab Peace Initiative. The Committee reiterated that the ongoing occupation should not prevent the State of Palestine from taking its rightful place among the community of nations and that Member States should extend formal recognition to the State of Palestine and support its full membership in the United Nations. As a reflection of that support, the State of Palestine was elected the 2019 Chair of the Group of 77 and China, the largest grouping in the General Assembly (see [S/PV.8375](#), [S/PV.8449](#), [S/PV.8517](#) and [S/PV.8583](#)). In July 2019, Saint Kitts and Nevis became the 140th State to formally recognize the State of Palestine.

18. The observance in 2018 of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the signing of the Oslo Accords, a historic moment that filled Palestinians, Israelis and the world with the hope that a genuine and lasting peace could finally be realized, served as a sad reminder of a lost opportunity. Similarly, the seventieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and of the expulsion and flight of Palestine refugees from their homeland in 1948, remembered as the Nakbah (catastrophe), contrasted starkly with the unrealized rights and broken promises made to an entire people of a life of dignity and freedom.

³ See, e.g., the statement of the Chair of the Committee to the International Conference on the Question of Jerusalem (Geneva, 27–28 June 2019). Available at www.un.org/unispal/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Chair-opening-statement-ENG.pdf.

Chapter III

Mandate of the Committee

19. The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People was established by General Assembly resolution 3376 (XXX) of 10 November 1975 with the task of recommending a programme designed to enable the Palestinian people to exercise their inalienable rights to self-determination, national independence and sovereignty and return to the homes and property from which they had been displaced, as recognized by the Assembly in its resolution 3236 (XXIX) of 22 November 1974. The mandate of the Committee has evolved considerably over the years into greater advocacy for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the mobilization of assistance. Additional information about the Committee is available on the website maintained by the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat (www.un.org/unispal).

20. On 30 November 2018, the General Assembly renewed the mandate of the Committee (resolution 73/18) and requested the Secretary-General to continue to provide the Division for Palestinian Rights with the resources necessary for its programme of work (resolution 73/21) and to continue to implement the special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information (renamed Department of Global Communications) of the Secretariat (resolution 73/20). The Assembly also adopted resolution 73/19, entitled “Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine”, in which it reaffirmed the near-consensus international position regarding the components of a just, lasting and comprehensive solution.

21. The work of the Committee is fully aligned with the decisions of the main intergovernmental bodies of the United Nations, such as the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, as well as with the work of the Secretary-General and the programmes, funds and specialized agencies of the United Nations system, with which it collaborates extensively.

Chapter IV

Organization of work

A. Membership and officers

22. The Committee is composed of 26 Member States, representing different regional groups and supporting the international consensus for a two-State solution: Afghanistan, Belarus, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Cuba, Cyprus, Ecuador, Guinea, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mali, Malta, Namibia, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Pakistan, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).

23. The 24 observers of the Committee are Algeria, Bangladesh, Bulgaria, China, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, the Niger, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, the Syrian Arab Republic, the United Arab Emirates, Viet Nam and Yemen, as well as the State of Palestine, the African Union, LAS and OIC.

24. The Bureau of the Committee, with geographically balanced representation, is elected each year from among the permanent representatives of Committee members. At its 394th meeting, on 15 February 2019, chaired by the Secretary-General, the Committee elected, in their personal capacity, Cheikh Niang (Senegal) as Chair; Adela Raz (Afghanistan), Ana Silvia Rodríguez Abascal (Cuba), Dian Triansyah Djani (Indonesia), Neville Melvin Gertze (Namibia) and Jaime Castillo Hermida (Nicaragua) as Vice-Chairs for the year; and Carmelo Inguanez (Malta) as Rapporteur until 15 May 2019. The State of Palestine participates in the Bureau's work as an observer.

25. The day-to-day tasks of the Committee are undertaken by its Bureau. The members of the Bureau represented the Committee at all international conferences organized by the Committee and on all visits of delegations, and they chaired and moderated various sessions of the conferences. On the margins of the conferences and during visits, they held meetings with senior officials from the respective host countries.

26. The Committee members and observers have actively advocated the rights of the Palestinian people, including in the Security Council. Currently, Committee members Indonesia and South Africa and observer Kuwait serve on the Security Council as elected members.

B. Participation in the work of the Committee

27. As in previous years, the Committee reconfirmed that all States Members of the United Nations and observers wishing to participate in its work were welcome to do so. In accordance with established practice, the State of Palestine participated in the work of the Committee as an observer. The Committee made every effort to guarantee the participation of civil society organizations, including those from Israel.

