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President: Mr. Hamilton Shirley AMERASINGHE
(Sri Lanka).

*In the absence of the President, Mr. Dessande (Chad),
Vice-President, took the Chair.*

AGENDA ITEM 27

Question of Palestine (*continued*):*

- (a) Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the
Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People;
- (b) Report of the Secretary-General

1. Mr. BISHARA (Kuwait): At the outset my delegation is always tempted to ask whether, indeed, there is in this world any other people struggling to regain its legitimate rights in its homeland apart from the people of Palestine. Is there, on this planet, any other nation existing in exile not far from its soil save the people of Palestine? And one should ask, Are the people of Palestine different from other peoples? Is it really logical to expect the Palestinians to behave as if they were superhuman when they have been treated as subhuman? These are questions that have been mooted every minute for the past three decades.

2. There is no other tragedy that evokes as much indignation as does the ordeal of the Palestinians. There is no other problem that so glaringly highlights the arrogance and brutality of Israel as does this problem. Yet the international community has failed to exert the necessary pressure expected of it to prevail on Israel to redress the injustice inflicted on the people of Palestine.

3. The world of today suffers, indeed, from a double standard and a double morality. Expediency and selfish interests reign supreme over principles and attachment to the purposes of the United Nations Charter. When the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People [A/31/35] was submitted to the Security Council last June the United States vetoed the draft resolution¹ on the ground of imbalance in its content. When the debate on Palestine took place last

January the same Power abused its prerogative as the custodian of peace by opposing the proposed draft resolution,² thereby vitiating the will of the international community.

4. And yet the people of Palestine came to the United Nations in their search for justice, notwithstanding the fact that the United Nations had inflicted upon them a most unjustifiable and adverse action in its decision on partition in 1947 [resolution 181 (II)]. The Palestinians resort to the United Nations in their quest for justice, in spite of the bitter memories and the incurable wounds of the past three decades. If we fail at this juncture to understand their plea, then the remnants of hope on which they subsist will vanish. A few Governments, among which is Israel, tend to indict the Palestinians as terrorists—an attitude which is in itself an indication of their insensitivity to the dimensions and magnitude of this great human tragedy. They tend to overlook the real causes of the problem in their effort to maintain a deceptive tranquillity in the Middle East region. The Palestinians are the victims of a consensus of indifference among the majority of States and the deliberate hostility of a few.

5. The right of Israel to live within recognized boundaries is always stressed by those few States which care little about the right of the people of Palestine to self-determination and independence, as stipulated in the various resolutions of the General Assembly.

6. Almost 10 years have passed since Israel occupied the territories of three neighbouring Arab States. Scores of resolutions of the Security Council and of the General Assembly have been adopted. Even long before the aggression of 1967, the General Assembly had adopted many resolutions on the right of the Palestinians to repatriation and compensation, as it did in resolution 194 (II) of December 1948. Israel has not only ignored those resolutions, but has treated them with contempt. This blatant defiance of the United Nations would not have continued if the major Powers had lived up to the responsibilities conferred upon them by the Charter. We have often been told that the channel of contacts should not be blocked, that the power of persuasion has not yet lost its effect, and that if the Palestinians had behaved themselves the prospects would have been brighter. And so the victims are always reproached while the wrongdoers are pampered.

7. The United Nations has not been able to take drastic and punitive measures against Israel for its persistent refusal to implement decisions relating to the rights of the Palestinians. This omission is due, in the submission of the

* Resumed from the 66th meeting.

¹ See *Official Records of the Security Council, Thirty-first Year, Supplement for April, May and June 1976*, document S/12119.

² *Ibid.*, *Supplement for January, February and March 1976*, document S/11940.

delegation of Kuwait, to the attitude of certain States which think that Israel has not done anything that warrants punitive action. I should like to ask whether this sugar-coated approach has produced any positive results. Soft-peddling with regard to Israel has generated more arrogance, brought about additional Jewish settlements in the West Bank, Gaza and Sinai, and intensified Israel's brutality and oppression directed against a defenceless people under occupation.

8. The slap-on-the-wrist treatment by some Member States has not slackened the pace of Israel's creeping annexation of the occupied territories. The velvet-glove treatment accorded Israel by some States has not encouraged it to come to its senses, and, unless it does, the Middle East will go into unfathomable waywardness. Israel not only refuses to recognize the inalienable right of the Palestinians to self-determination and independence, but tries to arrogate to itself the power to fashion their future and shape their destiny. After their displacement and uprooting in the past and in the present, the Palestinians have been coerced into submitting to the Israeli policy requiring them to accept assimilation in neighbouring countries and, accordingly, to renounce their legitimate right to statehood in their original homeland.

9. The delegation of Kuwait would like at this juncture to pay a sincere tribute to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and to its redoubtable Chairman, Ambassador Fall of Senegal, for the excellent report that Committee has produced and for the objective approach that has characterized its work. Nothing illustrates Israel's arrogance and recalcitrance more than its refusal to co-operate with the Committee. The Committee adopted a highly realistic approach. It rightly realized that peace in the Middle East could not be attained unless, among other things, the participation of the Palestine Liberation Organization [PLO] in the process of negotiations was ensured. The document of the Committee on Palestine puts the vital issues in their correct perspective. There have been continued attempts to side-track the PLO and to reduce it to the status of a spectator in a game in which the future of the Palestinians is at stake.

