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**The situation in the Middle East**

## **The situation in the Middle East**

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

#### *Summary*

The present report contains replies received in response to the note verbale by the Secretary-General dated 6 May 2019 concerning implementation of the relevant provisions of General Assembly resolutions [73/22](#), entitled “Jerusalem”, and [73/23](#), entitled “The Syrian Golan”.

\* [A/74/150](#).



## I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolutions [73/22](#) and [73/23](#). In its resolution [73/22](#), the Assembly stressed that a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the question of the City of Jerusalem should take into account the legitimate concerns of both the Palestinian and Israeli sides and should include internationally guaranteed provisions to ensure the freedom of religion and of conscience of its inhabitants, as well as permanent, free and unhindered access to the holy places by people of all religions and nationalities. In its resolution [73/23](#), which deals with the Syrian Golan, the Assembly demanded once more that Israel withdraw from all the occupied Syrian Golan to the line of 4 June 1967 in implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions.

2. On 6 May, in order to fulfil my reporting responsibility under resolutions [73/22](#) and [73/23](#), I addressed notes verbales to the Permanent Representative of Israel, the Permanent Representatives of all other Member States and the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations requesting them to inform me of any steps that their Governments had taken or envisaged taking concerning implementation of the relevant provisions of those resolutions. As at 15 August 2019, replies had been received from Cuba, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Libya, Morocco, the Philippines, the Syrian Arab Republic and the State of Palestine. The replies are provided in section II of the present report.

## II. Replies received

### Cuba

[Original: Spanish]

With regard to General Assembly resolution [73/22](#), the Republic of Cuba rejects the unilateral decision of the Government of the United States of America to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, which constitutes a serious and flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations, international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

The intention of the United States Government to alter the historical status of Jerusalem harms the legitimate interests of the Palestinian people and of the Arab and Islamic nations, will have serious consequences for stability and security in the Middle East, will further increase tensions in that region and will impede any effort to resume Israeli-Palestinian peace talks.

We call on the Security Council to fulfil the responsibility entrusted to it under the Charter of the United Nations for maintaining international peace and security, to take the necessary decisions and to demand from Israel an immediate end to the occupation of the Palestinian territories and to aggressive policies and settlement activities, as well as compliance with the resolutions adopted by the Council on the situation in the Middle East, including the question of Palestine.

We reaffirm our full support for a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on a two-State solution that allows the Palestinian people to exercise their right to self-determination and their right to an independent and sovereign State with the pre-1967 borders and East Jerusalem as its capital, and the right of return for refugees.

As for General Assembly resolution [73/23](#), the Republic of Cuba expresses its strongest condemnation of the decision of the United States Government to recognize the occupied Syrian Golan as the territory of Israel, which constitutes a serious and

flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations, international law and the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, in particular resolution [497 \(1981\)](#).

This new manoeuvre by Washington, which harms the legitimate interests of the Syrian people and of the Arab and Islamic nations, will have serious consequences for stability and security in the Middle East and will further exacerbate tensions in that volatile region.

The Security Council must fulfil its responsibility under the Charter of the United Nations for maintaining international peace and security, and take the necessary decisions to curb that unilateral action taken by the United States to support Israel in its intention to annex the occupied territory of the Syrian Golan Heights.

We will continue to support the demand of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to recover the Golan Heights, which were seized by Israel in 1967. We once again call for the total and unconditional withdrawal of Israel from the Syrian Golan and all other occupied Arab territories.

## **Islamic Republic of Iran**

[Original: English]

According to international law, the territory of a State shall not be the object of acquisition by another State resulting from the threat or use of force, and no territorial acquisition resulting from the threat or use of force shall be recognized as legal. This is a peremptory norm of international law applicable to all States under all circumstances.

Therefore, in the view of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the proclamation by the United States President on 21 March 2019 concerning the recognition of the sovereignty of the Israeli regime over the occupied Syrian Golan constitutes a material breach of a peremptory norm of international law, is a grave violation of the purpose and principles of the United Nations, blatantly violates the United Nations Charter, in particular its Article 2, is a gross violation of relevant resolutions of the Security Council and runs counter to relevant resolutions of the General Assembly.

The Islamic Republic of Iran condemns, in the strongest possible terms, such a shameful statement, and considers it null and void and as having no legal weight and value. Such a politically irresponsible and provocative statement and legally unlawful proclamation can in no way change the fact that the occupied Syrian Golan is and will remain an integral part of the territory of the Syria Arab Republic.

