



# General Assembly

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## Human Rights Council

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Agenda items 2 and 7

### Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General

### Human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories

## Human rights in the occupied Syrian Golan

### Report of the Secretary-General\*

#### *Summary*

The present report was prepared pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 43/30 on human rights in the occupied Syrian Golan, in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to report to it on human rights in the occupied Syrian Golan at its forty-sixth session.

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\* Agreement was reached to publish the present report after the standard publication date owing to circumstances beyond the submitter's control.



## I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 43/30, in which the Human Rights Council called upon Israel, the occupying Power, to comply with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Human Rights Council, in particular Security Council resolution 497 (1981), in which the Security Council decided, *inter alia*, that the decision of Israel to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration on the occupied Syrian Golan was null and void and without international legal effect, and demanded that Israel rescind forthwith its decision.
2. In its resolution 43/30, the Human Rights Council requested the Secretary-General to bring the resolution to the attention of all Governments, the competent United Nations organs, specialized agencies, international and regional intergovernmental organizations and international humanitarian organizations, to disseminate it as widely as possible and to report on human rights in the occupied Syrian Golan to the Council at its forty-sixth session. In addition, the Council decided to continue its consideration of the matter at its forty-sixth session.

## II. Implementation of Human Rights Council resolution 43/30

3. In a note verbale dated 21 October 2020 from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) addressed to the Government of Israel, on behalf of the Secretary-General, with reference to Human Rights Council resolution 43/30, the Office requested information on steps taken or envisaged concerning the implementation of the resolution. At the time of reporting, no reply had been received.
4. In a note verbale dated 21 October 2020 from OHCHR addressed to all permanent missions in Geneva, on behalf of the Secretary-General, the Office drew their attention to Human Rights Council resolution 43/30 and requested Member States to provide information on any steps taken or envisaged concerning the implementation of the relevant provisions of the resolution. The Permanent Missions of Algeria, Cuba, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Egypt, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Kuwait, the Syrian Arab Republic and the Russian Federation to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva responded to the request.
5. In a note verbale dated 21 October 2020 from OHCHR addressed to the competent United Nations organs, specialized agencies, international and regional intergovernmental organizations and international humanitarian organizations, on behalf of the Secretary-General and pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 43/30, the Office brought the resolution to the attention of those entities. The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) replied to the note verbale.
6. Algeria replied to the note verbale from OHCHR, on 9 December 2020, noting that the practices and violations systematically carried out by Israel, which had affected all human rights of the Syrian Arab population of the occupied Syrian Golan, constituted continuous violations of the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Human Rights Council. Algeria specifically noted Security Council resolutions 237 (1967), 242 (1967) and 497 (1981), as well as all relevant resolutions of the Human Rights Council adopted since 2006 and the resolutions of the Commission on Human Rights concerning the occupied Syrian Golan. Algeria noted that the actions of Israel in the occupied Syrian Golan also constituted a flagrant violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention and Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions of 1949.
7. Algeria expressed its deep concern over the continuation and escalation of violations committed by Israel against the human rights of the Syrian Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan, particularly since the announcement by the United States recognizing the annexation by Israel of the territory. Algeria emphasized that that announcement did not comply with the provisions of international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention, the relevant provisions of the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907 and Security Council resolution 497 (1981), in which the Council considered the decision by Israel to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration on the occupied Syrian Golan null and void and without

legal effect. Algeria also emphasized that the announcement by the United States was in violation of relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council.

8. Algeria recalled the position of the relevant groups, especially OIC, which in a statement of 26 March 2019, rejected the announcement by the Government of the United States recognizing Israeli sovereignty over the occupied Syrian Golan. OIC noted that the announcement was intended to perpetuate it as a *fait accompli* and legitimize the Israeli occupation. Algeria recalled that OIC stressed that that measure constituted a clear violation of international law and relevant United Nations resolutions and that the decision did not change the legal status of the Syrian Golan as an occupied Syrian Arab territory, in line with international law and relevant United Nations resolutions. Algeria highlighted that OIC urged all States to respect internationally legitimate resolutions and not to recognize any measure inconsistent with those resolutions.

9. Algeria recalled the report of the Director-General of the International Labour Organization on the situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories, in which the continued discriminatory practices by Israel regarding access to land and water for the Syrian Arab population of the occupied Syrian Golan were noted. Algeria noted that, according to the report, Israel facilitated access to land and water in the occupied Syrian Golan for Israeli settlers through tax incentives and subsidies, while the Syrian Arab population encountered difficulties in obtaining building permits. Algeria also noted that, in the report, concern was expressed about plans by Israel for a large-scale installation of wind turbines on Syrian-owned land, which would further restrict the expansion of Syrian villages. Algeria added that, in the report, the continued administrative and political efforts by Israel to annex the occupied Syrian Golan were indicated. It also referred to the conclusions in the report that the deterioration in the situation of work and employment in the occupied Arab territories continued and that Syrian Arab workers in the occupied Syrian Golan had for 50 years been subject to discrimination by Israel.