10. We need not restate the obvious. Only the feeble-minded, the arrogant and opportunists are unable to see the fact or to acknowledge it. Without the fulfilment of the right of the people of Palestine to self-determination and independence, there will be no peace. Without nation-status for the Palestinians in Palestine, the efforts of the aspirants to peace will crumble. Gone are the days when the Palestinians were looked upon as pathetic creatures worthy only of left-over crumbs. Because of neglect, indifference and the absence of compassion, they came out of the camps to which they had been consigned for three decades. To a man, they realized that reaching out for help was not only humiliating to their dignity but unworthy of the nobility of their cause. The Committee made it clear in paragraph 51 of its report that a just solution of the problem of the people of Palestine was a *conditio sine qua non* for the settlement of the Middle East problem as a whole.

11. We in Kuwait make no bones about our support for the people of Palestine in their struggle for self-determination and independence. General Assembly resolutions

3236 (XXIX) and 3375 (XXX) laid the basis for a just solution of the problem. The Fifth Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries unanimously endorsed the recommendations of the Committee,³ which has scrupulously observed the spirit and letter of the United Nations Charter. The Committee has not departed from the resolutions that constitute its mandate; a business-like approach and seriousness have characterized its work; its style has been devoid of emotionalism, and its deliberations have addressed themselves to the roots of the problem. It has not overlooked even one colour of the many that make up the mosaic picture of the Middle East.

12. The delegation of Kuwait would like to emphasize the importance of the request addressed by the Committee to the Security Council to call upon Israel to desist from the establishment of Jewish settlements in the occupied Arab territories [see A/31/35, para. 72]. Israelis say defiantly that those settlements are built to remain intact. Building Jewish settlement on Arab land and importing foreign Jews to live therein is Israel's policy of *fait accompli*. Any assumption that the passage of time will give a semblance of legality to those settlements not only is dangerous but also must be confronted and rejected. Israel should not go scot free with its spoils of conquest. The international community cannot afford to compromise on the principle of the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force. The essence of the United Nations Charter is the prohibition of expansion and territorial aggrandisement. If this essence is not preserved, then the Charter will be undone.

13. The representative of the PLO, Mr. Farouk Kaddoumi, in his statement on Monday [66th meeting] defined the goal of the Palestinian people when he said that the Palestinians want a State of their own in Palestine. He did not ask the international community to support his people in driving their foes and enemies into the sea; he did not wish his opponents to be in the same wretched position in which he finds his own people; and he did not wish his adversaries to be in the squalid exile to which his people have been sent. On the contrary, he spoke without malice; he defended the case of his people without wishing the architects of its displacement the same fate which he, his kith and kin find themselves. There was no trace of rancour in his plea for the just cause of his people.

14. What he asked for is no doubt disproportionate to the grievances of his people. His modest definition of justice falls short of the satisfaction of the aspirations of some of his own people. Yet he strove painstakingly to meet the dictates of the real situation and face the political realities. He did not come with the hallucinations of the unrealistic; he was sound in his approach and bowed to reason. How could one imagine that the representative of such a nation endowed with a never-dying sense of creativity would come to the rostrum of the United Nations to plead the application of a minimal sense of justice? What magnanimity Kaddoumi's speech displays against a background of bitterness, hate and despair.

15. Is not this assembly of representatives tired of Israel's false argument that Palestinians want to squeeze them dry?

³ See document A/31/197, annex IV, resolution NAC/CONF.5/S/RES.10.

Did Kaddoumi's speech not strike representatives as a mature manifesto for a peaceful solution of the question of Palestine? We should not raise a hue and cry about linguistic nuances.

16. The report of the Committee leaves no shadow of doubt about the intentions of the Palestinians or the nature of the recommendations contained therein. Indeed, we would do a great injustice to the people of Palestine if we questioned the good faith of the representative of the PLO. We should not indulge in the practice of over-analysing the obvious. The question of Palestine needs no more unwarranted incredulity. There is no reason to construe the PLO statement as meaning anything different from what it really says.

17. The people of Palestine, if let down by the international community, will continue to fight for its primordial rights. Those who have developed a spirit of resistance even in the jaws of humiliation and neglect should be given their rightful role in shaping the destiny of the Middle East. The Palestinians who have not been tempted by the comfort of assimilation in distant areas will remain as vibrant as ever and indomitable in their will to fight dispersal and resettlement outside their national homeland. No peace will be achieved without them, and no settlement will last without their consent. Never has a nation been subjected to so much tribulation and wretchedness and yet emerged so forceful as have the Palestinians. Never has a people been so much ravaged by inhuman intrigues and tribulations and emerged so intact as have the Palestinians.

18. Notwithstanding the agony of the camps and the misery of dispersion, their spokesman, Mr. Kaddoumi, came to the rostrum to deliver a mature statement in which he did not impugn the right of any but pleaded for justice for all. He rose above the temptation of succumbing to a callous and primitive vendetta. He spoke with no hatred but stated his case in measured words that smacked of no vengeance. His were the words of the noble that destiny has condemned to suffer for no fault of their own. But, if the present endeavours for the establishment of justice in the Middle East flounder, these people of Palestine cannot and should not be expected to make reason their companion in their wretched lives. In the circumstances of despair no one is ready to espouse reason and sense. The Palestinians are not, in this context, different from other human beings. A lot of talk is heard about terrorism and its ramifications. But little has been done to cure the underlying causes of despair. What would members expect from a people that so far has displayed the biblical patience of the wise?