In the light of the above, on 26 March 2019, the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran condemned the U.S. statement as an unlawful act violating international law and maintained that such worrying remarks in violation of the rights of the Palestinian and Syrian nations, particularly about the occupied Syrian Golan, are very dangerous for regional security. Further, on 6 April 2019, the President underlined that Golan is part of Syria's territory, which has been taken by the occupiers, and nothing can deny this historical fact.

In regional and international forums, the Islamic Republic of Iran has also continually expressed its principled position on the occupied Syrian Golan. In this connection, Iran strongly supported General Assembly resolution [73/23](#) entitled "The Syrian Golan", which "declares that the Israeli decision of 14 December 1981 to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration on the occupied Syrian Golan is null and void" and "demands once more that Israel withdraw from all the occupied Syrian Golan to the line of 4 June 1967 in implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions".

Likewise, at an extraordinary meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) on 22 March 2019, the Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran condemned the U.S. President's pro-Israeli statement on the occupied Syrian Golan, stating that all OIC member States were shocked by the continued attempts of the U.S. President to give what is not his to racist Israel: first Al-Quds and now Golan.

The Islamic Republic of Iran also supported the part of the Final Communiqué of the fourteenth Islamic Summit Conference, held in Makkah Al-Mukarramah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, on 31 May 2019, concerning the occupied Syrian Golan, which affirmed non-recognition of any decision or action aiming to change the legal and demographic status of Golan and rejected the American President's proclamation, dismissing it as null and void and of no legal effect.

Additionally, the Islamic Republic of Iran supported the Communiqué of the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement, which condemns the statement of the U.S. President of 21 March 2019 in relation to the occupied Syrian Golan and requests the Security Council to shoulder its responsibility by clearly condemning this provocative statement as it is an escalatory and grave violation of international law, the purposes and principles of the United Nations and relevant United Nations resolutions, particularly Security Council resolution [497 \(1981\)](#).

## Libya

[Original: Arabic]

- Libya has consistently stood by the Palestinian people and supported its struggle to exercise all its legitimate rights, in accordance with international conventions and norms.
- Libya reiterates that a comprehensive, just and lasting peace can only be achieved through the establishment of a fully sovereign Palestinian State with its capital in Al-Quds al-Sharif. In that connection, Libya reiterates its commitment to the Arab Peace Initiative of 2002.
- Libya has stated that it rejects and denounces any attempts or statements made or positions taken by any party whatsoever that are aimed at changing the historical, legal and religious status quo in occupied Jerusalem. In keeping with its position, Libya participated in the extraordinary meeting of the Council of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation that was held on 13 December 2017 in Istanbul, Turkey, and supported the resolution adopted at that meeting rejecting the decision of the American Administration to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and transfer its embassy to occupied Jerusalem.
- Libya supports and calls for adherence to all General Assembly resolutions relating to the Palestinian issue, in particular the resolutions concerning illegal Israeli actions in occupied East Jerusalem and other occupied Palestinian territory that were adopted at the tenth emergency special session.
- Libya supports the resolutions of the League of Arab States, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the African Union and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, all of which reiterate the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to establish its independent State with Jerusalem as its capital, and the need to end the inhumane treatment of Palestinians by the occupying authorities, which have consistently violated all international resolutions and instruments.

## Morocco

[Original: Arabic]

### I. Political and diplomatic efforts

Under the leadership of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, the Chair of the Al-Quds Committee, Morocco continued to stress the following points in various international forums and in bilateral meetings conducted by Moroccan officials with their foreign counterparts:

- Jerusalem remains at the heart of the conflict in the Middle East and is central to any resolution arrived at by the Israelis and Palestinians.
- There is an urgent need to break the deadlock in the peace process and we must not succumb to despair. The two-State solution continues to be the only solution that can establish security and stability in the region.
- The unity, sanctity and spiritual nature of Al-Quds al-Sharif, and its distinct status as a city of peace, must be maintained.
- Any unilateral actions taken in occupied Jerusalem must be rejected and considered to be void and without effect and in violation of Security Council resolutions concerning Al-Quds al-Sharif. Such actions are prejudicial to the symbolism and the legal, cultural and religious status of the city. They also put the city's future in jeopardy and run counter to efforts to create a climate that is suitable for bringing about a just peace based on international law.
- States are urged to respect the legal and political status quo in Jerusalem, in line with Security Council resolutions [476 \(1980\)](#) and [478 \(1980\)](#).
- East Jerusalem falls within the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 and is the capital of the Palestinian State. The question of East Jerusalem is therefore one of the final status issues that must be resolved through negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians.
- The two-State solution is the strategic choice that the international community has agreed upon to put an end to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, in accordance with internationally authoritative resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative.
- Continued and intensified settlement-building activity in the Occupied Palestinian Territory threatens to undermine the two-State solution and constitutes a flagrant violation of Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#).
- In order to establish a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East, internationally authoritative resolutions must be implemented, with a view to ensuring an end to the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories and the establishment, within the June 1967 borders, of an independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital living side by side with Israel in security and peace.
- Economic proposals to address the repercussions of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict cannot replace a comprehensive political plan that satisfies the just aspirations of the Palestinian people to freedom and independence, in accordance with the two-State solution.
- Jerusalem is central to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as emphasized in the joint statement on Jerusalem that His Majesty King Mohammed VI and His Holiness Pope Francis signed during the latter's visit to Morocco on 30 March 2019. In that statement, they consider the city to be a sacred place of encounter and

emphasize the importance of preserving it as the common patrimony of humanity, a symbol of peaceful coexistence for the followers of the three monotheistic religions and the home of mutual respect and dialogue.

- The multi-religious character, the spiritual dimension and unique cultural identity of Al-Quds al-Sharif must be protected and promoted.
- The followers of the three monotheistic religions must have free access to holy sites in the Holy City, and they must have the right to perform their religious practices. Doing so would make Al-Quds al-Sharif reverberate with the supplications of all the faithful to God, the creator of everything, for a future in which peace and brotherhood prevail throughout the world.

## **II. Efforts on the ground**

- As part of the constant care and attention that His Majesty King Mohammed VI, the Chair of the Al-Quds Committee, devotes to Al-Quds al-Sharif and to maintaining its architectural, cultural and spiritual heritage, His Majesty has allocated a financial grant as the contribution of Morocco to the restoration and rehabilitation of certain spaces within the Aqsa Mosque and its surroundings (see statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation on 17 April 2019). To that end, traditional builders and artisans from Morocco will be sent to repair the celebrated architecture of the Aqsa Mosque.
- The gift of Morocco embodies the ongoing efforts of the Al-Quds Committee, under the leadership of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, to preserve Jerusalem and support the resilience of its people, repair its architectural landmarks, safeguard its cultural and spiritual heritage, and defend its historical and legal status.
- In 2018, Bayt Mal Al-Quds al-Sharif Agency, the field arm of the Al-Quds Committee, executed more than 11 projects valued at \$3.7 million, including projects that are designed to protect the cultural and architectural heritage of Jerusalem, provide social assistance, support the resilience of Jerusalemites, disseminate culture and thought, protect culture and preserve the Palestinian archive.
- Morocco funded the \$5.4 million acquisition of a building that sits in a strategic location in the heart of the old city of Jerusalem, near the Aqsa Mosque, and covers an area of 2,100 m<sup>2</sup>. The building will soon be opened as the Moroccan Cultural Centre, an intellectual, cultural and humanitarian institute that will promote the values of peace and coexistence.
- The Agency launched the second phase of a project to repair and rehabilitate the building that houses the Moroccan Cultural Centre (Morocco House). Costing \$1.155 million in total, the project will cover building maintenance, imbuing the space inside with a Moroccan character and the annual cost of operating and guarding the building.

## Philippines

[Original: English]

Resolution [73/22](#) (“Jerusalem”): Jerusalem is a “final status issue” to be resolved in direct negotiations between Israel and Palestine.

Resolution [73/23](#) (“The Syrian Golan”): The Philippines enjoys friendly relations with the Syrian Arab Republic and continues to support Syria’s territorial integrity over the occupied Golan Heights.