10. Algeria also recalled the note by the Secretary-General on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan (A/74/88-E/2019/72), in which the validity of Security Council resolution 497 (1981) was recognized. Algeria noted that the document shed light on human rights violations perpetrated by Israel against the Syrian Arab population of the occupied Syrian Golan; the illegality of the construction and expansion of Israeli settlements and related infrastructure, as recognized by resolutions of the Economic and Social Council, was also reaffirmed. It was noted in the document that the continued establishment and expansion of Israeli settlements in the occupied Syrian Golan amounted to the transfer by Israel of its own civilian population into the territory it occupied, which was prohibited under international humanitarian law. Algeria also noted that it had highlighted that the Syrian Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan faced persistent problems due to the discriminatory nature of land, housing and development policies, given that it was almost impossible for Syrians to obtain building permits and that the number of demolition orders issued by Israel for properties owned by the Syrian Arab population had reached more than 1,570 since 1983. Algeria indicated that the discriminatory policies affecting the Syrian Arab population, and the implications for their livelihood, especially in the field of work and agriculture, were described in the document. It referred to the conclusions in the document that the long-standing Israeli occupation continued to have a detrimental effect on the living conditions of the Syrian Arab population and that the negative impact of the occupation was multilayered, with the cumulative repercussions affecting the future of the population under occupation. Algeria noted that the document also contained the conclusion that Israel continued to adopt policies and practices that contradicted relevant Security Council resolutions, international humanitarian law and international human rights law. It added that it was pointed out in the document that, while some of those practices might be considered discriminatory, others might amount to forcible deportation or collective punishment of protected persons, which constituted a grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention and was prohibited under international law.

11. Algeria expressed its support for the implementation of Human Rights Council resolution 43/30 and stressed that the creation and expansion of settlements constituted a

flagrant violation of international law. Algeria noted the need to pressure Israel to halt its settlement activities and related infrastructure plans in the occupied Syrian Golan. Algeria called upon OHCHR, within its mandate, to pay increased attention to the situation of human rights of the Syrian Arab population of the occupied Syrian Golan and to shed light on ongoing human rights violations by Israel, with particular emphasis on the following:

(a) The expropriation of land owned by internally displaced persons, which had been declared State property under the pretext of the absence of the owners or due to its proximity to the ceasefire line, or for the purpose of establishing military camps or structures;

(b) Arbitrary and discriminatory practices in the field of health, including those related to the labour sector, which had led to a severe shortage of health centres, medical clinics and hospitals;

(c) The need to condemn actions which led to the obliteration of features of Arab culture and the imposition by Israel of its curriculum in schools with the aim of weakening national affiliation and subverting national identity;

(d) Actions by Israel to prevent the Syrian Arab population of the occupied Syrian Golan from communicating with their relatives in the Syrian Arab Republic and the imposition of Israeli identity cards, in violation of the rights of the Syrian Arab population;

(e) The need to monitor the situation of Syrian citizens detained in Israeli prisons.

12. The Permanent Mission of Cuba to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva responded to the note verbale from OHCHR, on 2 November 2020. Cuba noted that the international community had reiterated its concern about the suffering of the Syrian Arab population of the occupied Syrian Golan due to the systematic and continuous violations of human rights by Israel since 1967, while also demanding an end to the occupation of the territory. Cuba stated that it considered that all actions, measures or legislative or administrative provisions adopted by Israel, or which it might take, which purported to alter the legal status, physical character or demographic composition of the occupied Syrian Golan, and its institutional structure, as well as measures to apply the jurisdiction and administration of Israel in the illegally occupied territory, should be recognized as null and void and without legal effect.

13. Cuba emphasized that it was unacceptable that the military occupation by Israel of the Syrian Golan had continued since 14 December 1981, despite the international community's sustained demand that the de facto Israeli imposition of laws, jurisdiction and administration on the occupied Syrian Golan should cease. Cuba stated that the acquisition of territory by force was inadmissible under international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

14. Cuba noted its rejection of practices and conduct aimed at controlling and seizing the natural resources of the occupied Syrian Golan by Israel, in flagrant violation of General Assembly and Security Council resolutions on the permanent sovereignty of the Syrian Arab population over its natural resources in the occupied Syrian Golan.

