**HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL HOLDS GENERAL DEBATE ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN PALESTINE AND OTHER OCCUPIED ARAB TERRITORIES**

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The Human Rights Council this morning held a general debate on the situation of human rights in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories, after hearing statements by concerned countries.

Israel was not present in the room to take the floor as a concerned country.

State of Palestine, speaking as a concerned country, stressed that Israel continued to refuse to cooperate with the Human Rights Council and other human rights mechanisms. The occupying power continued to target civilians, impose sieges, carry out land theft, attack religious places and destroy infrastructure.

Syria, speaking as a concerned country, said the debate on the situation of human rights in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories was of great importance as human rights violations in the occupied lands continued. The rights of Palestinians and people in the Golan were violated on a daily basis. The theft of resources and displacement resulting from settlements amounted to war crimes.

In the ensuing debate, speakers condemned the disproportionate use of force by Israeli forces against Palestinian protestors. Delegations urged the Human Rights Council to keep agenda item 7 as a standing item. Marginalising the discussion would only serve to embolden Israel. Speakers called on Israel to grant access to relevant Special Procedures in order to properly assess the human rights situation in the occupied territories. There must be a political solution to the crisis that would result in an independent Palestinian State living peacefully next to Israel and based on the 1967 borders.

Speaking were the delegations of Pakistan on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Venezuela on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, Togo on behalf of the African Group, United Arab Emirates on behalf of the League of Arab States, Kuwait on behalf of the Gulf Cooperation Council, Bolivia on behalf of a group of countries, Brazil, Pakistan, Egypt, Iraq, Qatar, Senegal, United Arab Emirates, Chile, Saudi Arabia, Venezuela, South Africa, China, Afghanistan, Cuba, Ecuador, Nigeria, Tunisia, Kuwait, Namibia, Jordan, Maldives, Libya, Djibouti, Sudan, Iran, Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea, Indonesia, Bahrain, Malaysia, Algeria, Russian Federation, Zimbabwe, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Turkey, Yemen, Oman, Lebanon, Mauritania, and Morocco.

Also taking the floor were the following non-governmental organizations: The Palestinian Return Centre Ltd; World Jewish Congress; European Union of Jewish Students; United Nations Watch; Defence for Children International; Commission of the Churches on International Affairs of the World Council of Churches; Conseil International pour le soutien à des procès équitables et aux Droits de l'Homme; Human Rights Now; Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, (in a joint statement with Al-Haq, Law in the Service of Man); Union of Arab Jurists; International Federation for Human Rights Leagues, (in a joint statement with Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies); Association of World Citizens; Europe-Third World Centre, (in a joint statement with International Association of Democratic Lawyers); Human Rights Watch; International-Lawyers.Org; Ius Primi Viri International Association; United Towns Agency for North-South Cooperation; Organization for Defending Victims of Violence; Khiam Rehabilitation Center for Victims of Torture; International Youth and Student Movement for the United Nations; International Organization for the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD); International Institute for Rights and Development Geneva; Association Bharathi Centre Culturel Franco-Tamoul; L'Observatoire Mauritanien des Droits de l'Homme et de la Démocratie; Badil Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights; Indian Movement “Tupaj Amaru”; Institute for NGO Research; Servas International and Al Mezan Centre for Human Rights.

The Council will next hold a general debate on the follow-up to and implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. This will be followed by an interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and a general debate on racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

Statements by Concerned Countries

VOJISLAV ŠUC, President of the Human Rights Council, noted that the delegation of Israel was not present in the room.