## Syrian Arab Republic

[Original: Arabic]

### Implementation of General Assembly resolution [73/23](#), entitled “The Syrian Golan”

1. From the time that Israel occupied the Syrian Golan in 1967, the international community has reiterated that it rejects that occupation and has demanded that Israel, the occupying Power, withdraw from the entire occupied Syrian Golan to the line of 4 June 1967. In its resolution [73/23](#) of 30 November 2018, entitled “The Syrian Golan”, the General Assembly demands once more that Israel withdraw from all the occupied Syrian Golan to the line of 4 June 1967, in implementation of the relevant United Nations resolutions. In that same resolution, the General Assembly also once again demands that Israel, the occupying Power, comply with United Nations resolutions concerning the occupied Syrian Golan, in particular Security Council resolution [497 \(1981\)](#). In that resolution, the Security Council declares that the Israeli decision of 14 December 1981 to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration in the occupied Syrian Golan is null and void and completely illegal. The General Assembly also demands that Israel should rescind forthwith its decision.

2. The Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan has persisted for more than 52 years. During that time, the United Nations has time and again adopted resolutions in which Israel is called upon to end its occupation of the Syrian Golan, its unremitting repression of Syrian civilians suffering under colonial occupation and its blatant, unchecked violation of international instruments and norms. Nevertheless, Israel continues to turn its back on United Nations resolutions and international law, and continues to occupy the Syrian Golan, in flagrant violation of international instruments and treaties and international law thanks to the protection from accountability provided by certain Security Council members.

3. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic once again condemns in the strongest terms the illegitimate and immoral decision of the President of the United States of America regarding Israel’s so-called sovereignty over the occupied Syrian Arab Golan. It constitutes a flagrant violation of international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant resolutions of the Organization, including resolution [497 \(1981\)](#), which was adopted unanimously by the Security Council. In that resolution, the Council acknowledges that the Syrian Arab Golan is an occupied territory and that any actions taken by Israel, the occupying Power, in the occupied Syrian Arab Golan, are null and void and have no legal effect. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic considers the piece of paper signed by President Trump and offered as a gift to the Prime Minister of the Israeli occupying Power as a mere unilateral act by a party that does not possess the political, legal or moral authority to decide the destinies of the peoples of the world or dispose of territories that constitute an integral part of the Syrian Arab Republic. Such United States practices are dangerous because they represent the current American Administration’s reckless and

unprecedented tendency to undermine international law, humiliate the United Nations and ignore all terms of reference, legal precedent and the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions concerning the Arab-Israeli conflict and the absolute need for Israel to end its occupation of Arab lands and withdraw to the borders of 4 June 1967.

4. The Syrian Government categorically rejects the decision of Israel, the occupying Power, to hold elections for so-called local councils in the occupied Syrian Golan. It strongly condemns that decision, which violates international law and is contrary to international instruments and norms. The Government reiterates that our people in the Golan reject that decision, which they consider to be a blatant affront to their national values and sense of belonging to their motherland, Syria.

5. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic also condemns the pressure being put by the Israeli occupying authorities on our people in the occupied Syrian Golan to force them to register their land, which was owned by their parents and grandparents, with the Israeli Land Registration Office. They are forcing them to submit title deeds registered in the homeland or other instruments establishing ownership of land to the Land Registration Office of the Israeli occupying authorities, so that they can be given Israeli-issued title deeds in their place. Their land is confiscated if they refuse to submit to this brutal measure. In advance of taking a measure that will affect all villages in the occupied Syrian Golan, the Land Registration Office of the Israeli occupying authorities has asked the residents of the occupied village of Ayn Qunyah and the industrial zone of the occupied village of Majdal Shams to submit their title deeds.

6. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic denounces the settlement policies that are being implemented by Israel in the occupied Syrian Golan without any regard for the relevant Security Council, General Assembly and Human Rights Council resolutions. In its resolutions, the General Assembly reaffirms the illegality of Israeli settlement building and other activities in the occupied Syrian Golan and renews its call on Israel to desist from changing the physical character, demographic composition, institutional structure and legal status of the occupied Syrian Golan and, in particular, to desist from establishing settlements. The General Assembly has called on Israel to desist from its continuous building of settlements.

7. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic condemns all Israeli practices and actions aimed at controlling the natural resources of the occupied Syrian Golan and the systematic looting of those resources by Israel, the occupying Power, in flagrant violation of the principle of the permanent sovereignty of peoples under foreign occupation over their natural resources, Security Council resolution [497 \(1981\)](#) and the General Assembly resolution entitled "Permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources". Israel continues to deplete the natural resources of the occupied Syrian Golan and deprive the territory's Syrian population of the ability to benefit from their natural resources, including water. The Israeli occupiers deliberately waste those resources or allow only Israeli settlers to utilize them. Israel has also cleared land adjacent to the ceasefire line in the occupied Syrian Golan and cut down trees. The Israeli occupation authorities have also diverted water from Mas'adah Lake in the occupied Syrian Golan to Israeli settlements. That Israeli action, which is contrary to international law and the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, has created an economic and environmental catastrophe of enormous proportions for Syrian nationals in the occupied Syrian Golan that has caused them to incur significant material losses. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic also warns of the threat posed by the occupying Israeli authorities' decision to authorize the United States company Genie Energy to drill for oil in the occupied Syrian Golan, in flagrant violation of



international law, international humanitarian law, the Fourth Geneva Convention and United Nations resolutions. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic also condemns the installation by the Israeli occupying forces of wind turbines 130 metres in diameter between towns in the occupied Syrian Golan, which will prevent farmers from harvesting their crops during all seasons of the year in those areas and will also cause severe health and environmental harm that will threaten the lives of the people of the occupied Syrian Golan.

8. The Syrian Arab Republic condemns the funding by the European Union of a survey on “alternative tourism” to promote tourism in Israeli settlements in the occupied Syrian Golan. The funding was announced at a conference held at the so-called Marom Golan settlement, near the two destroyed Syrian villages of Bab al-Hawa and Muwaysah. More than 100 tourism experts and advisers took part in an exchange of ideas and views on how to promote tourism in the occupied Syrian Golan. These developments are a clear and flagrant violation of the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic once again calls upon the States members of the European Union and the States Members of the United Nations to refuse, in accordance with their obligations under international law, to import natural or manufactured products from the occupied territories.

9. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic reiterates that the Israeli occupying forces’ policy of arbitrary detention and sham trials is part of a catalogue of Israeli crimes and human rights violations against Syrian civilian citizens in the occupied Syrian Golan stretching back over the more than five decades that Israel has occupied the Syrian Golan. It calls on international bodies to pressure Israel, the occupying Power, for the immediate and unconditional release of the Syrian prisoner Sidqi al-Miqt, the Mandela of Syria, and the imprisoned youth Amal Abu Salih.

10. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic calls upon the Secretary-General, the Security Council, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the President of the Human Rights Council, the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, and all human rights organizations to pressure Israel, the occupying Power, to guarantee a healthy environment for Syrian citizens in the occupied Syrian Golan, particularly in view of Israeli practices that destroy the environment. Israel has buried nuclear waste in the occupied Syrian Golan, specifically at the foot of Jabal al-Shaykh, in containers with a thirty-year life expectancy that are not secure and prone to cracking, and the radioactive contents of which can seep into soil and groundwater. That exposes Syrian citizens in the occupied Syrian Golan to the risk of cancer, and deaths from cancer now account for 30 per cent of all deaths.

11. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic also emphasizes that the above-mentioned international bodies must pressure Israel to cease taking peremptory decisions prohibiting citizens in the occupied Syrian Golan from visiting their Syrian homeland via the Qunaytirah crossing. Those arbitrary Israeli measures contravene the Geneva Conventions and other international norms and instruments. They serve only to increase the material, mental and physical suffering of Syrian citizens in the occupied Syrian Golan beyond all legal and moral bounds.

12. My Government reaffirms that the occupied Syrian Arab Golan is an integral part of the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic. Its recovery from the Israeli occupiers by all the means provided for under international law is an eternal right that cannot be bargained over or waived.

13. Lastly, the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic reaffirms that, in order to ensure stability in the Middle East and preserve the credibility of the United Nations, measures must be taken to implement all international resolutions aimed at ending the Israeli occupation of Arab territories, including the Syrian Arab Golan, and

compelling Israel to withdraw to the line of 4 June 1967, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions, including, in particular, Security Council resolutions [242 \(1967\)](#), [338 \(1973\)](#), [497 \(1981\)](#) and [2334 \(2016\)](#).

### **Implementation of General Assembly resolution [73/22](#), entitled “Jerusalem”**

1. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic reiterates its support for General Assembly resolution [73/22](#), entitled “Jerusalem”, and calls on the international community to bring pressure to bear on Israel to end its attempts to Judaize Jerusalem and revoke all its baseless legislative and administrative measures aimed at changing the city’s status and identity. It also calls for serious and effective steps to be taken to stop Israel’s unlawful practices against the Palestinian people in Jerusalem, above all settlement activities and practices that undermine the city’s holy sites.

2. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic condemns the decision by the United States of America to move its embassy to the occupied city of Jerusalem and recognize that city as the capital of the Israeli occupation. Such decisions are a flagrant violation of the legal, political and historical status of Jerusalem, and are merely one aspect of the rape of Palestine, the displacement of its people and the establishment of an occupying colonial entity on its soil. Moreover, those decisions constitute a flagrant violation of Security Council and General Assembly resolutions in which Israel is called upon to withdraw from the territories that it occupied in 1967, including Jerusalem. The above-mentioned decisions are therefore simply unilateral actions that have no legitimacy or impact on the legal status of Jerusalem.

3. The Syrian Arab Republic adheres to its principled position of supporting the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to establish its independent State, with Jerusalem as its capital, on the entirety of its national territory. We also support the right of return of Palestinian refugees, in accordance with General Assembly resolution [194 \(III\)](#) of 1948.

4. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic reaffirms that achieving a just and comprehensive peace requires implementation of United Nations resolutions calling for an end to the Israeli occupation of Arab territories, above all Security Council resolutions [242 \(1967\)](#), [338 \(1973\)](#), [497 \(1981\)](#) and [2334 \(2016\)](#); Israeli withdrawal from all occupied Arab territories to the line of 4 June 1967; and the establishment of a Palestinian State with Jerusalem as its capital.

### **State of Palestine**

[Original: English]

To the present day, Israel persists in its attempts to alter the demography, character, identity and legal status of Jerusalem, in violation of international law and United Nations Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, including resolution [73/22](#). Since the onset of the Israeli occupation in 1967, the occupying Power has systematically pursued such illegal policies and measures and, especially from 1980 onward following the unlawful extension of its so-called “Basic Law” to the City, has sought to forcibly cement its attempted annexation of Occupied East Jerusalem.

Regrettably, since the United States President’s December 2017 declaration on Jerusalem and transfer of the U.S. Embassy to the City in May 2018, Israeli violations have risen, clearly emboldened by these decisions. Israeli officials have become even more blatant in their contempt of the Security Council and the international consensus on Jerusalem, as reflected in sharp escalation of the following: inflammatory rhetoric boasting of Israel’s annexation of the City; justification of illegal actions based on religious edicts and offensive, distorted narratives; threats of further annexation in

the West Bank; increased settlement construction; violations against the City's Palestinian inhabitants, including a rise in demolition of Palestinian homes, revocation of residency rights, seizure of properties by extremist settlers and forced displacement of Palestinian families; rhetoric and pressure against United Nations operations in Occupied East Jerusalem, particularly of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East; and dangerous incitement at holy sites, especially in the Old City and at Al-Haram Al-Sharif, undermining the sanctity of holy sites and the right of the Palestinian people, both Muslims and Christians, to freely worship in Jerusalem.

There are countless examples of such inflammatory rhetoric and incitement, such as that by the Israeli Prime Minister declaring, on 28 January 2019, that: "There won't be any more uprooting or halting of settlements – just the opposite: the Land of Israel is ours, and will remain ours", or by another Minister (Regev) that: "This land has a connection with only one people – the Jewish people", or by another Minister (Erdan) that: "The State of Israel does not intend to relinquish in any way its sovereignty over eastern Jerusalem and will not allow any foothold in it". Such rhetoric is echoed repeatedly by officials, stoking tensions and fuelling the aggression of Israeli settlers and religious extremists, as witnessed in the recurrent calls for a Jewish takeover of Al-Haram Al-Sharif and other provocations, risking the outbreak of a religious confrontation with grave repercussions. This has been accompanied by a campaign of systematic intimidation and harassment of Palestinian inhabitants of the City and the creation of a coercive environment aimed at expelling them from their homes and land.

Moreover, Israel's continued closure of numerous Palestinian cultural, social and political institutions in Jerusalem – over 120 institutions have closed since the start of the occupation, including Orient House – has severely affected services to and access by the Palestinian population, which is being increasingly besieged and tormented by the occupation and enduring extremely difficult socioeconomic conditions.

