



# Security Council

Seventy-second year

**8139**<sup>th</sup> meeting

Monday, 18 December 2017, 12.25 p.m.

New York

*Provisional*

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*President:* Mr. Bessho. . . . . (Japan)

*Members:*

Bolivia (Plurinational State of) . . . . .	Mr. Inchauste Jordán
China . . . . .	Mr. Wu Haitao
Egypt . . . . .	Mr. Aboulatta
Ethiopia . . . . .	Mr. Alemu
France . . . . .	Mr. Delattre
Italy . . . . .	Mr. Cardi
Kazakhstan . . . . .	Mr. Sadykov
Russian Federation. . . . .	Mr. Safronkov
Senegal . . . . .	Mr. Seck
Sweden . . . . .	Mr. Skoog
Ukraine . . . . .	Mr. Yelchenko
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Rycroft
United States of America. . . . .	Mrs. Haley
Uruguay. . . . .	Mr. Rosselli Frieri

## Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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*The meeting was called to order at 12.25 p.m.*

### **Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

### **The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question**

**The President:** In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Israel to participate in this meeting.

I propose that the Council invite the Permanent Observer of the Observer State of Palestine to the United Nations to participate in this meeting, in accordance with the provisional rules of procedure and the previous practice in this regard.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2017/1060, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by Egypt.

I now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements before the vote.

**Mr. Aboulatta** (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Today's meeting is being held to consider the draft resolution contained in document S/2017/1060, submitted by Egypt on behalf of the Group of Arab States, pursuant to the resolution of the emergency meeting of Arab Ministers held in Cairo on 9 December.

The draft resolution has been submitted in response to the emergency situation at the heart of the Palestinian question and as the Security Council is addressing the latest developments related to Jerusalem. Bearing in mind the serious situation in Jerusalem and the repercussions of the unilateral decision of the United States to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, I recall that many members objected to that unilateral decision at the open briefing of the Council on 8 December (see S/PV.8128). I stress that there are no legal justifications for that decision.

Al-Quds Al-Sharif is an issue that is dear to the hearts of many people around the world, and any attempt to address the situation in the Middle East must undoubtedly take that very sensitive topic into consideration. However, we are well aware that the only

path towards addressing the issue is to resort to the one pillar underlying all international disputes — that is, international law — as distinct from religious or other beliefs. Any attempt to do otherwise would have huge repercussions on the situation and reawaken the chaos that preceded human development.

Al-Quds Al-Sharif is one of the final-status issues that must be settled through peaceful negotiations between the Palestinians and the Israelis. Any attempt to change the facts on the ground in Jerusalem would be considered to be an illegal unilateral measures with no legal merit, since it would violate international law and the resolutions of international legitimacy, including General Assembly resolution 181 (II), which established two States — Palestine and Israel — and considered Jerusalem to be a *corpus separatum* as part of a very particular international system.

Moreover, Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 252 (1968), 383 (1973) recognize no measure that includes Jerusalem as an Israeli territory, which would run counter to the Charter of the United Nations, which does not allow the annexation of territories. Additionally, it violates resolutions 476 (1980) and 478 (1980), which recognize no measure that would change the status quo in Jerusalem. Both resolutions reject any Israeli law seeking to annex Jerusalem and declare it the capital of Israel. Resolution 2334 (2016) reiterates that point through very clear legal language rejecting attempt to alter the demographic or geographic nature of the territories occupied since 1967, including east Jerusalem. It also clearly stresses that the Security Council does not recognize any change to the demarcation lines of 4 June 1967, including those related to Al-Quds Al-Sharif, with the exception of alterations derived from negotiations between the two parties.

The draft resolution stresses that any attempt to alter the character, status or demographic composition of the holy city of Jerusalem have no effect, are null and void and must be rescinded. We therefore object to any such attempt, in line with relevant Security Council resolutions. The draft resolution calls on all countries not to establish diplomatic missions in the holy city of Jerusalem, in compliance with resolution 478 (1980). It demands that all States comply with Council resolutions regarding the holy city of Jerusalem and not recognize any actions or measures contrary to those resolutions. It also reiterates its call for the reversal of the negative trends on the ground that are imperilling the two-State solution and for the intensification of international

and regional efforts in support of achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East on the basis of the relevant United Nations and Security Council resolutions, in addition to the Madrid terms of reference, including the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative, the Quartet road map and an end to the Israeli occupation that began in 1967.

Egypt was one of the very first supporters of the Palestinian people. We have supported them since 1948 and will continue to do so until we achieve a full and lasting peace. In the light of all this, I call upon all members of the Security Council to vote for the draft resolution and to implement international law, which is our main term of reference related to rights and duties concerning this critical topic and other international topics.