15. Cuba expressed its strongest condemnation of the declaration by the Government of the United States recognizing the occupied Syrian Golan as the territory of Israel. It considered that as constituting a serious and flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations, international law and relevant resolutions adopted by the Security Council, in particular resolution 497 (1981). It added that that recognition was in violation of the legitimate interests of the Syrian people and the Arab and Islamic nations, with serious consequences for stability and security in the Middle East and the growing escalation of tension in the region. Cuba urged the Security Council to fulfil its responsibility under the Charter, on the maintenance of international peace and security, and to take the decisions necessary to stop the actions of the United States which supported Israel in its intention to annex the occupied Syrian Golan.

16. Cuba emphasized that Israel must cease practices which contravened the full enjoyment of human rights for the Syrian Arab residents of the occupied Syrian Golan and, in that regard, must refrain from applying repressive measures upon the population. Cuba noted that foreign occupation, policies of expansion and aggression, racial discrimination, the creation of settlements, the imposition of the view that it was a *fait accompli* and the

annexation by force of territory, as had occurred in the occupied Syrian Golan, were practices that violated international instruments and norms and had a negative impact on the human rights of the Syrian Arab population of the occupied Syrian Golan.

17. Cuba condemned the violations of international humanitarian law by Israel with regard to Syrian detainees in the occupied Syrian Golan and reiterated its concern that those practices persisted. It also reiterated its concern over the prevalence of inhumane conditions in Israeli prisons, noting that it had led to the deteriorating health, and in some cases endangered the lives, of the detainees. Cuba emphasized that the continued illegal occupation by Israel of the Syrian Golan and its de facto annexation constituted an obstacle to the achievement of a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the region.

18. Cuba stated that Israel must withdraw immediately from all territory of the occupied Syrian Golan to the lines of 4 June 1967, in compliance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), and must renounce its intention to annex the occupied Syrian Golan, which was territory under the sovereignty of the Syrian Arab Republic.

19. The Permanent Mission of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva replied to the note verbale from OHCHR, on 20 November 2020. It expressed its deep concern about the systematic and continuous violations of the human rights of the Syrian Arab population of the occupied Syrian Golan, noting that they constituted crimes against humanity, infringing upon the Charter of the United Nations and international law. It stressed that all measures and actions taken or to be taken by Israel, the occupying power, such as the illegal decision of 14 December 1981, that purported to alter the legal, physical and demographic status of the occupied Syrian Golan and its institutional structure, as well as measures by Israel to apply its jurisdiction and administration to the territory, were null and void and had no legal effect. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea affirmed its unwavering support and solidarity with the just demand and right of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to restore its full sovereignty over the occupied Syrian Golan. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea called upon Israel to comply with all relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Human Rights Council, in particular Security Council resolution 497 (1981), and to withdraw from the occupied Syrian Golan to the lines of 4 June 1967. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea demanded that Israel cease changing the physical character, demographic composition, institutional structure and legal status of the occupied Syrian Golan. It urged Israel to stop all illegal measures and actions, including the construction and expansion of settlements, in the Syrian Golan, occupied since 1967.

20. On 19 November 2020, the Permanent Mission of Egypt to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva replied to the note verbale from OHCHR. Egypt expressed deep concern over continued violations of the human rights of Syrian Arab citizens of the occupied Syrian Golan by Israel, in flagrant violation of international conventions, international law and in particular international humanitarian law. Egypt reaffirmed the illegality and illegitimacy of all measures and actions taken by Israel, the occupying power, in the occupied Syrian Golan since the beginning of the occupation in June 1967, in accordance with Security Council resolution 497 (1981), in which the Council considered the decision by Israel to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration on the occupied Syrian Golan null and void and without legal effect, and in accordance with resolutions of the General Assembly and its subsidiary bodies, including the Human Rights Council. Egypt affirmed the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention and the relevant provisions of the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907 to the occupied Syrian Golan. Egypt also affirmed that the Israeli settlements and their expansion in the occupied Syrian Golan constituted a blatant violation of international law and stressed the need to pressure the occupying power to stop its settlement activities and concomitant infrastructure plans in the occupied Syrian Golan. Egypt further affirmed the responsibility of the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention to put an end to the Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan and to stop the violations of the rights of the Syrian Arab residents of the occupied Syrian Golan committed by Israel.