All of this has created an extremely toxic and volatile situation in Jerusalem, about which we continue to alert the General Assembly and Security Council and to urgently appeal for responsible action in line with their Charter duties and relevant resolutions, including, inter alia, Security Council resolutions [476 \(1980\)](#), [478 \(1980\)](#) and [2334 \(2016\)](#) and relevant General Assembly resolutions, from resolution [181 \(II\)](#) of 29 November 1947 onward, including resolution [73/22](#) on Jerusalem.

As affirmed in those resolutions, the international community has been rightly unequivocal in rejecting Israel's unlawful policies and practices in the City throughout the 52 years of this illegal, foreign occupation, which continues to be implemented by such acts of sheer colonization and aggression. Indeed, what is happening in Occupied East Jerusalem is a microcosm of what is happening in the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, from which the City is being increasingly severed and isolated physically, by the multiplying settlements and the Wall illegally constructed by Israel and countless military checkpoints, and also legislatively, by a series of discriminatory laws and annexationist measures and schemes enacted by the Israeli Government.

The General Assembly's adoption on 21 December 2017 of resolution [ES-10/19](#), "Status of Jerusalem", reaffirming relevant resolutions and rejecting Israel's illegal measures and U.S. actions in this regard, was therefore not only a responsible but an invaluable contribution towards protecting the City's legal and historic status, the rights of its Palestinian inhabitants and its holy sites in the face of Israel's entrenchment of occupation and de facto annexation. As affirmed by the Assembly,

Jerusalem remains a final-status issue to be resolved through negotiations in line with relevant United Nations resolutions.

It is shocking however – and a stark testament to the gravity of the challenges faced by the international rules-based order – that Israel continues to so flagrantly disrespect the demands for the cessation of its illegal actions without consequence. Such impunity has severely diminished the viability of the two-State solution on the 1967 lines and continues to obstruct the realization of the rights and legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people to freedom and independence in their State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital. Urgent action is needed to reverse the negative trends and salvage the prospects for a peaceful solution.

While deeply concerned by the prevailing situation, we are reassured by the abidance of the established international position, as reflected by the overwhelming support of resolution [73/22](#). General Assembly legislation on Jerusalem remains principled and not politicized, consistent with the Charter, international law, and relevant United Nations resolutions, as well as the July 2004 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, and remains fully respectful of the City’s historic and religious dimensions and sensitivities, including with regard to the historic status quo in place for over a century at Al-Haram Al-Sharif. This legislation also clearly reaffirms Israel’s status as the occupying Power in East Jerusalem and the international community’s non-recognition of Israeli sovereignty over the City as a whole, contrary to claims otherwise.

Such reaffirmations are vital for ensuring the application of international law to Jerusalem, which remains a core issue of the Palestine question. States must be guided by and are obliged to respect these principled positions as an essential part of their international obligations. Such respect will help contribute to the creation of the political horizon that will eventually bring an end to the Israeli occupation, lead to a just resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian situation – the crux of Arab-Israeli conflict – and establish genuine peace, security and coexistence. Pending the achievement of a just solution, the State of Palestine underscores the following:

- Resolution [73/22](#) reaffirms the Security Council and General Assembly determination “that any actions taken by Israel, the occupying Power, to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration on the Holy City of Jerusalem are illegal and therefore null and void and have no validity whatsoever”, calling on Israel “to immediately cease all such illegal and unilateral measures.” This includes the so-called Israeli “Basic Law” on Jerusalem, deemed by both the Council and Assembly as “null and void” and to be “rescinded forthwith”. This determination stands and the demand must be respected.
- Resolution [73/22](#) also recalls Security Council resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#), which reflects the long-established international stance on the basis of a just solution to the conflict, including with regard to Jerusalem. Resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#) reaffirmed the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force and underlined that the Council will not recognize “any changes to the 4 June 1967 lines, including with regard to Jerusalem, other than those agreed by the parties through negotiations”, and called upon all States “to distinguish, in their relevant dealings, between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories occupied since 1967”.

The State of Palestine appeals to all States and organizations to abide by resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#), including in respect of the obligation of distinction. This must include, inter alia, respect for the call on all States “to refrain from establishing diplomatic missions in the Holy City Jerusalem”. We regret the continuing provocative announcements by some States of ill intentions and short-sightedness in this regard.