19. I understand that Israel is jumpy and nervous because of the logic advanced here by the representative of the PLO. The PLO, the legitimate representative of the people of Palestine, has not suspended any sword of Damocles over Israel. The label of terrorism should be pinned on its real proponents, who are none other than the Israelis themselves and their establishment. The argument that the PLO wants to drive the Israelis into the waves of the Mediterranean is not only misleading but is also in marked contrast with the statement of the representative of the PLO delivered here on Monday. Can Israel continue to fool the international community after its actions and intentions have already been exposed by none other than its own leaders? Can

Israel escape the condemnation it deserves? Will those who find refuge in the often-repeated argument of a balanced approach continue their policy of ingratiating themselves with Israel to promote their own selfish ends? When will the dictates of respect for the Charter prevail over the expediency of narrow national interest? Indeed, the Palestinians are tired of being used for the domestic purposes of certain countries in the midst of elections.

20. The duty of this Assembly is to endorse the struggle of the people of Palestine for self-determination and independence. Moral support is the least we can give to the freedom fighters who are willing to let their blood be poured forth in a noble cause.

21. The international community should demonstrate its indignation at Israel's intransigence and its continued refusal to recognize the rights of the Palestinians. The Palestinians, who have suffered indescribable miseries, deserve more than what annual rituals offer them. A resolution whose adoption provides Member States with comfort is not the right consolation for the people of Palestine. The urgings for drastic action are greater than ever. A Zionist by the name of Greenberg once observed that "the triumph of the error does not erase the fact that it is an error". The General Assembly, therefore, is called upon in this debate to rectify that error.

22. Mr. NUSEIBEH (Jordan): The marathon debate—or should we call it filibuster?—over the Palestine question will soon enter its thirtieth year. Its hallmark has been immobility, inaction and outright helplessness. One leading American statesman, in response to my urging him, more than a decade ago, to initiate efforts towards achieving a just and equitable solution to the Palestine problem, responded in despairing resignation: "My friend", he said, "nobody ever touches the Palestine problem without getting his fingers burnt". I do not believe he was talking in superstitious mythology, because I know him to be a forthright and sincere man, who has been through the mill of this seemingly perilous issue.

23. The question then arises, What is this invisible power which has it within its means to incarcerate, intimidate and silence, even the brave, the forthright and the free? With a conglomeration of peoples, States, powers and high motivations, unmatched by anything parallel in the recorded history which our United Nations represents, it is legitimate to ask, What renders our collective will and resolutions so impotent, so ineffectual and such an exercise in futility? To me the only power which is above our mundane existence is that of the Creator of our universe and He is inherently just, fair, almighty and loving.

24. Neither the Creator nor his mortal creatures would condone or acquiesce in the gruesome fate which has befallen 3 million Palestinians, victims of dispersal, homelessness, persecution, military occupation, economic despoliation, sequestration and dispossession. Their fate and that of their offspring hangs precariously in the realm of the unknown, and should be an unbearable burden upon the conscience of the whole world.

25. The remnant of what has indisputably been for thousands of years their inalienable and natural habitat is

now being systematically taken over by an insatiable military occupation, without the slightest regard for Geneva Conventions, United Nations resolutions or the elementary rights of its victims.

26. And when Egypt presented a complaint before the Security Council,⁴ on Israeli practices in the occupied Arab lands a couple of weeks ago—and my delegation, among others, was a participant in those meetings—the Security Council, in its wisdom, after considering the irrefutable evidence, agreed by consensus to deplore the serious and unlawful Israeli practices in the occupied lands and demanded that they be rescinded.⁵

27. But the real climax—or was it the apex of mockery? — was when the Ambassador of Israel subjected the Security Council, in the aftermath of its consensus statement, to a scolding which a school-teacher would think twice about administering to a naughty pupil in his classroom. Not only that; he went on to tell the Council that its ruling meant nothing to his Government or to its policies and practices and it would not dissuade his Government in any way to desist from its present course of action. I must confess that I admired the angelic behaviour of the Council in accepting its scolding in silence and with grace. But what perturbed me was that a Member of the United Nations which is certainly not oblivious of its solemn obligations under the Charter should come out openly and loudly in defiance of the authority—the ultimate authority—which the Charter has bestowed upon the Council as the guardian of all issues affecting war and peace.

28. Why have I digressed into issues which seemingly are not directly related to the report before us, namely, the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People? The reason is that I belong to a generation which has seen numerous reports and just as numerous resolutions—188 according to the report's figures—solemnly adopted by the Assembly, the Security Council and other organs of the United Nations only to go unheeded and unfulfilled. That is why the Palestinian people is in such a state of incredulous despair.

29. Let us look back on practically all the issues which have appeared on the agenda of our Assembly during the past 30 years. In almost all cases they either were resolved and deleted from the agenda, to everybody's relief, or were at least moved forward, albeit slowly, towards being resolved. Even the tiniest and most remote islands, whose names and locations were known to but a few of the more learned among us, have achieved independence and national self-identification.