21. The Islamic Republic of Iran replied to the note verbale from OHCHR, on 8 December 2020, and emphasized that the occupied Syrian Golan was an integral part of the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic, as was recognized in many United Nations resolutions. It pointed

out that the occupation of the territory was in stark violation of international law, the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and authoritative international resolutions and also constituted a flagrant violation of the human rights of the Syrian Arab population of the territory. The Islamic Republic of Iran stressed that any actions taken by the occupying power in the occupied Syrian Golan were null and void and had no legal effect, given that the territory had been acquired by unlawful use of force. It noted that Israel continued to suppress the Syrian Arab population of the occupied Syrian Golan, including through the construction of illegal settlements, the imposition of its own laws and regulations and the illegal exploitation of natural resources. The Islamic Republic of Iran noted that those unlawful actions of the occupying power constituted clear violations of numerous resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and the Human Rights Council over the past 50 years.

22. The Islamic Republic of Iran noted that the establishment of settlements was a grave violation of resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council, which had consistently demanded that the occupying power end its occupation of the Syrian Golan and refrain from changing the physical character, demographic composition, institutional structure and legal status of the territory and, in particular, refrain from establishing settlements. The Islamic Republic of Iran emphasized that, in those resolutions, the Council and the Assembly had stressed the illegality of the construction of settlements and other activities of Israel in the occupied Syrian Golan.

23. The Islamic Republic of Iran noted that, in accordance with the peremptory norms of international law, no State should recognize as lawful a situation created by a serious breach of peremptory norms of general international law and emphasized that the General Assembly and the Security Council had repeatedly stressed the obligation of non-recognition of the annexation of the occupied Syrian Golan by Israel. Referring to General Assembly resolution 37/123 A of 16 December 1982, in which the Assembly characterized the annexation of the occupied Syrian Golan as an act of aggression that should not be recognized, the Islamic Republic of Iran noted that the international community had the obligation not to recognize the unlawful situation resulting from the acquisition of territory by force.

24. The Islamic Republic of Iran, while expressing deep concern over the human rights situation in the occupied Syrian Golan, noted that it had taken the following positions and measures in relation to paragraph 10 of Human Rights Council resolution 43/30:

(a) Condemnation of the policies and practices of Israel, including in extending its territorial jurisdiction and laws to the occupied Syrian Golan and its disregard of the adverse effects of that action on the Syrian Arab population;

(b) Condemnation of all illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied Syrian Golan and of actions forcing Syrian Arab residents to leave their lands, as part of an overall policy by Israel to change the demographic nature of the territory;

(c) Support for the right of refugees to return to their homeland in the occupied Syrian Golan;

(d) Condemnation of Israel for its imposition of Israeli citizenship on the Syrian Arab population of the occupied Syrian Golan;

(e) Refusal to recognize any policy or measure which might lead to the continued occupation of the Syrian Golan;

(f) Objection to any position held by States or organizations which recognized Israeli sovereignty over the occupied Syrian Golan;

(g) Rejection of any policy or practice which would be conducive to violations of the human rights of the Syrian Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan, including the rights to self-determination, health, sanitation, adequate housing, freedom of peaceful assembly and association and freedom of expression.

25. The Islamic Republic of Iran emphasized that the return of the occupied Syrian Golan to the Syrian Arab Republic remained the only solution to the long-standing occupation and invited the international community to strongly deplore any position, policy or practice which

contributed to the continuation of the occupation and violations of human rights of the Syrian Arab population of the occupied Syrian Golan.

26. The Permanent Mission of Iraq to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva replied to the note verbale from OHCHR, on 19 November 2020, reaffirming its position rejecting the principle of the forcible expropriation of territories. It affirmed all General Assembly and Security Council resolutions concerning the identity of the occupied Syrian Golan and condemning the illegal occupation of that territory by Israel. Iraq stated its rejection of the settlement and investment projects by Israel in the occupied Syrian Golan. It affirmed the right of internally displaced persons to return to their homes and property and noted the illegality of any measures taken by Israel with the aim of imposing its laws and regulations over the territories which it has occupied, including the Syrian Golan. Iraq categorically rejected the holding of local elections in the occupied Syrian Golan by Israel and emphasized the need to adhere to the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention. It expressed concern over United Nations reports which indicated the extent of the suffering to which the Syrian Arab population of the occupied Syrian Golan had been subjected and called upon the United Nations to exercise its role in putting an end to the suffering and to the illegal occupation. Iraq stressed the need to respect the aims and purposes of the United Nations, which affirmed respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States, and to implement international resolutions relevant to the occupied Syrian Golan.

27. The Permanent Mission of Kuwait to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva replied to the note verbale from OHCHR, on 10 November 2020, stating that it supported the legitimate right of the Syrian Arab Republic over the occupied Syrian Golan and noting that that claim was well-established in the international legal framework, but that it was consistently undermined by the occupation of the territory by Israel. Kuwait affirmed the principled position condemning all measures taken by Israel, the occupying power, to alter the legal, physical and demographic status of the occupied Syrian Golan, noting that that position had been renewed in the most recent summit declaration of the Non-Aligned Movement.