The demands by the Council and Assembly for the cessation of settlement activities in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory must also be respected. Serious measures must be taken to hold Israel accountable, should it persist with its illegal construction and expansion of settlements, the Wall and associated colonization regime, and to cease the transfer of Israeli settlers to the occupied territory, the demolition of homes and eviction of Palestinian families, including large portions of the Bedouin Palestine refugee community.

States must be equally vigilant in demanding that Israel cease fanning the flames of religious strife and must insist that all parties cease all acts of provocation, incitement and inflammatory rhetoric and observe calm and restraint. We recall specifically the Assembly's clear call in resolution [73/22](#) "for respect for the historic status quo at the holy places of Jerusalem, including the Haram al-Sharif, in word and in practice", and that it urged "all sides to work immediately and cooperatively to defuse tensions and halt all provocations, incitement and violence at the holy sites in the City".

Respect for the historic status quo and Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan's custodianship of the Muslim and Christian holy places is essential and a pillar of stability. All violations must be halted and, as stressed by the Assembly, the unique historic, spiritual, religious and cultural dimensions of the City must be respected and free, unhindered access to the holy places by people of all religions and nationalities must be guaranteed. This must include respect for the City's Arab identity and heritage and for the clear demands for the cessation of Israeli policies aimed at erasing them, including repressive measures targeting Jerusalem's indigenous Palestinian inhabitants and attempting to replace them with Israel's Jewish population and measures to sever the City from its natural Palestinian environs in the rest of the West Bank.

The State of Palestine therefore stresses the urgency of international action to preserve and uphold international law, safeguard Palestinian rights, reverse the negative trends on the ground and restore the possibility of a just peace. We urge the mobilization of political will to implement the relevant resolutions and fulfil legal obligations in this regard. Serious efforts, including practical measures, must be made to convey a firm message to Israel that this illegal and unjust situation will no longer be tolerated and that it cannot persist with its occupation and the colonization of Jerusalem and of the rest of the Palestinian territory it has occupied since 1967 without consequence.

In this regard, committed to multilateralism, Palestine remains insistent on a collective approach to justly resolve the Palestinian question in all aspects, including the question of Jerusalem, in accordance with the relevant resolutions. The permanent responsibility of the United Nations is central in this regard and the Security Council and General Assembly must be at the forefront of upholding this responsibility. We also call for the utilization of the Secretary-General's good offices and the capacities of the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process to alleviate the plight of the Palestinian people, mediate and preserve hope in the face of rising despair.

For its part, the State of Palestine reaffirms its full respect for international law and all relevant United Nations resolutions; our actions have been consistent in seeking the implementation of those resolutions, including resolution [73/22](#). We remain convinced that international law is key to rectifying the injustice the Palestinian people have for so long endured, and remain committed to all political, legal, popular and non-violent means to this end. Moreover, despite the political deadlock and serious setbacks, the Palestinian leadership remains, to the present moment, adherent in word and deed to the two-State solution on the pre-1967 borders

and committed to the internationally endorsed terms of reference and parameters of a just solution based on the relevant United Nations resolutions, Madrid principles, Arab Peace Initiative and Quartet road map.

To this end, we will continue drawing the international community's attention to the situation in Jerusalem and continue calling for political and legal action to compel a halt to Israel's illegal and provocative measures in the City. We will also continue seeking support from all partners for Jerusalem's Palestinian inhabitants to alleviate the dire socioeconomic conditions caused by the occupation's illegal, discriminatory and oppressive measures, as well as support to preserve the City's religious and cultural heritage. We will also continue our efforts with the United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to engage diplomats, parliamentarians, scholars, civil society and the media on the situation of Jerusalem in all its dimensions in the search for joint solutions based on the law and international obligations.

We reaffirm our readiness to cooperate with responsible, credible, multilateral initiatives aimed at bringing an end to Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem; achieving the two-State solution of an independent, sovereign, contiguous and viable State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side with Israel in peace and security within recognized borders based on the pre-1967 borders; and realizing the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including a just solution for the Palestine refugees based on General Assembly resolution 194 (III). Despite the many crises and challenges faced at the moment, the Palestinian leadership has remained and will remain committed to a peaceful and just solution and renews its calls on the international community to uphold its obligations and commitments to the establishment of long-delayed justice, peace and security.

The Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations avails himself of this opportunity to renew to the Secretary-General of the United Nations the assurances of his highest consideration.

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