Chapter V

Action taken by the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights in accordance with General Assembly resolutions [73/18](#) and [73/21](#)

A. Introduction

28. In the implementation of its programme of work, as a subsidiary body of the General Assembly, the Committee is guided by its mandate to promote the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and support the achievement without delay of an end to the Israeli occupation that began in 1967 and of the two-State solution on the basis of the pre-1967 lines. Its work and activities are also fully aligned with Security Council resolutions on the question of Palestine; women and peace and security; international and humanitarian law; human rights frameworks such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; and, more recently, the Sustainable Development Goals and their achievement by the State of Palestine. As authorized by the General Assembly, the Committee frequently made adjustments to its approved programme of work that it considered appropriate and necessary in view of developments. Taking a rights-focused approach, the Committee has made every effort to support the universally recognized rights of an occupied people and the rights of all States and people to live in peace and security. To that end, the Committee utilized a wide range of instruments and activities, including engaging the diplomatic community in a sustained dialogue on the question of Palestine through its formal and informal intergovernmental processes; employing the good offices of the Secretary-General; organizing awareness-raising activities for the public that involved conferences, meetings, invited speakers and the media, including social media; promoting partnerships with Governments, relevant bodies of the United Nations system, intergovernmental organizations and civil society organizations; and building the capacities of the future State of Palestine.

B. Mobilization of the diplomatic community

29. The Committee utilized intergovernmental processes to continue to mobilize the international community in support of the realization of the two-State solution and a just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the question of Palestine in all its aspects through its diplomatic engagement with permanent missions in New York and around the world. It also held international conferences to allow the exchange of views among delegates and a wide range of partners.

30. During the reporting period, the Committee held four meetings at United Nations Headquarters, including a special meeting on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People (see paras. 47–49 below). It also held seven Bureau meetings, including with special guests and briefers, and one Bureau retreat.

31. On 17 October 2018, the Bureau met to decide on the priorities and focus of the Committee's activities for the remainder of 2018 and the programme of work for 2019 in the light of updated information on the current political situation.

32. On 23 October, the Committee was briefed via videoconference by Michael Lynk, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, on his forthcoming report (to be issued under the symbol [A/HRC/40/73](#)), which pointed to the actions of an occupying Power seemingly bent on further territorial annexation. Mr. Lynk warned that failure by the international community to stop the expansion of settlements in the West Bank, including East

Jerusalem, and other Israeli legislative initiatives could prompt Israel to formalize de jure annexation.

33. On 15 November, the Committee endorsed four draft resolutions for submission to the General Assembly. They concerned the mandate of the Committee, the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine, the special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information (since renamed the Department of Global Communications) of the Secretariat, and the Division for Palestinian Rights. On 30 November, the General Assembly, having before it the report of the Committee (A/73/35), adopted the four draft resolutions (resolutions 73/18, 73/19, 73/20 and 73/21).

34. At its meeting on 15 February 2019, the Committee officially adopted its programme of work for 2019 (A/AC.183/2019/1). At the same meeting, the Committee also elected its Bureau members for 2019 (see para. 24 above).

35. On 26 February, the Committee, through the Division for Palestinian Rights, organized its annual briefing session, which was open to all permanent missions to the United Nations, to familiarize delegates with the Committee's mandate and programme of work. A total of 20 participants attended the informative and interactive session, including 6 elected members of the Security Council. The Department of Global Communications also gave a presentation on the special information programme on the question of Palestine.

36. On 1 March, the Bureau, at the invitation of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, discussed with Jürgen Rüttgers, former Federal Minister of Germany, commonalities between the visions of the Committee and Germany for a peaceful and sustainable solution to the question of Palestine based on the two-State solution, as well as practical steps for its achievement, including by engaging young people on both sides of the conflict.

37. On 20 March, the Bureau met with the Chair and a member of the independent commission of inquiry established by the Human Rights Council to investigate all alleged violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. The briefing included the screening of footage of Israeli security forces killing and injuring Palestinian civilians at the Gaza fence.