Palestine, speaking as a concerned county, expressed gratitude to brotherly States which were ready to take part in the debate under agenda item 7. The occupying party continued to refuse to comply with international humanitarian and human rights law and United Nations’ resolutions. Israel continued to refuse to cooperate with the Council and other human rights mechanisms. The United States Ambassador in New York came to remove the agenda item 7 last year, and was considering a resolution for removing the item during this session, but that decision was only supported by Israel. As a result of such failure, the United States withdrew from the Council. The United States had recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel last December but this was a violation of international law and the right to self-determination of Palestinians. The occupying power continued to target civilians, impose sieges, carry out land theft, attack religious places and destroy infrastructure. The practice of apartheid and adoption of racists laws continued by Israel. There were over 6,000 Palestinian detainees held by Israel, including members of parliament. All Israeli violations were documented in the report of the High Commissioner, as well as the report of the Secretary General. The Council had to help stop international human rights violations by Israel against Palestinians. The Commission of Inquiry had to investigate the latest atrocities. The High Commissioner had to publish the list of enterprises cooperating with the occupying power in the building of settlements.

Syria, speaking as a concerned country, said the debate on the situation of human rights in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories was of great importance as human rights violations in the occupied lands continued. The rights of Palestinians and people in the Syrian Golan were violated on a daily basis. The theft of resources and displacement resulting from settlements amounted to war crimes. Israel was attempting to annex parts of the West Bank through new settlements. Syria regretted the fact that Israel was preventing the visit of Special Procedures to Palestine. People in Gaza were deprived of their rights to education and to life. Syria requested the unconditional release of all Palestinian detainees in Israeli prisons. Israel was flouting all its international commitments. United Nations reports on Israeli practices clearly documented Israel’s disregard for its international obligations. Threats levelled by the United States and United Kingdom in the Human Rights Council demonstrated their continued support for the Palestinian occupation.

General Debate on the Human Rights Situation in Palestine and Other Occupied Arab Territories

Pakistan, speaking on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, condemned in the strongest terms the continued Israeli practice of settlements in the occupied territories, as well as the construction of the wall. More than 300 Palestinian children were being held in Israeli prisons, among 7,000 Palestinian detainees, in utter violation of the Geneva Conventions. The Israeli practices and policies of systematic violations were tantamount to war crimes and crimes against humanity. This undermined all hope for peace based on the two-State solution.

Venezuela, speaking on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, condemned in strongest terms the disproportionate use of force by Israel, which was in violation of international human rights and humanitarian law. The Non-Aligned Movement had grave concerns about the illegal, unilateral and arbitrary decision made by the United States to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and move its capital there. The atrocities inflicted upon the Palestinian people included occupation, collective punishment, excessive and indiscriminate use of force, massive settlements, blockades, arbitrary detention as well as use of torture and apartheid.

Syria, on a point of clarification, made an observation that its statements were not properly followed in interpretation. A big part of Syria’s previous statement had not been interpreted. Syria asked the Presidency to take necessary measures so that the voice of Syria was heard in all official languages of the United Nations.

Togo, speaking on behalf of the African Group, said the Israeli occupation had led to a prolonged conflict which continued to afflict the human rights of the Palestinians. The continued use of force against demonstrators, which led to deaths and the injury of thousands, was unacceptable. The African Group called for an end to the Israeli occupation which was the longest in contemporary history. It called on the international community to ensure peaceful coexistence of the Palestinians and Israelis and to urgently undertake measures to remedy the situation by striving to protect human rights for all.

United Arab Emirates, speaking on behalf of the League of the Arab States, condemned the decision of some countries not to participate in the debate on this item, thus refusing to discuss the rights of the Palestinian people - although this was a standing item on the Human Rights Council Agenda. This encouraged Israel to enjoy impunity. The American administration was becoming part of the conflict. This bias against the Palestinian people would only encourage Israeli forces to continue and consecrate impunity. It called on the international community to recognize the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, and to respect the relevant United Nations resolutions

Kuwait, speaking on behalf of the Gulf Cooperation Council, said item 7 had to stay on the agenda of the Human Rights Council and be given appropriate time. The Gulf Cooperation Council condemned the killing of numerous demonstrators by Israel in Gaza. International resolutions had to be obeyed and the continuing violation of human rights in Palestine, Syrian Golan and Lebanese territories had to end.