30. We of course rejoice that they have done so. It is only when it comes to the question of Palestine and the Palestinians that we find ourselves facing a Gordian knot, an impenetrable wall, a process of retrogression instead of progression, in which our people are losing more of their homeland, more of their lands, more of their rights, in short more of everything, at an alarmingly accelerated rate. The

Palestinian people will not be elated by paper victories, nor, for that matter, deterred by the immensity of the reverses in their homeland to which they are continually being subjected.

31. In our appraisal of the report we are impressed first and foremost by the penetrating grasp, the sincerity and the pragmatism which permeates its guidelines, its formulations and its programme of recommended action. This is a position paper, a policy programme of implementation, which grapples with most of the conceivable variables which might arise in the long-entangled issue, and endeavours pragmatically to find appropriate solutions. It is discerning and restrained in its approach; it does not indulge in absolutes and gives full recognition to the fact that the passage of time and changed circumstances have diluted and undermined what an earlier generation of Palestinians would have viewed as truisms. Even as recently as 1949, when the protocol of Lausanne was initialled by both Israel and the Arab States, including Palestinian representation—which would have put into effect a just and lasting solution finally and decisively, to the advantage of all parties concerned and the world at large—many Palestinians felt that they had made their supreme concession by agreeing to partition and to the alienation of substantial portions of their country. The Israeli authorities of those days reneged on their agreement and the conflict has continued ever since.

32. It is in this historical perspective that the report of the Committee should be appraised. The report is not an unadulterated pro-Palestinian instrument, as the Israelis myopically claim, nor is it anti-Israeli, either in tone or in content—unless, of course, the Israelis' final aim is the total take-over of the whole of Palestine and the casting of all the Palestinian people into the wilderness of nowhere. If this is their final aim—and I do not honestly know what their final aim is—then the report of the Committee is certainly not obliging.

33. But if the Israeli aim is the achievement of a just peace with the Palestinians and the Arab world at large, within the framework of the situation obtaining today, then it would be well worth their while to scrutinize the report thoroughly and without prior inhibitions, imaginary fears or preconceived prejudices. For the moment of truth has arrived when the Israelis have the burden and the responsibility of opting for peace—genuine peace—or taking the perilous road of indefinite conflict extending over generations.

34. In concrete terms, and without embellishments and references to the numerous United Nations resolutions on the Palestine issue, the report gives pride of place to the following programme.

35. First, Israel should withdraw from all the Arab territories occupied since 1967, in accordance with the principle of the inadmissibility of any acquisition of territories by the use of military force and the relevant resolutions of the Security Council.

36. Secondly, the Palestinian people should be enabled to exercise its inalienable right to national self-determination, including the right to establish an independent State in

⁴ See *Official Records of the Security Council, Thirty-first Year, Supplement for October, November and December 1976*, document S/12218.

⁵ *Ibid.*, document S/12233.

Palestine, in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Palestinian refugees wishing to return to their homes and to live in peace with their neighbours should have the right to do so, and those choosing not to return should receive compensation for their properties.

37. Thirdly, a time-table should be established by the Security Council for the complete withdrawal by Israeli occupation forces from those areas occupied in 1967; such withdrawal should be completed no later than 1 June 1977.

38. Fourthly, during an interim period, and if deemed necessary, the Security Council could establish a temporary United Nations peace-keeping force in the region and provide formal assurances of security so as to facilitate withdrawal by Israel from the occupied areas. In yet another section of the report, paragraph 45, the report proposes, additionally, that the Security Council, for the long run, could provide international guarantees for the peace and security of all States and peoples in the Middle East.

39. Fifthly—and, in my delegation's judgement, foremost at present—Israel should withdraw from the settlements already established in the occupied territories since 1967, in contradiction to the provisions of article 49 of the fourth Geneva Convention⁶ and in violation of United Nations resolutions. Israel should also desist from the establishment of new settlements in the occupied territories. I said that this is uppermost because, if our reading of the report is correct, the territorial delineation proposed for the Palestinians by the 20-member Committee is the West Bank and Gaza, a mere one fifth of geographic Palestine under the British Mandate.

40. The General Assembly, the Security Council and the Special Political Committee, which is currently discussing Israeli practices in the occupied Arab lands, are fully cognizant of the alarming proportions which the devouring of these territories has reached, and the cessation of further sequestration is by no means in sight. Now if this were not vitiated and reversed—and I ask the Assembly to listen carefully to this point—what minimum viability would remain for the proposed Palestinian homeland and national self-identification, which the report in paragraph 18 insists is a *conditio sine qua non* for the exercise by the Palestinians of their rights to self-determination and independence? The entire foundations of the report would simply collapse, and Israel would have pre-empted its own solution, irrespective of any and every Palestinian right and of any third-party adjudication.

41. The General Assembly in the course of its debate on *apartheid* categorically rejected South Africa's new bantustan [resolution 31/6 A]. Is it going to be less vehement on what would turn out to be a far more truncated bantustan for the Palestinians if the inviolability of the occupied territories were to continue to be indiscriminately disregarded and undermined? I leave the answer to the members of this Assembly.

⁶ Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, signed at Geneva on 12 August 1949. See United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 75 (No. 973), p. 287.