28. On 23 November 2020, the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva replied to the note verbale from OHCHR. It stressed that Israel had systematically engaged in practices violating the human rights of the Syrian Arab population of the occupied Syrian Golan since 1967. It highlighted that those actions constituted violations of international resolutions of the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and the Human Rights Council in relation to the situation in the occupied Syrian Golan, including Security Council resolutions 237 (1967), 242 (1967), 497 (1981) and all relevant Human Rights Council resolutions adopted since 2006. In addition, the Syrian Arab Republic noted that the actions of Israel constituted a flagrant violation of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (Fourth Geneva Convention), as well as the Protocol I Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 (Protocol I).

29. The Syrian Arab Republic described an increase in the frequency of the violations perpetrated by Israel of the human rights of the Syrian Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan since the illegal declaration of the United States of America recognizing the annexation by Israel of the occupied Syrian Golan. The Syrian Arab Republic reaffirmed that that announcement was in blatant violation of the principles and provisions of international law, the Fourth Geneva Convention and Security Council resolution 497 (1981), in which the Council considered the decision of Israel to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration on the occupied Syrian Golan null and void, with no international legal effect. The Syrian Arab Republic noted that the declaration was also in violation of Human Rights Council resolutions relevant to the occupied Syrian Golan.

30. The Syrian Arab Republic recalled that the States members of the Non-Aligned Movement, in the final document<sup>1</sup> issued at the Baku Summit held in October 2019, had renewed their principled position concerning the occupied Syrian Golan and the protection of the rights of its Syrian citizens. The Syrian Arab Republic noted that the Non-Aligned

<sup>1</sup> See [www.namazerbaijan.org/pdf/BFOD.pdf](http://www.namazerbaijan.org/pdf/BFOD.pdf).

Movement had also condemned the recognition by the United States of the annexation by Israel of the occupied Syrian Golan and had called upon the international community and the Security Council to assume their responsibilities in that context, as the declaration constituted a violation of international law and relevant United Nations resolutions, in particular Security Council resolution 497 (1981).

31. The Syrian Arab Republic also recalled the statement of 26 March 2019 by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), in which it condemned the recognition by the United States of the sovereignty of Israel over the occupied Syrian Golan and called upon the international community and the Security Council to assume their responsibilities in that context. The Syrian Arab Republic noted that, in the statement, OIC had emphasized that the declaration by the United States had constituted a clear violation of international law and relevant United Nations resolutions, especially Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 497 (1981). OIC affirmed that the decision of the United States did not change the legal status of the occupied Syrian Golan in accordance with international law and relevant United Nations resolutions. The Syrian Arab Republic recalled that the General Secretariat of OIC had urged States across the world to respect internationally recognized resolutions on the occupied Syrian Golan and not to recognize any measure inconsistent with those resolutions.

32. The Syrian Arab Republic strongly condemned the visit made in November 2020 by the Secretary of State of the United States to the Israeli settlements in the occupied Syrian Golan, noting that it constituted a continuation of a policy aimed at legalizing settlements and the Israeli occupation, in blatant violation of international law, the Charter of the United Nations, the Fourth Geneva Convention and relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution 497 (1981).

33. The Syrian Arab Republic noted that, in the note by the Secretary-General on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the Occupied Syrian Golan (A/75/86-E/2020/62), the validity of Security Council resolution 497 (1981), in which the Council decided that the decision by Israel to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration on the occupied Syrian Golan was null and void and had no international legal effect, was reaffirmed.

34. The Syrian Arab Republic took note of the description, in the above-mentioned document, of the persistence of discriminatory policies in several areas, including access to land and water, which benefited Israeli settlers who already enjoyed incentives such as tax subsidies. The Syrian Arab Republic also highlighted the description of restrictive building and zoning policies which had led to pressure on existing infrastructure and to overcrowding. It noted the description of the issuance of demolition orders and the recent initiation of a new process aimed at zoning the scarce land plots that could be suitable for expanding Syrian villages as a national park. The Syrian Arab Republic noted that those policies had a significant adverse impact on the Syrian Arab population. It also noted the description of the discriminatory pricing and distribution of utilities, which had subsidized illegal Israeli settlement businesses and suffocated Syrian industries, especially the agricultural sector. The Syrian Arab Republic noted the finding in the above-mentioned document that, in the light of the fact that the majority of Syrian households depended on agriculture, they were facing difficulties in competing with the agriculture in the settlements, which was often more industrial in nature.

