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**Statement by the State of Palestine during the ID with the SR on Human Rights Defenders
HRC 31 – 03/03/2016**

Thank you Mr. President,

At the outset, we would like to thank the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders, Mr. Michel Forst for his report.

The role of human rights defenders has become widely recognized over the years. They have increasingly come to ensure greater protection for the victims of violations. However, they have also increasingly become targets of attacks and more vulnerable to continuous insecurity and threats, especially defenders in occupied territories.

The Declaration on human rights defenders provides that human rights defenders are entitled to several forms of protection. Israel, the occupying power, has continuously clamped down on human rights defenders, physically assaulting them, including through the use of live fire and rubber-coated bullets. It continues its policies of arbitrary arrest and prosecution of human rights defenders during their legitimate human rights activities resisting the belligerent prolonged occupation, in clear violation of international human rights standards.

As occupying power, and in line with the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, Israel has the responsibility to ensure that defenders can enjoy a safe and enabling environment, and is under the duty to protect, not to attack, the activities of human rights defenders.

The impunity enjoyed by Israel for its policy of assaulting human rights defenders is long-standing and one of the main reasons that violations persist.

Our question to the Special Rapporteur is the following: what measures can be taken to protect human rights defenders in an environment where impunity is rampant and attacking human rights defenders is part of State policy?

I thank you,