**Mr. Rosselli Frieri** (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): We have requested the floor before the vote in order to make two comments — one procedural and one substantive.

With regard to the procedural issue, the draft resolution was shared officially on Saturday. Yesterday, the President was asked to put it in blue and to schedule the vote for today, without having held any negotiations or consultations on the contents of the draft, with the exception of the meeting that just concluded (see S/PV.8138), which also did not include a detailed discussion of its contents. Just as we have criticized permanent members of the Security Council on previous occasions for similar practices that reduce the transparency of the work of this organ and force the membership to take decisions without being able to participate in the drafting of the text, we must once again affirm that this is not the right way to do things in the Council.

As for the substantive issue, we reaffirm the special status of the city of Jerusalem, pursuant to General Assembly resolutions, particularly resolution 181 (II), adopted in 1947, as well as Security Council resolutions. General Assembly resolution 181 (II), which Uruguay voted in favour of and still supports to this day, recommended the partition of Palestine into a Jewish State and an Arab State, and the establishment of Jerusalem as a *corpus separatum* under a special international regime administered by the United Nations. That is the basis for the special status of Jerusalem in United Nations law and international law.

As such, it should have been referenced in the text of the draft resolution.

In the meeting held earlier today, we welcomed the recognition extended by many countries today to the foundational nature of General Assembly resolution 181 (II) by referring to the separation of Palestine into two States — one Jewish and one Arab — with a special status for Jerusalem. That is particularly important because at the time of its adoption, many States did not support resolution 181 (II).

The final status of Jerusalem is unfinished business. The sovereignty and boundaries of Jerusalem should be agreed by Israel and Palestine in bilateral negotiations. Therefore, any decision, measure or action that the parties or any third State would take contrary to the resolution to change the status of Jerusalem would affect the peace process and the search for a two-State solution — a goal shared by nearly the entire international community for decades.

For seven decades, Uruguay has sought a fair and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on respect for international law. For those reasons, despite a submission process of the document that we view as flawed, my delegation supports the draft resolution contained in document S/2017/1060 before the Council.

**The President:** I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

*A vote was taken by a show of hands.*

*In favour:*

Bolivia (Plurinational State of), China, Egypt, Ethiopia, France, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Russian Federation, Senegal, Sweden, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and Uruguay

*Against:*

United States of America

**The President:** There were 14 votes in favour and one vote against. The draft resolution has not been adopted, owing to the negative vote of a permanent member of the Council.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements following the voting.

**Mrs. Haley** (United States of America): I have been the proud representative of the United States at the United Nations for nearly a year now. This is the first time I have exercised the American right to veto a draft resolution in the Security Council. The exercise of the veto is not something that the United States does often. We have not done it in more than six years. We do it with no joy, but we do it with no reluctance. The fact that this veto has been exercised in defence of American sovereignty and in defence of America's role in the Middle East peace process is not a source of embarrassment for us. It should be an embarrassment to the remainder of the Security Council.

As I did when we discussed this topic 10 days ago (see S/PV.8128), I will once again note the features of the President's announcement on Jerusalem that are most relevant here. The President took great care not to prejudge final-status negotiations in any way, including the specific boundaries of Israeli sovereignty in Jerusalem, which remains a subject to be negotiated only by the parties. The position is fully in line with previous Security Council resolutions on this item. The President was also careful to state that we support the status quo regarding Jerusalem's holy sites and that we support a two-State solution if that is what the parties agree to. Again, those positions are fully consistent with previous Security Council resolutions. It is highly regrettable that some are trying to distort the President's position to serve their own agendas.

What is troubling to some people is not that the United States has harmed the peace process. We have, in fact, done no such thing. Rather, what is troubling to some people is that the United States had the courage and honesty to recognize a fundamental reality. Jerusalem has been the political, cultural and spiritual homeland of the Jewish people for thousands of years. They have had no other capital city, but the United States recognition of the obvious — that Jerusalem is the capital and seat of the modern Israeli Government — is too much for some.

First, some have threatened violence on the street, as if violence would somehow improve the prospects for peace. Now today, buried in diplomatic jargon, some presume to tell America where to put our embassy. The United States has a sovereign right to determine where and whether we establish an embassy. I suspect that very few Member States would welcome Security Council pronouncements about their sovereign decisions, and I can think of some that should fear it.

It is worth noting that this is not a new American position. Back in 1980, when Jimmy Carter was the American President, the Security Council voted on resolution 478 (1980), which called upon diplomatic missions to relocate from Jerusalem. The United States did not support resolution 478 (1980). In his remarks, the then Secretary of State Ed Muskie said the following:

“The draft resolution before us today is illustrative of a preoccupation which has produced this series of unbalanced and unrealistic texts on Middle East issues” (S/PV.2245, para. 106).