42. Sixthly, the report, while setting out its programme of implementation in phases—as it must necessarily do in a situation so confounded by the passage of years and the accumulation of one-sided reverses—none the less sets priorities and proposes speedy action on a number of steps which can ill brook further delays. I have touched upon some of them and I shall now turn to one which in my opinion is pivotal to all. This is contained in paragraph 55 of the report, where the belief is expressed that the prevailing situation in the Middle East should not be allowed to stagnate. We can shout ourselves hoarse in debate, but to no avail. What is imperative is movement, and the view is expressed in the report that there is a need to reconvene the Geneva Peace Conference on the Middle East, with the participation of all parties concerned, including the PLO, in order to deal with the problem in all its aspects.

43. Let us remember that what is envisaged is not an *ad hoc* agreement to resolve the consequences of the 1967 war. What is envisaged is a comprehensive, over-all and lasting solution, in which all are agreed that the Palestine question is central. It is in everybody's interest, including Israel's, that the Palestinians *per se* should participate. We know full well that, whichever way we look at it, the process of dialogue and negotiation will entail a great deal of give-and-take, of concession and counter-concession which only the Palestinians and the Israelis may be willing and able to make. Theirs is a fateful task which involves their future generations. And, needless to say, they are the ones who in the final analysis will have to live side by side, in amity and normality. So why beat around the bush and raise technical and procedural difficulties which can only impede unnecessarily the process of peace-making?

44. As for the Government of Jordan, which I have the privilege to represent at the United Nations, I wish to assure the General Assembly that Jordan, because of the Jordanians' inseparable brotherly ties to their brethren the Palestinians, will do all in its power to assist the Palestinians in achieving their cherished rights and aspirations. I wish to assure the General Assembly also that Jordan's dedication to a just peace in the Middle East, and in the world at large, is staunch and unqualified, and that Jordan will therefore contribute whatever it can to the achievement of such a peace.

45. The final part of my speech is addressed directly to the Israeli delegation—although, with your indulgence, Mr. President, I would say that any member who wishes to listen may do so.

46. This is what I wish to say to the Israeli delegation. Your country, Israel, is at present at a cross-roads and is therefore ambivalent and undecided. You have two options open to you. You have for the time being in your grip the "real estate", a not unimportant bargaining point. You are arming to the teeth, with the latest and most lethal weapons. This, of course, has its price, reflected by a deficit in your balance of payments that is now \$4 billion and is continually rising. This militaristic orientation and the siege mentality with which you have saddled yourself is playing havoc with your internal economy and social equanimity, and may eventually bring about a disintegration of your society. You have even indulged in the perilous pursuit of

atomic stockpiling, a ploy which directly affects the survival of humanity. But, as the late Professor Toynbee stated—not as a passing opinion, but as a theme and proven historical theory—“for every challenge there is a response; the greater the challenge, the greater will be the response”. The danger, therefore, is that the belligerency option, no matter how intoxicating temporarily, cannot remain indefinitely a one-way street. Many on both sides believe in the prophetic inevitability of Armageddon right in the heartland of the Holy Land. But to make things less bleak for both of us, and for the world at large, I should like to cite a verse from the Holy Koran which, in English, reads: “A day in your God’s calendar is the equivalent of one thousand years as you calculate time.” So if any of us has a penchant for self-fulfilling prophecies, let us opt for God’s calendar, which would, at least, give us and the world an extra one thousand years of grace and survival.

47. The second option is a real peace, provided that the inalienable rights of the Palestinians are restored. This would not, as you claim, result in the dismantling of Israel. You have achieved your dream of statehood, and the world has been saying it will be guaranteed by the Security Council, by the major Powers, individually and collectively. The report which is the subject of our discussion says the same thing. You have ingathered all the Jewish refugees, the displaced persons and numerous others who belonged to age-old homelands but who for one reason or another became alienated from them, or whom you convinced by persistent indoctrination that they did not belong to them.

48. The rate of immigration to Israel is now a trickle and is further diminished by emigration from Israel. Any further efforts to attract massive numbers of new immigrants from countries where they are happy, prosperous and powerful would be a disaster not only to them but to Israel itself, for it derives generous and formidable sustenance from them. Surely you would suffer most if you dismantled world Jewry. Perhaps some countries may not mind such a thing happening. But is it in your interest, or in the interest of the people involved?

49. A change towards peace, primarily with the Palestinians, and, as a corollary, with the Arab world at large requires a change of venue on your part, a change of vision, a deep and unprejudiced reappraisal of where your true interests lie.

50. There are already 1.5 million Palestinians residing in the West Bank, Gaza and Israel. Surely they are not the monstrous creatures some of the mass media depict them as being. And enabling the remaining 1.5 million Palestinian refugees to exercise their inalienable right to return or not to return, in phases and in an orderly organized fashion, over the years would not be the unmitigated disaster you imagine it. The Palestinians in their own homeland are hard-working, skilled and peace-loving.

51. If this mutation of premises were given serious consideration by your leadership, and if the Palestinians and Israelis lived side by side in amity and fraternity, as the Arabs and Jews did for countless generations, the Middle East and the world might well witness one of its greatest creative transformations.

52. But let me stress that this can happen only if both you and we unshackle ourselves from the conflicts, tragedies and sufferings of the past few decades. I am thinking in terms of a new order, within a framework of genuine peace, in which the tractor replaces the tank as a way of life and a way of thinking.

53. The two options are now readily available to you in unmistakable terms. The onus of choice is yours, and the consequences of your decision will be momentous indeed—not only to us and to you, but to the world at large as well, for decades to come.