38. As part of its priority to engage the European Union, the Committee sent delegations to Brussels and Berlin. The visit of the delegation to Brussels from 4 to 6 March 2019 mobilized regional and national support for the two-State solution and promoted concrete steps, such as the recognition of the State of Palestine and the protection of Palestinian civilians under occupation. Key action-oriented points raised during the visit included: accountability of Israel for its violations and the need for the European Union and the United Nations to be at the forefront of action to end impunity, with a view to safeguarding human rights and salvaging the prospects for realizing the two-State solution; compliance with the European Union policy of differentiation regarding products imported into the European Union from the Occupied Palestinian Territory, in particular from illegal Israeli settlements, and as a requirement of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016); the publication by the United Nations of a database of businesses profiting from the occupation of the Palestinian territory; protection of Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip and West Bank, especially in Hebron, and the lifting of the illegal blockade of Gaza; support for the mandate of UNRWA and for predictable, sufficient and sustained financing; and collective recognition of the State of Palestine by European Union member States as a means of promoting the peace process.

39. The United Nations Forum on the Question of Palestine was held at Headquarters on 4 April and the International Conference on the Question of Jerusalem was held at the United Nations Office at Geneva on 27 and 28 June. They served as important platforms for raising awareness, exchanging ideas and mobilizing the international community, Member States, international organizations and civil society organizations in the United States and abroad to shoulder the collective responsibility for safeguarding the two-State solution and exerting the efforts needed to support the realization of Palestinian rights and the achievement of lasting Israeli-Palestinian peace on the basis of that solution (see also paras. 55 and 56 below).

40. On 28 May, at Headquarters, the Bureau briefed the Group of African States on its mandate priorities and forthcoming activities in order to raise awareness of the Palestinian plight and foster support among regional United Nations groups.

41. On 21 June, the Bureau held its fifth annual retreat, at which it discussed the implications of international developments for the Committee and its work and identified priorities for 2019 and 2020. The Committee decided to strengthen outreach activities, including those regarding academia and the media, and to further develop its communication strategy. The decisions adopted at the retreat were shared with the Committee.

42. On 24 and 25 June, a Committee delegation visited Berlin and requested Germany to recognize the State of Palestine as a means of promoting the realization of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. The delegation met with officials from the Federal Chancellery and the Foreign Office and with parliament members, who confirmed that Germany remained committed to the two-State solution and opposed the annexation of the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

43. On 13 July, the Committee organized a visit to the Palestine Museum in Woodbridge, Connecticut, United States, to celebrate Palestinian cultural and artistic achievements through figurative art, music and dance. Representatives of Committee members and observers as well as the wider United Nations membership attended a lecture by a renowned Palestinian artist and scholar on the history and impact of Palestinian paintings and other works of art through the decades despite the occupation.

44. On 24 July, the Bureau held its annual meeting with the Secretary-General. The Chair conveyed the Committee's concerns regarding the deterioration of the situation and the continuing plight of the Palestinian people. He stressed that, while an overwhelming majority of Member States remained firmly committed to the two-State solution, that commitment had yet to be translated into concrete steps, including first and foremost the recognition of the State of Palestine as a sovereign and independent State and support for its full membership in the United Nations. The Secretary-General reaffirmed his unwavering support for the two-State solution.

45. The Chair delivered statements on behalf of the Committee at the quarterly debates of the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, on 18 October 2018 (S/PV.8375), 22 January 2019 (S/PV.8449), 29 April 2019 (S/PV.8517) and 23 July 2019 (S/PV.8583). He highlighted the deteriorating situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the Committee's key activities and recommendations and called upon the Council to uphold its responsibilities under international law and take appropriate action that would lead to a just, comprehensive and peaceful settlement of the conflict in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the Council.

C. Raising awareness of the question of Palestine

46. The Committee has endeavoured to raise awareness of the political, human rights and humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including the situation of Palestinian women, by facilitating up-to-date briefings by experts and exchanges of ideas on specific issues at Committee meetings at Headquarters, during side events, international conferences and visits of Committee delegations and through publications and its website. Details of each of the activities can be found on the website of the United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine (www.un.org/unispal).

47. As the major awareness-raising event organized by the Committee, the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, which was commemorated on 28 November 2018, saw an impressive display of support and solidarity by Member States, civil society and the public.

48. At the special meeting of the Committee on that date, statements were delivered the President of the General Assembly, the President of the Security Council and the Secretary-General. Other speakers included the Vice-Chair of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, high-level representatives of the African Union, LAS, OIC and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations. Messages of solidarity were received from 22 Heads of State, six Heads of Government, nine Ministers for Foreign Affairs and others and published on the Committee's website.