35. The Syrian Arab Republic highlighted that, in the above-referenced document, it was noted that the long-term Israeli occupation of the occupied Syrian Golan continued to have an adverse impact on the living conditions of the Syrian Arab population, as well as social and economic development in the occupied territories. It was also noted that the negative impact of the occupation and Israeli policies and practices was multilayered and that the cumulative repercussions of the occupation affected the future of the population living under occupation. It was further noted that Israel continued to employ policies that were inconsistent with the relevant Security Council resolutions, international humanitarian law and international human rights law and that some of those practices might be considered discriminatory, while others might amount to the forcible transfer or collective punishment of protected persons, which would be a grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention.



36. The Syrian Arab Republic asserted that, in order to legalize the occupation and impose its laws in the occupied Syrian Golan, Israel had aggressively sought to impose its illegal decision to hold local council elections in the occupied Syrian Golan on 30 October 2018. The Syrian Arab Republic described that the Syrian Arab population of the occupied Syrian Golan had thwarted such a dangerous attempt through their categorical rejection of the elections. It pointed out that the Syrian Arab residents had boycotted both the nomination process and the elections, despite the detention of large numbers of the population and repression by the Israeli occupation authorities.

37. The Syrian Arab Republic described a collection of policies adopted by Israel that were aimed at consecrating the occupation of the occupied Syrian Golan, including through the construction and expansion of settlements, the confiscation of agricultural lands and the creation of an agricultural reality supportive to the Israeli settlers, with the aim of harming the Syrian Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan.

38. The Syrian Arab Republic described concerns associated with the granting by Israel of a licence to a private sector company to establish 45 wind turbines to generate power in the occupied Syrian Golan, in the context of policies aimed at land appropriation. The turbines would be built on an area of 6,000 dunums of agricultural lands belonging to the Syrian Arab population, who had protested the project, according to information received from the Syrian Arab Republic. The Syrian Arab Republic emphasized that the project would limit the expansion of the Syrian Arab villages, where residents already lived in dense and congested conditions. It noted that the Israeli Electricity Company had constructed a high-tension electric line to produce energy from the wind turbine project, which would connect the power station of the Israeli settlement of Katzrin with a power station to be built in the context of that project. The Syrian Arab Republic emphasized that there would be severe damage inflicted on the environment and agriculture and the health and livelihoods of those in the occupied Syrian Golan. The Syrian Arab Republic highlighted that, in its concluding observations on the fourth periodic report of Israel under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (E/C.12/ISR/CO/4), the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights expressed concern about reports that Israel had given licences to Israeli and multinational companies for oil and gas extraction and renewable energy projects in the occupied Syrian Golan without consulting the affected communities, while prohibiting Syrians from gaining access to, controlling or developing their natural resources. The Syrian Arab Republic also noted that, in its annual report to the General Assembly (A/75/199), the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories had also expressed its deep concern over the effects of that project on the Syrian Arab population of the occupied Syrian Golan.

39. In a letter dated 9 December 2020 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Permanent Representative raised additional concerns about the reaction of Israeli authorities to a general strike declared by the Syrian Arab population of the occupied Syrian Golan. The strike was declared in reaction to the windfarm project, and those who participated went to the land in question to protest the construction of the windfarm. The Syrian Arab Republic noted that Israeli security forces had confronted the protestors with bullets and tear gas, resulting in more than 20 injuries. It emphasized that the reaction of the Israeli security forces demonstrated practices of harassment, confiscation and intimidation, with the aim of pushing the Syrian Arab population to leave their lands, and noted that the windfarm project was in violation of international humanitarian law and relevant United Nations resolutions. The Syrian Arab Republic underscored the duty of an occupying power not to use lands it occupied for its own benefit or in a way that harmed the interests of the population under occupation.

40. The Syrian Arab Republic noted that Israel had approved a multi-year plan to develop and strengthen agriculture in the 33 Israeli settlements in the occupied Syrian Golan. It described how that plan was aimed at encouraging the entry of Israeli young people to the agricultural sector by providing strong and systematic support and assistance to settler farmers in the fields of agriculture and poultry farming. The Syrian Arab Republic recalled

that agriculture, according to the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of Israel, was the pillar of the Israeli settlement project in the occupied Syrian Golan.

41. The Syrian Arab Republic described how, with the systematic support of the Government of Israel, Israeli settlers had seized an area of 100,000 dunums in the occupied Syrian Golan, which were exploited by the settlers for various agricultural products. The Syrian Arab Republic explained that that constituted an unbearable economic burden on the Syrian Arab inhabitants of the occupied Syrian Golan, noting that unfair competition due to discriminatory policies threatened the future livelihood of the Syrian Arab population, which depended on agriculture.