Bolivia, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that various reports documented serious human rights violations against Palestinians, including executions, disproportionate use of force, colonization, economic blockade, and forced displacement. The group of countries welcomed the report by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights consolidating a database on all enterprises cooperating with Israeli settlements. The High Commissioner was urged to make this database public. The group of countries expressed profound solidarity with the Palestinians.

Brazil was deeply concerned about continuing tensions in the occupied Palestinian territories. The disproportionate use of force launched by Israeli militants against civilians in late May was condemned. The healthcare crisis in Gaza had to be resolved. Brazil hoped that the Commission of Inquiry would carry out its investigations in an independent and objective manner. The continued building of illegal Israeli settlements was a further impediment of peace. Brazil reiterated the call for the resumption of the peace process and the creation of two States.

Pakistan said that the blockade of Gaza and the building of the separation wall in the West Bank were causing untold sufferings for Palestinian people. Military check points and arbitrary arrests had become instruments of corrective punishment for the Palestinian people. The situation in the Syrian Golan was deeply disturbing. Pakistan supported a two-State solution that ensured a viable State of Palestine, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, living in peace with its neighbours.

Egypt said Palestinians and other occupied populations continued to face human rights violations perpetrated by Israel, which was also trying to change the status and religious characteristics of Jerusalem. Unarmed civilians were being targeted by Israel, leading to scores of injuries and deaths. The Human Rights Council was called on to discharge its responsibilities and address human rights violations perpetrated by Israel. Egypt would make every effort to support the legitimate rights claims of the Palestinian people.

Iraq welcomed the Human Rights Council resolutions to set up a Commission of Inquiry on Israeli violations against large-scale Palestinian protests and called for Israel to end its policy of non-cooperation with relevant Special Procedures. The inhabitants of the occupied Palestinian territories suffered from grave human rights violations, including the disproportionate use of force against civilians and the expansion of Israeli settlements. Palestinians in Gaza were now in their eleventh year under blockade. Iraq called for an independent Palestinian State based on the pre-1967 borders.

Qatar said attempts to marginalise agenda item 7 would embolden Israel to perpetrate more crimes against the Palestinian people. Qatar strongly condemned the targeting of Palestinian demonstrators by Israeli forces. Palestinians were calling for the implementation of their rights and freedoms and were being exposed to intimidation and arbitrary detention. Palestine was a central cause for all freedom loving people. Qatar welcomed United Nations General Assembly resolutions on the protection of Palestinians.

Senegal said the continued degradation of the situation in Palestine was clear. High levels of violence, characterised by the disproportionate use of force, were recently witnessed in Palestine, resulting in a high number of deaths. Senegal called for the resumption of negotiations between Israel and Palestine with the aim of reaching a political solution that would establish two independent States, Palestine and Israel.

United Arab Emirates endorsed the Security Council statement which affirmed that the Israeli settlements were in violation of international law. The last report by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights stated that since 1967, 250 settlements had been created in East Jerusalem and the West Bank. This was depriving and stealing the land of the real owners, and favourising the settlers over the Palestinian peoples. The United Arab Emirates urged Israel to immediately cease its settlement activities in the West Bank and Gaza.

Chile recalled that last May, the Human Rights Council had adopted a resolution to dispatch an Independent Commission of Inquiry to document all violations of international humanitarian law and human rights. Chile condemned the indiscriminate use of force by the Israeli State and called for an immediate cessation to the attacks. It supported the General Assembly resolution calling on Israel to put an immediate end to all actions that led to this situation, and it reiterated its call for peaceful coexistence, and for a two-State solution.

Saudi Arabia said that item 7 was a standing item on the Human Rights Council agenda and it must stay as long as Palestinians continued to be exposed to numerous violations. It condemned the recent excessive use of force by Israel that led to over 100 killings and over 1,000 injuries. It condemned the building of settlements. As for the Gaza Strip, Saudi Arabia condemned in the strongest terms the practices and measures that amounted to collective punishment of the civilians as well as the moral and physical blockade. The alleviation of the suffering of the Palestinian people was a basic policy of the people of Saudi Arabia as was the establishment of an independent Palestinian State.