49. All speakers expressed their unwavering support for the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and called upon the international community to work towards that objective. Many stressed the urgency of an expeditious solution and the responsibility of world leaders to make the Palestinian question a priority, underscoring the centrality of a just solution to regional and global peace and stability.

50. As is customary, similar events were coordinated in observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People at the United Nations Offices at Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi. The messages of the Chair and the Secretary-General were delivered at those events, and the United Nations was represented at the highest levels. The commemorations were attended by representatives of members and observers of the Committee and of the membership at large, who expressed their solidarity with the Palestinian people and support for the two-State solution. A message from the Secretary-General was issued in all six official languages.

51. The annual exhibition organized by the Committee on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, in cooperation with the Permanent Observer Mission of the State of Palestine to the United Nations, was entitled "Unrealized rights, unfulfilled promises: 70 years of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and of the Palestinian people's Nakbah". It was displayed from 29 November 2018 to 4 January 2019 in the Visitors Lobby at Headquarters in the context of the seventieth anniversaries of both the expulsion and flight of Palestine refugees from their homeland in 1948, remembered as the Nakbah, and the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The exhibition served to raise awareness among visitors about the Nakbah and the denial of the rights of Palestine refugees that continues to this day.

52. The Chair, responding to an invitation from the Palestinian Return Centre, undertook a mission to London between 11 and 14 December 2018, where he met Members of Parliament and representatives of charities and delivered a public lecture

at the School of Oriental and African Studies of the University of London. During the visit, the Chair recalled the principles and parameters agreed upon by the international community to find a just and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and informed key interlocutors about the Committee's work.

53. Several briefings and activities were organized within the framework of Committee meetings to update Member States and participants on specific issues. On 15 February 2019, a Committee meeting at Headquarters featured a videoconference with Amnesty International from East Jerusalem in which it presented a briefing on its report entitled "Destination: occupation – digital tourism and Israel's illegal settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories". The briefing provided information about the role of transnational e-tourism businesses in maintaining the Israeli occupation and highlighted how, by listing accommodations, attractions and tours located in settlements or run by settlers, four companies helped to sustain illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank. In its report, Amnesty International recommended that Member States take regulatory action to prevent digital tourism companies domiciled or headquartered on their territory from providing or facilitating tourism services in settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

54. Similarly, a Committee side event, organized on 7 March 2019 on the margins of the sixty-third session of the Commission of the Status of Women, featured the screening of a documentary entitled *Naila and the Uprising*. The film described the active role played by Palestinian women during the first intifada of 1987 and its political aftermath. The screening was followed by a panel discussion with Zahira Kamal, head of the Palestinian Democratic Union Party, and Rula Salameh, the producer of the film, who had travelled for the occasion from Ramallah, as well as Julia Bacha, the director of the producing company Just Vision. The event, chaired by the Deputy Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine, attracted about 300 attendees and generated wide media coverage.

55. The United Nations Forum on the Question of Palestine, held at Headquarters on 4 April 2019 on the theme "The threat of de facto annexation: what next for Palestine?", raised awareness among Member States of Israeli measures with the potential to produce a creeping annexation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and highlighted viable and practical strategies to end that annexation in accordance with international law. Experts and attendees underscored, inter alia, the detrimental unilateral steps taken by some Member States and asserted that the continuing construction of illegal Israeli settlements and infrastructure for the exclusive use of Israelis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory amounted to a de facto annexation along with the 1980 de jure annexation of East Jerusalem, in violation of international law and United Nations resolutions. Other major impediments to achieving a lasting solution included the development of archaeological projects and tourist sites privileging an Israeli nationalistic narrative. Participants emphasized that Member States and civil society could play an important role in upholding international law, including human rights and humanitarian law, through bilateral pressure on Israel and domestic legislative and judicial action, such as the recognition of the State of Palestine and the implementation of paragraph 5 of Security Council resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#).