42. The Syrian Arab Republic highlighted that, in April 2019, Israel had announced plans to expand settlements in the occupied Syrian Golan, including by building 30,000 housing units, constructing new cities and moving 250,000 Israeli settlers to the occupied Syrian Golan. The Syrian Arab Republic described that that action was aimed at changing the demographic composition of the region. It also noted that, in June 2019, Israel had launched a new settlement project named after the Forty-fifth President of the United States. The Syrian Arab Republic asserted that those expansion plans were closely aligned with the policies of Israel, including inhibiting access to livelihoods for the Syrian Arab population, the confiscation of land, the prohibition of construction and development in Syrian Arab villages, the prevention of natural growth and the uprooting of the Syrian Arab population from their villages. The Syrian Arab Republic noted additional policies detrimental to the Syrian Arab population, including the plundering of natural resources, the destruction of the environment and limitations placed on movement for the Syrian Arab population aimed at restricting their access to their lands, which would then be confiscated to create geographical and demographic conditions which served the settlement policies of Israel.

43. The Syrian Arab Republic reported that Israeli authorities continued to pressure Syrian Arab landowners to accept property documents issued by the so-called "Israeli Survey Bureau" instead of the ownership documents registered in the Syrian Arab Republic. It noted that that entailed a risk of confiscation of those lands in order to change the demographic balance of the region. It asserted that Israel had demanded that the Syrian Arab inhabitants of the occupied Syrian Golan, especially those in the village of Ain Qina and the industrial zone belonging to the land of Majdal Shams village, hand over the ownership documents for the land that they had inherited from their parents and grandparents. According to the Syrian Arab Republic, the Israeli authorities have threatened to confiscate the land and grant it to Israeli settlers if the Syrian Arab landowners do not accept Israeli property documents.

44. The Syrian Arab Republic drew attention to the report of the Special Committee (A/75/199), in which it indicated the continuation of the plans of Israel to build new settlements, as referred to above. The Syrian Arab Republic also drew attention to the continuation of discriminatory policies against the Syrian Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan, especially in gaining access to water and land. In its report, the Special Committee expressed concern that the new Israeli land registry regime imposed new regulations that required specific documents to prove ownership, whereas most Syrians had old ownership documents, and noted that that system would lead to their inability to prove their ownership of their land.

45. The Syrian Arab Republic described the seizure of natural resources in the occupied Syrian Golan by Israel and noted their continued exploitation for the benefit of Israel and Israeli settlements and the major role played by Israeli companies and multinational corporations in that regard. According to the Syrian Arab Republic, the exploitation by Israel of the occupied territory, particularly of agricultural lands, coincided with the theft and exploitation of water. The Syrian Arab Republic emphasized that Israel had employed numerous methods to confiscate natural resources, in violation of the rights of the Syrian Arab population, including the following:

- (a) Expropriation of land owned by Syrian Arab residents who had been displaced, which was then declared State land under the pretext of the owners' absence, and the confiscation of communal lands, for example in the village of Masada;
- (b) Expropriation of land in close proximity to the ceasefire line and planting landmines;

(c) Confiscation of land for military purposes, including for the establishment of military camps and installations, in addition to paving roads for those purposes, including in areas far from the ceasefire line;

(d) Expropriation of land for the building of settlements and agricultural and industrial facilities;

(e) Fencing off of areas, reportedly approximately 100,000 dunums, under the pretext of placing them at the disposal of the Israel Nature and Parks Authority;

(f) Expropriation of land indirectly through the *meshkanta* process, which involved giving an agricultural loan against a mortgage to an Israeli bank and confiscating the property if the loan was not paid in full within a specified time period.

46. The Syrian Arab Republic noted the recent expropriation of tens of thousands of dunums of land in the Syrian village of Jubata al-Khashabin, which lay within the demilitarized zone established by the United Nations in 1974, with the aim of building trenches close to Syrian territory. According to the Syrian Arab Republic, tens of thousands of dunums of land belonging to the village were consequently made inaccessible.

47. The Syrian Arab Republic described how Syrian Arab workers in the occupied Syrian Golan suffered from arbitrary and discriminatory practices, which had a significant impact on their working conditions, especially in the agricultural sector, in terms of water ownership and the marketing of crops and difficulty in competing in the market due to preferential treatment and advantages granted to settlers in those areas. The Syrian Arab Republic noted that, in the report of the Director-General of the International Labour Organization on the situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories, issued in May 2020, the continuation of those discriminatory practices, including those related to access to water and land, were noted and it was emphasized that Syrian workers were more vulnerable to exploitation in the workplace.