Specifically regarding the provision on diplomatic missions in Jerusalem, Secretary Muskie said

“In our judgement this provision is not binding. It is without force. And we reject it as a disruptive attempt to dictate to other nations. It does nothing to promote a resolution of the difficult problems facing Israel and its neighbours. It does nothing to advance the cause of peace.” (*ibid.*, para. 111)

That was true in 1980, and it is equally true today. The United States will not be told by any country where we can put our embassy.

Buried even deeper in the jargon of the draft resolution is the accusation that the United States is setting back the prospects of peace in the Middle East. That is a scandalous charge. Those who are making it should consider that it only harms the very Palestinian people they claim to speak for. What does it gain the Palestinian people for their leaders to throw up roadblocks to negotiations? A peace process that is damaged by the simple recognition that Jerusalem is the capital of Israel is not a peace process; it is a justification for an endless stalemate. What does it gain the Palestinian people for some of their leaders to accuse the United States of being hostile to the cause of peace? It gains them nothing, but it risks costing them a great deal.

The United States has done more by far than any other country to assist the Palestinian people. Since 1994, we have given over \$5 billion to the Palestinians in bilateral economic assistance, security assistance and humanitarian assistance. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) operates schools and medical facilities throughout the region. It is funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions. Last year, the United States voluntarily funded almost 30 per cent of the UNRWA

budget; that is more than the next two largest donors combined. It is vastly more than some of the members of the Council that have considerable financial resources of their own.

I will be blunt. When the American people see a group of countries whose total contributions to the Palestinian people is less than 1 per cent of the UNRWA budget, and when they see those countries accuse the United States of being insufficiently committed to peace, the American people lose their patience. I have been to the Palestinian refugee camps that the United States supports with its contributions. I have met with men, women and children there; I have advocated on their behalf. I can say that their leaders do them no favours by being more open to abandoning peace negotiations than to doing the hard work of seeing them to completion. The United States has never been more committed to peace in the Middle East. We were committed to it before the President announced our recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, and we are committed to it today.

What we witnessed today in the Security Council is an insult. It will not be forgotten. It is one more example of the United Nations doing more harm than good in addressing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Today, for the simple act of deciding where to put its embassy, the United States was forced to defend its sovereignty. The record will reflect that we did so proudly. Today, for acknowledging a basic truth about the capital city of Israel, we are accused of harming peace. The record will reflect that we reject that outrageous claim.

For these reasons, and with the best interest of both the Israeli and the Palestinian people firmly in mind, the United States voted no on this draft resolution.

**Mr. Rycroft** (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom voted in favour of draft resolution S/2017/1060 today because it is in line with previous Security Council resolutions, including 242 (1967), 476 (1980), 478 (1980) and 2334 (2016), and with our established position on the status of Jerusalem. That position is clear and long-standing. The status of Jerusalem should be determined through a negotiated settlement between Israelis and the Palestinians and should ultimately be the shared capital of the Israeli and Palestinian States. In line with those same resolutions, we regard East Jerusalem as part of the occupied Palestinian territories.

As we have previously said, we disagree with the United States decision to unilaterally recognize

Jerusalem as the capital of Israel before a final status agreement and to move the United States Embassy to Jerusalem. As recent events in the region have shown, these decisions are unhelpful to the prospects for peace in the region, an aim that all of us in the Council remain committed to. The British Embassy to Israel is based in Tel Aviv and we have no plans to move it.

Importantly, the draft resolution that has just been voted on stresses that Jerusalem is a final-status issue to be resolved through negotiations; affirmed that decisions and actions that purport to have altered the character, status or demographic composition of the Holy City of Jerusalem have no legal effect; demanded that all States comply with Security Council resolutions regarding Jerusalem; and called for the intensification and acceleration of international and regional efforts to achieve a just and lasting peace in the Middle East without delay.

Our position since the Security Council met on 8 December (see S/PV.8128) has not changed. We recognize that Jerusalem holds huge significance and holiness for Jews, Muslims and Christians. We reiterate the fundamental necessity of maintaining the status quo at the holy sites, in particular the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif. We continue to value Jordan's important role as custodian of the holy sites, and remain fully supportive of its efforts to maintain calm.

We must now all look forward. We share President Trump's desire to bring an end to this conflict and welcome his commitment to a two-State solution negotiated between the parties. This includes his clear acknowledgement that the final status of Jerusalem, including the sovereign boundaries within the city, must be subject to negotiations between the parties.

Our commitment to and position on an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement has also not changed. It should be based on the lines as they stood on 4 June 1967 with equal land swaps to reflect the national, security and religious interests of the Jewish and Palestinian peoples. Jerusalem should be the shared capital of the Israeli and Palestinian States, and its status must be determined through a final status agreement. A just, fair, agreed and realistic settlement for refugees is needed that is demographically compatible with the principle of two States for two peoples. This position is consistent with the draft resolution before us. We now strongly encourage the United States Administration



to bring forward detailed proposals for an Israeli-Palestinian settlement.