56. The International Conference on the Question of Jerusalem, organized in cooperation with OIC, was held at the United Nations Office at Geneva on 27 and 28 June 2019 on the theme "Preserving the cultural and religious character of Jerusalem". It raised awareness of Israeli policies and measures aimed at changing the cultural and religious character of Jerusalem, which have significant political, legal and socioeconomic ramifications, including the threat of derailing prospects for a peaceful solution to the question of Palestine. Panellists and participants highlighted, inter alia, that Jerusalem was a final status issue and that, without a just

solution to its status, no Israeli-Palestinian agreement was possible; that Israeli plans risked upending the demographic make-up of the city; that the international community had a shared responsibility to preserve the historic status quo of the holy sites; that any unilateral actions, including by Member States, in contravention of United Nations resolutions and international law were null and void; that violations of the status quo could turn a political conflict into a religious conflagration, with repercussions throughout the region and beyond; and that there must be guarantees of free access for all worshippers to the city, with each group respecting the sanctity of the other's established holy sites.

57. The United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine, now in its twenty-fifth year of operation, remains a valuable resource on the question of Palestine for diplomats and researchers around the world, averaging 35,000 visitors per month. It consists of more than 37,000 documents and is considered to be the largest and most comprehensive online repository on the subject. The collection ranges from the latest United Nations documents to rare records dating back decades. In June 2019, with the support of the Department of Global Communications and an external consultant, the Division for Palestinian Rights completed a two-and-a-half year project to migrate the information system to a modern technological platform. Since its launch, the new site has received more than double the number of page views per month. Efforts to make all of the information on the website available in all six official languages of the United Nations are under way.

58. The Committee maintained a social media presence to disseminate information on the question of Palestine. During the reporting period, the Committee's Facebook⁴ and Twitter⁵ accounts recorded steady growth in the number of visitors.

59. Further to its monitoring mandate, the Committee also produced monthly bulletins compiling all official documents of the United Nations and other intergovernmental organizations relating to the question of Palestine,⁶ an annual compendium of United Nations resolutions distributed to 4,095 recipients, including research libraries and universities, and other relevant studies and publications on topics of interest.

60. Moreover, through its weekly publication entitled "NGO Action News", the Committee continued to raise awareness of the work of civil society and United Nations actors in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and around the globe towards the achievement of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

D. Cooperation with intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and United Nations system entities

61. The Committee continued its cooperation with intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and United Nations system entities and expressed its appreciation for the active participation of representatives of those bodies at various events held under its auspices. It also expressed its appreciation to OIC for its annual co-sponsorship of the International Conference on the Question of Jerusalem. The African Union, LAS and OIC regularly attended the meetings of the Committee as observers and participated in its work. At its meeting on 4 September 2018, the Committee was briefed by the Director of the New York office of UNRWA. The

⁴ Reaching 2,234 people per month on average.

⁵ With 37,000 impressions per month on average and more than 16,000 followers.

⁶ Available at www.un.org/unispal/data-collection/monthly-bulletin.

Committee's interaction with the European Union was strengthened through its delegation's visit to Brussels from 4 to 6 March.

62. In the context of cooperation with OIC, on 1 and 2 March 2019, the Chair delivered a statement at the forty-sixth session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of OIC, held in Abu Dhabi.

63. The Committee continued to attach great importance to enhancing relations with national and regional parliaments and their interparliamentary organizations. In March and June 2019, Committee delegations held meetings with Belgian and German parliamentarians as well as members of the European Parliament, focusing on their role in ensuring that Member States and intergovernmental organizations implement United Nations resolutions and relevant provisions of international law and contribute to a just, peaceful and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

64. At the United Nations Forum on the Question of Palestine on 4 April, the Committee invited Senator Frances Black of Ireland, who had spearheaded a bill in line with paragraph 5 of Security Council resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#) and the European Union policy of differentiation regarding products imported from the Occupied Palestinian Territory. During those meetings, interlocutors recommended that the Committee organize events focused on the role of parliamentarians in finding a just solution for the question of Palestine.

65. Also on 4 April, the Chair delivered a statement at the event entitled "Palestinian Day on the Hill", organized by the Canada-Palestine Parliamentary Friendship Group. The Chair stressed that parliaments had an important role to play as representatives of the will of the people that can demand accountability from their own Governments and ensure that international law is ultimately applied. Ahead of the visit, the Chair and the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine met in New York with the Foreign Minister of Canada.

66. During its activities, the Committee, through the Division for Palestinian Rights, continued its long-standing cooperation with the United Nations system, including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations country teams, UNRWA, the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, the Department of Global Communications (including the United Nations information centres and the United Nations Regional Information Centre for Western Europe, in Brussels), the Human Rights Council and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). The Division also liaised with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) on the 2019 report of the Secretary-General on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women ([E/CN.6/2019/6](#)) and with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) in the context of the capacity-building programme.