48. The Syrian Arab Republic highlighted that the Syrian Arab population continued to suffer from a shortage of doctors, specialized medical clinics, health centres, hospitals and first aid centres and that they incurred high costs for treatment in cities such as Nazareth, Safad and Jerusalem in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The Syrian Arab Republic noted that Israel had imposed obstacles to the opening of new specialized laboratories and clinics, compelling the Syrian Arab population to seek treatment in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Israel continued to impose taxes on the Syrian Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan, including the health fund tax and taxes for hospitals and medical centres that did not exist in the villages of the occupied Syrian Golan. According to the Syrian Arab Republic, Israel had used the refusal of the population of the occupied Syrian Golan to obtain Israeli citizenship as an excuse not to grant them access to health services.

49. The Syrian Arab Republic noted that the World Health Assembly annually adopted a decision calling upon the World Health Organization (WHO) to provide support to the Syrian Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan through technical assistance related to health. The Syrian Arab Republic stated that policies implemented by Israel prevented WHO teams from reaching the occupied Syrian Golan to conduct field assessments of the situation of health, and therefore from fulfilling that part of the mandate.

50. The Syrian Arab Republic highlighted that Israel, in what was described as an attempt at obliterating Arab culture, had imposed the Israeli curriculum in schools in the occupied Syrian Golan and that education was conducted in Hebrew instead of Arabic. The Syrian Arab Republic noted that those policies undermined the rights of the Syrian Arab students and were aimed at severing any links that the students might have with their Arab culture and their religion and, ultimately, at undermining their identity. The Syrian Arab Republic described how Israel deliberately appointed unqualified teachers to ensure control of the education process. Syrian Arab students were also denied the right to complete their university education, including in Syrian universities, especially through restrictions on freedom of movement, including preventing them from travelling.

51. The Syrian Arab Republic noted that Israel continued to prevent the Syrian Arab population from communicating with Syrian citizens in their homeland and continued to attempt to impose Israeli identity on the population of the occupied Syrian Golan.

52. The Syrian Arab Republic reaffirmed that the policies and practices of Israel constituted clear violations of the civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights of the Syrian Arab population of the occupied Syrian Golan. Specific rights violated included the right to work, the right to education, the right to own property, the right to freedom of movement, the right to preserve cultural and historical heritage and the right to enjoy the highest attainable standard of health. The Syrian Arab Republic stressed that the discriminatory practices of Israel and the restrictions placed on the Syrian Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan posed a serious threat to their future existence, growth and development.

53. The Syrian Arab Republic called upon the international community to break the silence about the practices and systematic violations of Israel which were aimed at perpetuating the occupation of the Syrian Golan, including by changing the demographic, geographical, cultural, security and political character of the occupied Syrian Golan.

54. The Syrian Arab Republic reaffirmed its unwavering position against the attempts of Israel and its supporters to legitimize the occupation of the Syrian Golan. The Syrian Arab Republic also reaffirmed its unwavering position against the persistent violations of international law, specifically the Fourth Geneva Convention, and Security Council resolutions by Israel, the occupying power, without any deterrence.

55. The Syrian Arab Republic renewed its call upon the United Nations and Member States who sought to promote international law to pressure Israel to end its occupation of the Syrian Golan and not to recognize any legal status resulting from actions by Israel. The Syrian Arab Republic stressed in particular the need to refrain from assisting Israel in any activities, especially in relation to business and tourism, which would perpetuate the occupation of the Syrian Golan, as well as the human rights violations against its Syrian Arab inhabitants, with particular reference to support for the continued construction and expansion of new and existing settlements. The Syrian Arab Republic called upon the international community and international organizations to monitor flagrant violations of international law by Israel and to oblige Israel to stop illegal settlement practices and repressive measures against the Syrian Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan.

56. The Syrian Arab Republic called upon OHCHR to pay due and just attention to the human rights situation of the Syrian Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan within the framework of its global human rights mandate.

57. The Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva responded to the note verbale from OHCHR, on 4 December 2020. It expressed concern over the continued violations of the rights of the Syrian Arab population of the occupied Syrian Golan by Israel, which ran contrary to international law, including international humanitarian law. The Russian Federation stated that Israeli settlement activities in the occupied Syrian Golan were contrary to international law and that all administrative and legal actions and measures by Israel in the territory were illegal, in accordance with Security Council resolution 497 (1981) and relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council. The Russian Federation affirmed the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention and the relevant provisions of the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907 to the occupied Syrian Golan.

58. ESCWA replied to the note verbale from OHCHR, on 10 December 2020, drawing attention to the note by the Secretary-General on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan, which had been prepared by ESCWA and which included information about the situation in the occupied Syrian Golan.