Venezuela was pleased that item 7 continued to be on the agenda despite of the position of the occupying power and the United States. It condemned the disproportionate use of force by Israel which had consolidated itself as a destructive power. It also condemned the arbitrary decision of the United States to recognise Jerusalem as the capital of Israel as well as all actions that supported the actions of the Israeli State. Venezuela affirmed its firm commitment to the noble cause of the Palestinian people and the establishment of a Palestinian State with the pre-1967 borders and East Jerusalem as its capital.

South Africa noted that the general debate on item 7 was timely given the adoption by the General Assembly in June 2018 of a resolution calling for the protection of the Palestinian civilian population. Israel’s apartheid policies were condemned. South Africa looked forward to the proposal of the Secretary General in a recent General Assembly resolution on how to ensure the safety and protection of Palestinians. The occupying power had to stop using live ammunition and rescind its shoot-to-kill orders against protesters.

China said that the issue of Palestine was the crux and root cause of the Middle East situation. China was closely following the situation and expressed its grave concern over the huge number of victims. Israel was urged to exercise restraint. Efforts had to be made in accordance with the United Nations resolutions. China was a strong advocate of the Middle East peace process and supported an independent Palestine State based on its pre-1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Afghanistan deeply condemned Israel’s continued oppression in Palestine, especially in the last few months. The deficit in accountability, reported by the High Commissioner and the Secretary General, undermined the confidence in Israel’s justice. Afghanistan urged the holding of impartial and independent investigations into crimes committed in Gaza. The right to self-determination and the right to return of Palestinians was affirmed.

Cuba stressed that the current situation in the occupied Palestinian and Arab territories, including the recent aggression against Palestinians in Gaza, reaffirmed the need for agenda 7. Israel had to withdraw from the occupied Syrian Golan up to the line of 4 June 1967. The unilateral decision of the United States to establish its diplomatic representation in the city of Jerusalem, disrespecting international laws and United Nations resolutions, was condemned. Cuba supported the two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders with East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine.

Ecuador recognised the right of the States of Palestine and Israel to live in a peaceful environment. Ecuador supported a free, independent and sovereign Palestinian State. Six decades of occupation had resulted in a major humanitarian crisis that was exacerbated by the disproportionate use of force by Israel. Access to humanitarian assistance to the region must be guaranteed by Israel. Agenda item 7 must remain on the Council’s agenda.

Nigeria reiterated its call for Israel to implement relevant United Nations resolutions as a means to reach an amicable solution to the crisis. Israel must exercise restraint and avoid excessive use of force against Palestinian protestors. The international community must take urgent action to end the crisis and uphold the human rights of the Palestinian people. The only viable solution to the crisis was the realisation of an independent Palestinian State.

Tunisia said Israel was violating the rights of Palestinians. Israel was conducting a siege and changing the demographic characteristics of the region. Israel had recently shot and killed a relief worker in Palestine. Such crimes were common for relief workers, journalists and civilians in general. Palestinians were suffering on a daily basis due to the systematic violation of their human rights.

Kuwait expressed its strong condemnation over the grave violations of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories. It was important to continue discussing the deterioration of the rights of Palestinians under item 7 of the Council’s agenda. Kuwait called for the implementation of relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions. All United Nations bodies must take urgent action to address Israeli violations.

Namibia said that more than 50 years after the occupation of the Palestinian territories began, the occupier’s violation of human rights, international humanitarian law, and United Nations resolutions continued to be committed unabated and with seeming impunity. It was with this background that Namibia reiterated its attachment to agenda item 7. Namibia regretted that Israel continued to deny access to the occupied Palestinian territories by successive Special Rapporteurs, and all of the Council’s previous Commissions of Inquiry.