54. If your decision should be to opt for peace, then no unnecessary time need be wasted in any further ado about procedural irrelevancies. The Secretary-General is right here in this building and he can, as the report urges, alone or in conjunction with the Security Council, initiate the preliminary steps with the parties concerned in preparation for a resumption of the peace-making process in Geneva, which we hope will be both successful and expeditious.

55. Mr. GURINOVICH (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) (*interpretation from Russian*): The situation in the Middle East, where over the past 30 years four bloody wars have broken out and where the hotbed of military threat has still not been eliminated, arouses the serious concern of all peace-loving forces.

56. As is clearly stated in the decisions of the Twenty-fifth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, we stand solidly in support of the struggle of the Arab peoples for the return of their ancestral lands which remain under the heel of the Israeli occupiers and the struggle for the restoration of the lawful national rights of the Arab people of Palestine.

57. As has already been correctly pointed out here, the question of Palestine is an inalienable, integral part of a settlement of the Middle East problem. This has been confirmed in decisions of the United Nations and receives the understanding and support of the overwhelming majority of the States of the world.

58. Throughout the world there is growing condemnation of the Israeli aggressors and of their protectors, who are undermining the implementation of the decisions of the Security Council and the General Assembly and are blocking the road to a just peace in the Middle East. Israel has no right to Arab lands, any more than the Hitlerite Fascists had a right to seize the countries of Europe. Israel does not take this into account. As a result of the 1967 aggression Israel occupied foreign territories three times greater than its own territory.

59. Like any aggressor, Israel pretends to be a lover of peace and puts forward all kinds of hypocritical “arguments”. For example, the Israelis talk about some kind of existing threat of the destruction of Israel. But it was not the Arabs who waged wars of aggression against Israel; it was Israel which gave the Arabs no rest because of its aggressive actions. It was not the Arabs who drove the inhabitants of Israel from their homes, but Israel that deprived the whole Arab people of Palestine of its homeland. They talk about “secure and recognized bound-

aries", but at the same time let the cat out of the bag when they talk about plans to "re-establish Greater Israel from the Nile to the Euphrates", or at best they remain silent as to the exact frontiers of their State. They talk about their readiness to negotiate with the Arabs "without pre-conditions", but at the same time they put forward their own annexationist preliminary conditions based on "faits accomplis" of the acquisition of foreign land. They completely reject the possibility of participation in any negotiations by the lawful and recognized representatives of the Arab people of Palestine. They talk about the need to respect the right of the people of Israel to live in peace and tranquillity in its own State, while at the same time denying that right to the Arab people of Palestine. And, even more than that, they maintain that such a people does not exist, that these are merely persons who have no right to a homeland and must somehow live in other Arab countries. The representatives of Israel complain that the General Assembly spends about 50 per cent of its time discussing and seeking the means of a political settlement in the Middle East and the elimination of the consequences of Israeli aggression. They try to make themselves out to be advocates of the use of this forum for the solution of other important problems, thus relegating the Middle East problem to a secondary level. At the same time, they do not support proposals in the United Nations on the strengthening of peace, the struggle against colonialism, racism and *apartheid*, disarmament and the solution of problems relating to the economic and social progress of all peoples.

60. Another typical circumstance is that every time conditions begin to seem propitious for the promotion of a political settlement in the Middle East, holding out promise of breaking the deadlock and crowning with success the efforts of those who genuinely want peace, the representatives of Israel indulge in any and every kind of provocation designed to ensure that peace does not reign in the Middle East. The latest example of this position is Israel's involvement in the tragic events in Lebanon. Israel is using the fruits of its aggression in an attempt to maintain constant tension in the Middle East link in the strategy of world imperialism.

61. A heavy responsibility rests on those who support Israel, on those who, through Israel and with the help of reactionary forces in the Arab world, are trying to establish control over the area of the Middle East and its enormous oil resources and important strategic position.

62. The resolution on the question of Palestine adopted at the Fifth Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries at Colombo quite rightly notes that:

"... the military, economic, political and moral support that Israel receives from some States, and particularly the United States of America, encourages it to persist in its aggressive policy and its usurpation of Palestine". [A/31/197, annex IV, resolution NAC/CONF.5/S/RES.9.]

63. And in its resolution on the Middle East question the Conference stressed that:

"... the real objective behind overflowing Israel with such massive quantities of arms is to consolidate it as a colonialist and racist base in Africa, Asia and the Third

World in general". [*Ibid.*, resolution NAC/CONF.5/S/RES.8.]

64. Israel and its backers should not cherish the illusion that they will be able to impose their will by force on the Arab people of Palestine and on the peoples of the other Arab countries. That such considerations are illusory was convincingly proved during the October 1973 war. The vanity of such hopes is borne out, too, by the unremitting struggle of the Arab population of the occupied territories against the Israeli occupiers, which is being waged in conditions of cruel terror and repression on the part of the Israeli military machine.

65. In this connexion, we welcome the unanimous consensus of the Security Council during the consideration of the situation in the occupied Arab territories, in which the PLO took part. Israel would do well to draw the proper conclusions from this and to set out to implement United Nations decisions on the Middle East.

66. Peace is necessary to all peoples of the Middle East. It is necessary also to the people of Israel, who so far have lived, through the fault of their leaders, in the conditions of a garrison State.

67. All peoples are interested in peace in the Middle East, for peace is the greatest good and the most important condition of the economic and social progress of mankind.