67. On the margins of the International Conference on the Question of Jerusalem, a Committee delegation held bilateral meetings with the President of the Human Rights Council, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross to consider the stark humanitarian and human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and progress on publishing the Human Rights Council-mandated database on businesses operating in the Israeli settlements.

68. The Committee continued its collaboration with civil society organizations promoting the rights of the Palestinian people. As is customary, a civil society representative was invited to speak at the special meeting of the Committee held on

28 November 2018 to commemorate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. The Bureau held closed consultations with civil society representatives, including from Israel and the State of Palestine, in the margins of that observance as well as on the margins of the United Nations Forum on the Question of Palestine, held in New York on 3 March 2019. On 4 March, a Committee delegation met with Belgian and European civil society groups during its visit to Brussels.

69. Those meetings and interactions allowed the Committee to inform civil society about its mandate and activities, at Headquarters and abroad, as well as to learn about civil society concerns and actions. In turn, the rich exchanges have informed the programme of work, statements and reports of the Committee. The Committee has also continued to provide a space in which Israeli and Palestinian civil society organizations can interact, through the facilitation of their participation in Committee events, at a time when such interaction is increasingly circumscribed on the ground.

E. Capacity-building

70. As requested in General Assembly resolution [73/21](#), the Committee continued to develop training opportunities and programmes in order to expand the capacity of officials of the State of Palestine.

71. From 16 to 19 September 2018, a staff member of the Division for Palestinian Rights visited Ramallah and assessed the impact of the Committee's capacity-building programme, meeting with representatives of 10 ministries and 20 United Nations agencies. Apart from ensuring the alignment of the programme with activities of the rest of the United Nations system on the ground, the staff member conducted a needs assessment during the visit and identified specific areas and gaps in Palestinian capacity on which the Committee will now focus its efforts. The work undertaken serves to cement a demand-driven, national priority-focused capacity-building approach. An impact assessment of the annual training programme held in New York was also performed, and terms of reference for the selection of officials for the programme were also clarified and finalized.

72. From 5 September to 12 October 2018, the Committee carried out its annual six-week capacity-building training programme on multilateral diplomacy for Palestinian diplomats in New York, coinciding with the seventy-third session of the General Assembly. The objectives of the programme were revised and the classroom training element of the programme was strengthened, with the training content more customized to the job functions of participating Palestinian officials. The programme served to acquaint two female Palestinian diplomats with the work of the United Nations, its legal foundations, rules and regulations, and the functioning of its main organs and major items on their respective agendas, with a special focus on the question of Palestine. In December 2018, the Committee funded the participation of six Palestinian officials in an online course organized by UNITAR, entitled "Women, leadership and peacebuilding". The Committee, in cooperation with OHCHR, also supported the attendance, from 29 April to 3 May 2019, of a female Palestinian official at the ninety-eighth session of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, held in Geneva, in preparation for the presentation of the report of the State of Palestine to that Committee in August.

73. In response to multiple requests from Palestinian authorities, the Committee is collaborating with UNDP, UNESCO and the Office of the Prime Minister of the State of Palestine to build the communications and media relations capacity of officials in various ministries, including at the cabinet level.

Chapter VI

Action taken by the Department of Global Communications in accordance with General Assembly resolution 73/20

74. The Department of Global Communications continued to implement its special information programme on the question of Palestine pursuant to General Assembly resolution 73/20.

75. During the reporting period, the Department held its annual International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East in Moscow on 5 and 6 September 2018, in which the Chair of the Committee also participated. The seminar, organized in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation with the support of the United Nations Association of Russia, the Russian Peace Foundation and the United Nations information centre in Moscow, was attended by participants from the State of Palestine, Israel, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States, among others, who discussed a variety of issues relating to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

76. The Department organized its annual training programme for Palestinian journalists in New York from 29 October to 30 November 2018 and in Washington, D.C., for the week beginning on 12 November. Six Palestinian journalists from Gaza, the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Jordan graduated in 2018, bringing the total number of journalists benefiting from the training programme to 196.

77. During the reporting period, all relevant open and intergovernmental meetings held at Headquarters were covered by United Nations Web TV and United Nations Photo.