Jordan said Israel’s occupation remained in Palestine, in the Golan and in the Lebanese territories. The Palestinians had been living for over 50 years under occupation. The most efficient way to alleviate the suffering was to enable the Palestinians to exercise their rights, and in particular the right to self-determination under international law. Israel could not continue to change the Islamic character of East Jerusalem.

Maldives thanked the Human Rights Council and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights for their continuous efforts to call for greater accountability for the continuous atrocious crimes committed by Israel in the occupied Palestinian territories. It also reiterated its strong support to the retention of agenda item 7 in the work of the Human Rights Council. If this Council strayed away from discussing human rights violations in Palestine and other occupied Palestinian territories, the purpose and the principles of this august body would be forsaken.

Libya condemned the systematic violations by the occupying Israeli power against the Palestinian people who were faced with the most horrendous crimes, including detention and torture. Other violations including apartheid policy were in force. The confiscation of Palestinian land, the demolition of houses, and the continued building of settlements were gross violations to the Geneva Convention of 1949 and international law.

Djibouti recognized the right of Palestinians to live in their country based on the pre-1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital. The recognition of Jerusalem as Israel’s capital by the United States undermined all efforts to peace and contradicted all measures to carry out a peace process. The use of force during demonstrations was condemned. For over 50 years the settlement policies and daily arbitrary arrests of Palestinians, as well as the blockade of the Gaza Strip, had been violating Palestinians’ right to self-determination.

Sudan said that Israeli aggression continued, violating all human rights of Palestinians as well as international laws and resolutions. Some countries continued to boycott agenda item 7, but Sudan believed that this agenda item 7 had to remain due to grave violations by Israel amounting to crimes against humanity. Sudan supported the right of Palestinians to establish an independent State.

Iran said that on the eve of the eleventh year of illegal blockade of the Gaza Strip by Israel, two million Palestinian inhabitants continued to be subjected to collective punishment and a growing humanitarian crisis. Israel had intensified the expansion of settlements across the West Bank, including the city of Al-Quds Al-Sharif. In line with the General Assembly resolution, the international community was urged to force the occupying power to refrain from brutalities and abide by obligations under the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949.

Democratic People’s Republic of Korea said that despite repeated demands of the international community, Israel defiantly continued to commit systematic and egregious violations of human rights, including the killing of civilians. The arrogant behaviour of Israel was attributable to its main patron, the United States. They had to be held accountable for their illegal and unjustifiable actions. The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea opposed all attempts to remove item 7 from the agenda.

Indonesia expressed serious concern over the continued violation of the human rights of Palestinians. Violations had become particularly evident earlier this year when peaceful Palestinian protesters were killed. Indonesia welcomed the creation of the Commission of Inquiry to probe human rights violations. Persistent Israeli attacks violated United Nations resolutions. Agenda item 7 was a constant reminder of the needs of Palestine.

Bahrain said Israel had not stopped violating all the rights of Palestinians and continued breaching international human rights and humanitarian law. Item 7 was a major item on the agenda of the Human Rights Council and would remain so until a solution to the Palestinian problem was found. Bahrain supported the work of the Commission of Inquiry and urged justice for the perpetrators of human rights violations.

Malaysia said the Human Rights Council must never be distracted from addressing human rights violations in Palestine. The Gaza blockade was ongoing and Israeli settlements continued expanding. There was no accountability for Israel’s actions. Human rights violations were being met with impunity. Only an end to the occupation of Palestine could improve the human rights situation in the region.

Algeria reiterated the importance of maintaining item 7 on the agenda of the Human Rights Council. Algeria condemned gross violations of Palestinian human rights by Israel and the collective punishment of all Palestinians. Detainees were being deprived of the right to a legal defence. Israeli practices targeted all categories of Palestinians, including children and babies. The international community must compel Israel to put an end to all its violations.

Russian Federation called on all parties to refrain from any action that could lead to a new outbreak of violence. The decision by the United States to recognise Jerusalem as the capital of Israel was counterproductive. Russia condemned indiscriminate Israeli actions against Palestinian protesters. Israel must end the blockade of Gaza. A solution to the crisis could only be reached through a two-State solution.