68. The delegation of the Byelorussian SSR is profoundly convinced that the attainment of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East is not only a necessity but a possibility, for it is facilitated by the present international situation, which is characterized by the process of détente and the ever-increasing affirmation of the principles of peaceful coexistence among States with different social systems.

69. But, as experience shows, such a settlement cannot be achieved by means of separate arrangements that disregard the key questions of a Middle East settlement.

70. The experience acquired over recent years in the search for a settlement and the decisions adopted by the Security Council and the General Assembly have identified the real basis on which a settlement can be achieved. This basis—to which there is no alternative—includes three interlinked requirements which are in keeping with the interests of all parties directly involved in the conflict. These are: the withdrawal of Israeli troops from all Arab territories occupied in 1967; the implementation of the lawful national rights of the Arab people of Palestine, including their right to establish their own State; and, finally, the establishment of the independent existence and development of all States of the Middle East under appropriate international guarantees.

71. The necessary international machinery for such a settlement does exist. I refer to the Geneva Peace Conference on the Middle East, which, in our view, must resume its work as soon as possible with the participation of all interested parties, including the PLO, the genuine representative of the Arab people of Palestine, for, as has already been noted, a just solution of the Palestine problem is one of the key elements of a lasting and comprehensive settlement.

72. In view of the importance of a speedy settlement of the Middle East problem, the Soviet Union recently took a new, important initiative concerning a Middle East settlement and the Geneva Peace Conference. I am referring to document A/31/257-S/12208. The delegation of the Byelorussian SSR expresses the hope that all parties concerned will give that Soviet initiative a positive reception.

73. Our delegation notes with satisfaction that during the past year the United Nations has continued its efforts to solve the Palestine problem. In this connexion, particularly great importance attaches to the work of the Committee on the Implementation of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, which is reflected in the report of that Committee submitted for our consideration. We support the recommendations contained in the report, which are designed to guarantee the lawful national rights of the Arab people of Palestine, and we regret that, because of the negative position of Israel's protectors, the Security Council was unable to adopt any kind of decision on the report of the Committee. The delegation of the Byelorussian SSR also takes note of the efforts of the United Nations Secretary-General to promote the implementation of General Assembly resolution 3375 (XXX) concerning the participation of the PLO in all efforts, deliberations and conferences on the Middle East under the aegis of the United Nations. These efforts are described in the Secretary-General's report [A/31/271].

74. The Byelorussian SSR, like all countries of the socialist community, faithful to the principle of solidarity with the peoples fighting for freedom and social progress, supports and will always support the just cause of the Palestinian people and all other Arab peoples.

75. This position of the Soviet Union and other socialist States has always been clear and consistent. Speaking at a plenary meeting as long ago as the second session of the General Assembly of the United Nations when the question of Palestine was under consideration, the representative of the Soviet Union stated:

"The Government and the peoples of the USSR have entertained and still entertain a feeling of sympathy for the national aspirations of the nations of the Arab East . . . Arabs and the Arab states will still, on more than one occasion, be looking to Moscow and expecting the USSR to help them in the struggle for their lawful interests, in their efforts to cast off the last vestiges of foreign dependence."⁷

76. During all the ensuing years, the Soviet Union and other States of the socialist community have, even in the days of their own most taxing experiences, consistently supported the just cause of the Arab peoples. They have given and continue to give their active and most effectual support, unlike those who are not promoting the solution of the Middle East problem for those who shout loudest about their support of the Arab peoples do nothing to bring about a just and lasting settlement in the Middle East.

77. The delegation of the Byelorussian SSR is convinced that there does exist a real opportunity of eliminating the

root-causes of the Middle East conflict and of reaching agreements on a comprehensive settlement of it. The United Nations decision on this question must promote the attainment of that goal.

78. Mr. HAMZAH (Democratic Yemen) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The General Assembly is considering the question of Palestine in the light of the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, which was established during the last session under resolution 3376 (XXX). The Committee has submitted its report, which includes a detailed programme intended to enable the people of Palestine to exercise its inalienable right to return to its country, its right to independence and to national sovereignty.

79. We should like to pay a tribute to the Committee for the work that it has done and to its Chairman, Mr. Fall of Senegal, and we consider that this report, which we welcome with pleasure and on which I shall not speak at length, constitutes a correct approach, permitting the restoration of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, that people which has suffered for so long, having being displaced by the colonial policy of Zionist settlement in the very heartland of the Palestinian people. The Committee has submitted its report to the Security Council so that the Council could take appropriate measures in accordance with the recommendations appearing in part two of the report.

80. Some members of the Council submitted a draft resolution reaffirming the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination, including the right to return and the right to national independence and sovereignty in Palestine in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. Although that draft resolution received the majority of votes in the Security Council, it was not adopted because the United States of America, alone in voting against it, exercised its right of veto. The United States of America, which endeavours to play the role of mediator in settling the problem of the Middle East, has once again proved that it is on the side of Israel and is no less hostile than the latter to the Palestinian people and to their right to self-determination and sovereignty. The United States even encourages Israel to persist in its obstinate refusal to implement the resolutions of the United Nations by providing Israel with arms and political and economic aid.