78. The Meetings Coverage Section of the Department of Global Communications issued 73 press releases relating to the question of Palestine and the Middle East peace process in English and French. In addition, the Department produced a wealth of multimedia news articles and features about issues affecting the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people across its news and social media platforms in the six official languages, as well as in Kiswahili and Portuguese. United Nations News stories and social media posts on the flagship United Nations accounts were further amplified by media outlets and social media influencers. UNifeed video packages were aired 3,639 times by 315 global broadcasters, including Al Jazeera, the British Broadcasting Corporation, China Global Television News and Russia Today.

79. The Department's news and video teams conducted two field missions to the region, gathering information for features with a particular focus on children. Materials included exclusive reports, interviews and photos of senior United Nations officials visiting schools and training programmes sponsored by UNRWA in Gaza, the West Bank and Jordan.

80. With funding from Oman, the Department has been digitizing its audiovisual assets and has now posted 223 historical films and videos relating to the question of Palestine on its audiovisual library website.

81. Regarding the observance of the International Day of Solidarity in 2018, the Department worked closely with the Committee and the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs to provide communications support for all of the events that were held at Headquarters on 28 November. The Department continued to update the website for the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People in the six official languages and supported the revitalization of the website of the United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine, including the migration of data to preserve its rich historical record.

82. In addition, the global network of United Nations information centres organized a series of activities to highlight issues relating to the question of Palestine, including events in Brussels, Cairo, Canberra, Dakar, Dar es Salaam, United Republic of Tanzania, Geneva, Mexico City, Nairobi, Vienna and Washington, D.C.

83. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library was host to a series of four customized library training and coaching sessions for Palestinian delegates from 18 September to 8 October 2018, including training on United Nations documentation, treaty research and legal resources.

84. More than 256,700 visitors were briefed on the question of Palestine in front of the updated permanent exhibit, located along the route of the guided tour of Headquarters. Also during the reporting period, the updated permanent exhibit was mounted at the United Nations Office at Geneva.

85. The Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth visited the West Bank and Gaza in June 2019 to raise awareness of the activities of UNRWA, in particular health and education services provided to young Palestine refugees. At the invitation of the Envoy, a delegation of UNRWA student parliamentarians attended the launch of the United Nations Youth Strategy on 24 September 2018.

Chapter VII

Conclusions and recommendations of the Committee

86. On the basis of its deliberations at Committee and Bureau meetings, briefings, visits of delegations, international conferences and events involving Member States, civil society organizations and regional organizations, the Committee has developed the recommendations set out below.

87. Recalling that 2019 marks the seventy-first anniversary of the expulsion and flight of Palestine refugees from their homeland in 1948, remembered as the Nakbah (catastrophe), and the fifty-second anniversary of the Israeli occupation, the Committee urges the international community to redouble its efforts towards the fulfilment of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including to self-determination and independence, and the achievement of the two-State solution based on the 1967 borders, in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid principles, the Arab Peace Initiative and the road map of the Quartet.

88. The Committee reiterates the need to reframe the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. It is not a conflict between two equal parties over disputed territory. It is a conflict emanating from one State occupying, colonizing and annexing the territory of another State under oppressive, inhumane and discriminatory conditions.

89. Consistent with the responsibilities and obligations of the international community, the Committee supports revising the existing model of bilateral negotiations into an expanded multilateral framework, with a view to reviving the peace process with a credible political horizon. In this context, the Committee welcomes the eight-point plan presented to the Security Council by the President of the State of Palestine, Mahmoud Abbas, on 20 February 2018, reiterating the agreed long-standing international consensus on the question of Palestine and calling for the mobilization of efforts to actualize that consensus.

90. Any resolution of the conflict, apart from having the two-State formula at its core, requires a comprehensive regional solution, such as that offered by the Arab Peace Initiative. The Committee calls upon international and regional organizations, such as the European Union, LAS and OIC, to take on a more politically active role in mediating an end to the conflict.

91. The Committee acknowledges that intra-Palestinian unity is critical to the reunification of Gaza and the West Bank under a single, democratic and legitimate national Government and to achieving an independent State of Palestine. The Committee offers its support to local, regional and international efforts to advance the unity process.

92. The Committee urges the Security Council and the General Assembly to ensure the implementation of the long-standing parameters for peace affirmed in relevant United Nations resolutions, including Council resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#) and Assembly resolution [73/19](#). The Committee requests the Secretary-General to continue to submit his reports to the Council on the implementation of resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#) in written format and to include references to implementation by Member States of the provision contained in paragraph 5 of resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#). Pursuant to paragraph 11 of the resolution, the Committee also calls upon the Council to examine practical ways and means to secure the full implementation of relevant Council resolutions.