Zimbabwe reiterated the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, and their right to a State with East Jerusalem as its capital. It remained preoccupied by the Israeli occupation and stressed that the construction of settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories and East Jerusalem seriously impaired the viability of a peaceful two-State solution. It called on Israel to stop all such violations, including the blockade, and all other forms of collective punishment.

Bangladesh said the continuous failure to address the Palestinian situation showed once again the double standards of the international community. A carte blanche had been given to Israel to do whatever it wanted, including killing children and women. Bangladesh called upon Israel to cooperate with the Commission of Inquiry. It underscored that the two-State solution, with East Jerusalem as the capital of the Palestinian State, was the only solution to the problem. It called on Israel to immediately stop the blockade and to end the occupation.

Bolivia, referring to the preamble of the United Nations Charter, reminded that “We the peoples of the United Nations” had pledged to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, and to ensure the reign of justice and human rights. Bolivia condemned any action that would justify the protracted and unimpeded Israeli occupation. It noted with satisfaction the progress made to consolidate the database of companies participating in the building of Israeli settlements and called for the publication of that list.

Turkey sadly observed that the suffering of the Palestinians had been continuing for decades. What the world had recently witnessed was a total disregard of all the values that the international community had vowed to uphold since the establishment of the United Nations system, in clear violation of international law. The international community should uphold its responsibilities for the maintenance of international peace and security and implement its legal obligations to ensure the protection of civilians.

Yemen noted the serious escalation in the gravity of violence to which Palestinians were subjected, making agenda item 7 more important, as it offered an opportunity to shed light on recent events. The occupying power was asked to cease all hostilities and Israel’s occupation of all territories, including the Syrian Golan and Lebanese territories. All measures taken by Israel to change the legal and demographic status of the occupied territories, thus violating the fourth Geneva Convention, were condemned.

Oman said that Palestinian people were exposed to the worst violations of human rights, including their right to self-determination. Item 7 was extremely important and must remain on the agenda until the end of occupation. All parties were called upon to put an end to extremism and support the peace process. The international community was urged to end Israel’s occupation of Palestine, the Syrian Golan and Lebanese territories, and to support the creation of two States.

Lebanon reiterated the importance of item 7 to discuss Israel’s occupation of Palestinian and Arab territories. The absence of some delegations and the boycott by others showed biases and their willingness to turn a blind eye to an occupation which had been in place for 70 years. Israel and its supporters denied the right to Palestinians to protest against the harsh conditions in which they had been living. Israel had to be compelled to respect basic human rights and international law.

Mauritania was following with concern the situation in occupied Palestinian territories and other occupied Arab territories. The situation, lasting for over half a century, was inacceptable and it represented a major challenge to the international community. It was about time to face that challenge with a just two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders with Al Quds Al Sharif as the capital of Palestine.

Morocco said that all documents submitted to the Council recorded grave violations of the human rights of Palestinians. The High Commissioner had mentioned that illegal settlement practices were becoming worse and the fact-finding mission had demonstrated that the confiscation of property had created a fundamental threat to the right to self-determination, undermining the Islamic identity of Jerusalem. No solution was possible without defining the status of East Jerusalem.

Palestinian Return Centre Ltd said that a Palestinian paramedic had recently been shot and killed by Israeli snipers. The protests earlier this year had been peaceful and no Israeli troops had been injured by Palestinian protestors. Israel must be brought to justice for its ongoing human rights violations.

World Jewish Congress said the value of an international body committed to defending human rights could not be understated. Still, the Human Rights Council was treating issues unfairly. The Council had failed to fulfil its mission to address human rights issues impartially by obsessively focusing on Israel. Israel was the only democracy in the Middle East and should be recognized as a human rights defender.

European Union of Jewish Students said it was profoundly concerned that the sole liberal democracy in the Middle East was being singled out in the Human Rights Council through agenda item 7. The Council was ignoring human rights violations in other States, including Saudi Arabia. The Council must advance human rights worldwide and States must use it to heal, not blame.