81. The heroic struggle being waged by the Palestinian people is acquiring ever greater historical importance from day to day. The increased international recognition of the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, the support of the non-aligned group and other international groups for the PLO, the fact that the PLO has joined the non-aligned group and its unanimous selection as a member of the Co-ordinating Bureau of Non-aligned Countries during their Fifth Conference held at Colombo, all provide proof that the struggle of the Palestinian people is being strengthened and will inevitably triumph.

82. The victories in the political sphere could never have been won without the heroic resistance of the Palestinian people on the very places where they are struggling or without the increased escalation of their struggle against the

⁷ See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Second Session, Plenary Meetings*, vol. II (125th meeting), p. 1360.

Zionist forces of occupation. The uprising of the Palestinian people, their heroic opposition to the Zionist policy of seizing and annexing their lands, their solidarity with their national leaders, their continuing struggle and the fact that they are armed and waging a people's war for independence—all herald the inevitable victory which that people will win, even though it may take a long time.

83. Democratic Yemen reaffirms its continuing support of the PLO in its constant struggle against Zionism and imperialism until the Palestinian people finally achieve a complete and brilliant victory.

84. Mr. SINGH (India): India's approach and attitude to the question of Palestine was evolved during the early history of the Indian national movement for independence. At that time Palestine was under British administration, in accordance with a Mandate of the League of Nations. The independence of Palestine was always the objective of the people of Palestine, and their struggle for independence was an integral part of the world-wide nationalist movement, a movement which was based on the well-established principle that sovereignty resides in the people. The colonial Power was regarded as holding the people's sovereignty in trust until it could be transferred to the sons and daughters of the soil.

85. Colonial territories became independent through a variety of means, peaceful and non-peaceful. One important result of the establishment of the United Nations was the reaffirmation in its Charter of the principle of the self-determination of peoples; the other equally important result was the support of the United Nations for national liberation movements.

86. What happened in Palestine at the end of the Second World War is a matter of recorded history. The consequences and the manner of the partition of Palestine still remain with us and are at the root of peace in the Middle East. No peace settlement in that region will be viable unless it includes a just settlement of the question of Palestine, that is, the restoration of the national rights of the Palestinian Arab people. Since the United Nations itself created this problem by its decisions of 1947 and 1948, it continues to bear a special responsibility for its solution.

87. For more than 29 years the United Nations has been able to do virtually nothing for the Palestinian Arabs, except treat them as refugees. It was only recently that the United Nations recognized the PLO, as well as the rights of the Palestinian Arab people. Those people are entitled to return to their own lands and to live there, as they have always done, with dignity and in security. The Charter of the United Nations provides the necessary procedures for enabling the Palestinian Arab people to fulfil their legitimate national aspirations, that is, to establish themselves as a sovereign, independent nation in their homeland. That is, of course, without prejudice to the existence and security of all States already established in the Middle East.

88. A famous authority on international law, Hans Kelsen, said the following on the question of Palestine:

"At the moment the Government of the United Kingdom withdrew from Palestine, that territory was in a legal status of statelessness until the new state of Israel was established and recognised by other states. That part

of Palestine which is not under the control of the new government legally will be a stateless territory until a recognised Government will be established there."⁸

89. The Arab people of Palestine are entitled to an independent existence, and in this respect they are no different from the Arab people of Syria, Lebanon and Iraq—all of whom were placed in the same category of inhabitants of Mandated Territories as Palestine by the League of Nations. The root of the problem continues to be the refusal of Israel to withdraw from the areas occupied by it during the conflict of 1967. The occupation established as a result of military necessity has now become so prolonged that it has assumed the characteristics of colonial rule. The longer the Israeli occupation continues, the more explosive the situation will become, because the frustrations of a self-respecting people are bound to increase through their enforced subjection to occupation.

90. The lesson of history surely is that an alien Government is no substitute for self-government. Military occupation by Israel does not confer on it any authority to alter the status of any of the occupied areas or to administer them as if they were territories of Israel. Sovereignty over the occupied Arab lands continues legally to remain with the Palestinian Arab people, which is entitled to national independence and to the exercise of its inalienable rights. The exercise of these rights has been given priority by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, which has formulated an action programme for their implementation.

91. The Committee has presented a pragmatic programme for solving a complex problem peacefully and in stages. Its report, in our view, is a first step in the right direction. It is necessary for the Security Council to consider appropriate steps to enable the Palestinian Arab people to exercise their rights. The responsibility for such action has to be shared between the Security Council and the General Assembly.

92. The first thing to do, of course, is to secure the termination of Israeli occupation of Arab territories. It is with that objective in view that the Committee has drawn up a tentative programme for the implementation of the rights of the Palestinian people within a certain time-frame. We believe that the Committee's report provides a realistic basis for dealing with the question of Palestine. It is our hope that the General Assembly and the Security Council will give full consideration to the recommendations of the Committee on Palestine and take them fully into account in resolving the Middle East problem.

93. It is quite clear to us that, in any discussion or conference concerning peace in the Middle East the Palestinian people should participate on a footing of equality with the other participants. The burden of the past certainly weighs heavily on all, including Israel, but we feel that the time is now ripe for making good the promise of peace for the future. In this regard the great Powers have a crucial role to play, a role which is expected of them by the United Nations in the interests of international peace and security.

The meeting rose at 5.10 p.m.

⁸ See Hans Kelsen, *The Law of the United Nations* (London, Stevens & Sons Limited, 1950), p. 653.