93. The Committee underscores the responsibility of States and private entities not to contribute to grave Israeli violations of Palestinian human rights, in particular with respect to settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. It looks forward to the publication, by OHCHR, of a database of all business

enterprises engaged in certain Israeli settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, as mandated by the Human Rights Council in its resolution 31/36.

94. The Committee calls upon the international community to shift from a humanitarian to a human rights framework in addressing the plight of the Palestinian people. It demands an end to the 12-year Israeli air, land and sea blockade of Gaza and the lifting of all closures within the framework of Security Council resolution [1860 \(2009\)](#). It calls upon international donors to fulfil without delay all pledges to expedite the provision of humanitarian assistance, the reconstruction process and economic recovery, which are essential to alleviate the distress of Palestinians, including women and children, who face additional and gender-specific challenges that need to be addressed through targeted actions.

95. The Committee deems unilateral decisions by Member States to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and the transfer of embassies in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem as null and void, as they are in violation of Security Council resolutions, including resolutions 476 (1980) and 478 (1980). The Committee calls upon Member States to rescind those decisions and reiterates that the historic status quo of the holy sites in Jerusalem must be respected and that the international community shares the responsibility to preserve the legal, demographic and historical multicultural and multireligious character and status of the city.

96. The Committee deplores the use of excessive, disproportionate and indiscriminate force by Israeli forces against Palestinian civilians, including during the protests in the Gaza Strip in 2018 and 2019. The Committee calls for the implementation of the recommendations contained in the report of the commission of inquiry, mandated by the Human Rights Council to investigate violations committed on the fence between Israel and the Gaza Strip during those protests.

97. The Committee urges Member States and the Organization to remind Israel of its obligations under international law to protect civilians. It regrets that, on 29 January, the mandate of the Temporary International Presence in Hebron was not renewed, and that the international monitors left the city, removing an essential element of protection for the local population. Further to the report of the Secretary-General pursuant to General Assembly resolution ES-10/20, the Committee emphasizes the need for the implementation of an international protection mechanism that can credibly ensure the safety and welfare of Palestinian civilians.

98. The Committee emphasizes the importance of the acknowledgment by Israel of the Nakbah and its impact upon the Palestinian people as a necessary requirement for a viable and lasting peace. Palestine refugees should be treated as dispossessed nationals of a country – the State of Palestine – rather than as stateless refugees. It strongly advocates the right to return as well as just compensation for Palestine refugees, as provided for in paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 194 (III). The Committee further encourages all Member States to work collectively to fund UNRWA sufficiently and predictably.

99. The Committee notes with appreciation the diligent contribution of the Division for Palestinian Rights in support of its mandate and requests the Division to continue its substantive and secretariat support for all aspects of its mandate.

100. The Committee will continue, through its mandated activities implemented by the Division, to raise international awareness as well as international support for the rights of the Palestinian people in conformity with international law and United Nations resolutions. In that context, the Committee recognizes the growing importance of cooperation among developing countries and regional and subregional organizations within the framework of South-South and triangular cooperation for

sharing replicable experiences towards the achievement of self-determination and independence.

101. The Committee requests the continuation of the special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information (now the Department of Global Communications), which has made an important contribution to informing the media and the public.

102. The Committee commends civil society initiatives in support of the Palestinian people and will continue to expand its efforts to engage civil society organizations, including by regularly convening civil society forums. It encourages civil society partners to work with their national Governments, parliamentarians and other institutions to promote the achievement of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the full recognition of the State of Palestine and its independence.

103. The Committee intends to continue to work closely with other United Nations actors and entities, including the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and UNRWA, to synergize efforts in fields of common concern and uphold the permanent responsibility of the Organization towards the question of Palestine until it is resolved in all its aspects in a satisfactory manner and in accordance with international law. The Committee wishes to express its deep appreciation to its partners, and in particular OIC, for the contribution of extrabudgetary resources and their active participation in its conferences and events.

104. Lastly, the Committee urges its members, observers and others to participate actively in its programme of activities. The Committee will also enhance its outreach to all Member States and regional groups at the United Nations to take a more active and effective approach towards the achievement of the two-State solution, and to expand the Committee's membership as a form of political support for the resolution of the question of Palestine. The Committee calls upon all Member States to join in this endeavour and invites the General Assembly to reconfirm its mandate in recognition of the importance of its role.