United Nations Watch said a number of democracies had chosen to stay away from the prejudiced debate under agenda item 7. The item violated the Council’s principles of impartiality and universality. There were no peaceful protests in Palestine as Palestinian law enforcement officials harassed journalists.

Defence for Children International said that between January 2013 and June 2018, Israeli forces and settlers had killed at least 649 Palestinian children in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip. Members of the Council were urged to condemn Israel’s use of excessive force and urge it to allow access to all United Nations human rights mechanisms.

Commission of the Churches on International Affairs of the World Council of Churches said that in June, the Israeli parliament had passed a first reading of a bill aiming to prohibit photographic documentation of Israeli soldiers in action. This law would impede monitoring of human rights violations and harm freedom of expression, freedom of the press and freedom of information and prevent human rights organizations from documenting violations of human rights.

Conseil International de Soutien à des Procès Equitables et aux Droits de l'Homme said that recently as Palestinians were marching to end the blockade of Gaza, Israeli soldiers were ordered to shoot, resulting in a high number of deaths and wounded. While Israel held ultimate responsibility, it had to be shared with countries that allowed for this to happen. The United States’ support of Israel’s shoot-to-kill policy was deplorable.

Human Rights Now said that Israel’s violent response to Palestinian protests, which had resulted in injuring over 1,200 people, had been the worst scale violence since 2014. The use of firearms against unarmed protesters violated the right to life and peaceful assembly. Israel ignored most of the Council’s resolutions. Nonetheless, a resolution to end Israeli impunity had to be adopted by the Council.

Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, in a joint statement with Al-Haq – Law in the Service of Man, said that some States in the Human Rights Council had tried to remove agenda item 7, and thus contributed to the colonization of Palestinian land by Israel. The organization called for a full ban on Israeli settlement products, adding that corporate entities involved in the occupied Palestinian territory could be complicit in grave breaches of international law.

Union of Arab Jurists reminded that some States wanted to remove item 7 from the Council’s agenda. The occupation authorities had expanded Israeli settlements and expelled Palestinians from their homes, and they practiced racist policies. The organization condemned those practices and the decision of the Trump administration to declare Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.

International Federation for Human Rights Leagues, in a joint statement with Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies noted that the building of a database of businesses operating in Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory was commendable. It strongly urged the Human Rights Council to maintain the database process dynamic and alive. In that sense, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights should provide regular updates and cooperate with stakeholders.

Association of World Citizens drew attention to the presence of young people in the Council room, both Palestinians and Israelis, and called on the Council not to continue with fear and not to wait for older people to bring about change. What was the reason for all those killings that were absolutely horrific? The organization called for the opening of bleeding hearts on both sides.

Europe-Third World Centre, in a joint statement with International Association of Democratic Lawyers, noted the withdrawal of the United States from the Human Rights Council. Israel was imposing an apartheid regime on the people of Palestine. The withdrawal of the United States did not make the issue any less relevant. Council members must urgently take action to uphold the rights of Palestinians.

Human Rights Watch said Israeli forces had killed and wounded Palestinian protesters over the past months. Such acts could amount to war crimes. The Palestinian authorities and Hamas both violently dispersed peaceful demonstrations in recent weeks and continued to arbitrarily arrest critics. The Human Rights Council must raise concerns over the shrinking space for civil society in Israel.

International-Lawyers.Org said Israel had failed to implement all relevant United Nations resolutions seeking to protect the rights of Palestinian people. There was no parallel in recent history for the horrible conditions imposed on the people of Palestine. The Human Rights Council must probe the activities carried out by Israel to determine if their actions amounted to genocide.

IUS PRIMI VIRI International Association rejected all efforts to remove item 7 from the Council’s agenda. Israel continued to violate international law on a daily basis, including through the arbitrary detention of children and the continuous expansion of settlements. Israel had recently shelled Gaza and killed Palestinian protestors.

United Towns Agency for North-South Cooperation said that Israel considered itself above international law, especially when it came to arbitrary arrests, detentions and systematic policy against children. Since the adoption of a law in 2015, which authorised the increase of prison sentences and torture, over 700 children had been detained every year and interrogated. States were urged to call on Israel to end its policy against children.

Organization for Defending Victims of Violence said that United States’ decision to recognise Jerusalem as Israel’s capital was deplorable. Israel was violating all conventions and resolutions, including article 49 and 53 of the fourth Geneva Convention. Security Council and General Assembly resolutions provided a roadmap which had to be followed in future peace talks. All parties were called on to join in their efforts to reinvigorate the peace process.

Khiam Rehabilitation Centre for Victims of Torture noted that agenda item 7 served to give voice to those who were in Israeli prisons, often experiencing torture. Torture was defined in the Convention against Torture and it included a psychological component. Psychological torture was a methodological practice which was affecting over 1 million Palestinians.

International Youth and Student Movement for the United Nations said that recent atrocities in Gaza had confirmed the brutal nature of the Israeli occupation. It was appalling how international law was undermined by frequent calls to remove agenda item 7 by orchestrated campaigns. Item 7 must remain until the end of the Israeli’s occupation.

International Organization for the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD) noted that the transfer of the United States embassy to Jerusalem had shown complete disregard for the plight of Palestinians. The United States could no longer be a peace broker in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, whereas Israel maintained an entrenched discriminatory system against the Palestinians.

International Institute for Rights and Development Geneva drew attention to Israeli’s oppressive practices towards Palestinians, such as deplorable living conditions and denial of employment, as well as deportation of human rights defenders and all those who criticized Israel’s policies. The organization called on the international community to provide protection to Palestinian refugees.

Association Bharathi Centre Culturel Franco-Tamoul noted that the targeting by Israeli defence forces of unarmed protesters with open fire was unacceptable. Since April 2018, Doctors Without Borders had received more than 1,300 patients with gunshot wounds. The current capacity in Gaza could not treat such infections; patients needed to be transferred outside of Gaza for expert care, but only 54 per cent of requests for external treatment had been approved by Israel in 2017.

L’Observatoire Maruitanien de Droits de l’Homme et de la Démocratie reminded that since its birth, Israel had engaged in a policy of forcible displacement of Palestinians from their homes and lands. More than 750,000 Palestinians had been displaced, some of them internally during the Nakba in 1948. Seventy years on, the Palestinian question was still on the United Nations agenda.

Badil Resource Centre for Palestinian residency and refugee rights said the Universal Declaration of Human Rights codified customary rules. Numerous United Nations resolutions had identified the right to remedy of the people of Palestine. The organization called on the international community to ensure that the people of Palestine could fully enjoy their rights and freedoms.

Indian Movement “Tupaj Amaru” said it opposed efforts by the United States to relegate the discussion of the issue of Palestine. Arab States like Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates had worked alongside with Israel, betraying the people of Palestine. Palestinians were being killed just for defending their lands. The group said such actions amounted to crimes against humanity.

Institute for NGO Research said the States that were upset about the withdrawal of the United States from the Council only had themselves to blame. Item 7 should have never been included in the agenda of the Human Rights Council. Mob rule prevailed and international organizations were siding with the biased approach to human rights. States must implement the Council’s founding values.

Servas International was deeply concerned over the dire situation faced by the people of Palestine. A major obstacle to peace was the continuous expansion of Israel settlements. Certain villages were in imminent threat of demolition, creating a dangerous precedent for other villages in the occupied Palestinian territories. Recent crackdowns on protests by Palestinian authorities were also a major concern.

Al Mezan Centre for Human Rights said 110 Palestinians had been killed by Israel in the past 14 weeks. Calls for Israel to uphold its international obligations had continuously gone unheard. The protests in Gaza came as a result of 11 years of blockade that had rendered the people of the region unable to lead dignified lives. The organization called for the lifting of the blockade.

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