We call on all parties to act with restraint, reject violence and work together to ensure calm and stability. This will give the peace process the best chance of success. We remain fully supportive of progress towards a lasting peace and will do everything we can to achieve it.

Any peace effort needs to take account of the people, not just the land and the holy sites. For too long Israelis have lived in fear of rockets and terror; this wreaks havoc in people's daily lives and renders peace hard to achieve, as do attempts by some to deny the ancient and legitimate connection of the Jewish and Palestinian peoples to Jerusalem. Many Palestinians living outside East Jerusalem, including the Old City, are effectively cut off from it. Those that can enter have to wait in long lines to pass through checkpoints. Within East Jerusalem live more than 320,000 Palestinians. The vast majority are permanent residents, but their permits can be revoked at any point. If they apply for Israeli citizenship, and most do not, a high proportion of applications are rejected. The lives of Jews and Palestinians — and for both groups Jerusalem is uniquely holy — must not be forgotten in any peace effort.

I once again reaffirm our strong support for renewed peace negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians as soon as possible — these should be supported by the international community — and for realizing the vision of General Assembly resolution 181 (II), whose seventieth anniversary we marked last month: a safe and secure Israel, the homeland for the Jewish people, living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state, the homeland for the Palestinian people.

**Mr. Delattre** (France) (*spoke in French*): France regrets the outcome of the voting today. We thank Egypt for the quality of the work it has carried out and for its balanced approach.

This vote was a foregone conclusion for us for at least five reasons, which I would like to refer to today.

First of all, draft resolution S/2017/1060 confirms an international consensus on Jerusalem that has been built over decades and which is being translated into international law today. The decisions announced by the President of the United States, which we regret, do not in any way modify the common foundation on

which all peace agreement must be based. As President Macron has said, the status of Jerusalem concerns all of the international community. It has been the subject of several specific resolutions of the Security Council. It is therefore normal for the Security Council to be seized of this issue today and to reaffirm the principles and framework it defined with regard to Jerusalem, in particular through resolutions 476 (1980) and 478 (1980). That — no more no less — is what the text on which we have just voted does.

Jerusalem's status must be examined by the parties in the framework of a peace agreement. In the absence of an agreement, and in accordance with the consensus that has prevailed for 70 years within the international community, France does not recognize any sovereignty over Jerusalem. Also, following the June 1967 conflict, we did not recognize the annexation of East Jerusalem, which is part of the occupied territories under international law. Similarly, in 1980 we did not recognize Israel's unilateral acts concerning Jerusalem. Before and after Israel's Basic Law: Jerusalem, Capital of Israel, the Council adopted resolutions 476 (1980) and 478 (1980), which put forth two principles that are recalled in the draft resolution the Council has just voted on.

All decisions and actions aimed at altering the status of Jerusalem, as well as its geographical, demographic and historical character, are null and void and must be rescinded. All Member States that have established diplomatic missions at Jerusalem must withdraw them from the city. That is what happened following the adoption of resolution 478 (1980), without exception. What was at stake then was no less than what is at stake today — not only the clear Jewish link with Jerusalem, but also the legal framework and political parameters for a settlement to the conflict.

The result of today's voting reflects the desire of 14 members of the Council to reaffirm their collective commitment to international law, including the resolutions of the Council, on the key issue of the final status of Jerusalem. This is decisive for any prospect for peace. It emphasizes the willingness of a very large majority of Council members to not recognize any decision that runs contrary to its resolutions, as requested in the draft resolution put forward by the delegation of Egypt.

With regard to the United States, its stance clearly has a particular impact. It is incumbent upon the United

States to clarify the compatibility of President Trump's announcement on 6 December with the international consensus, without which no credible peace effort can be made. That is because, and this is my second point, without an agreement on Jerusalem, there will be no peace agreement. France and its partners in the European Union believe that Jerusalem is destined to become the capital of two States — Israel and Palestine — by means that must be defined through negotiations. No unilateral decision can replace that.

We all know that there is no alternative to the two-State solution. A one-State solution in which two citizenship systems coexist is a fantasy that would mark the ruin of the national aspirations of the Palestinians and the democratic aspirations of the Israelis. Neither the two parties nor the international community can resign themselves to that. To go somewhat further, and to be absolutely clear, there is no alternative to the two-State solution, or to a two-State solution without an agreement between the parties on Jerusalem, or a possible agreement on Jerusalem outside the internationally recognized parameters. We noted the willingness expressed on 6 December by the President of the United States to support the two-State solution. We hope that that will pave the way for the United States to return to the consensus framework of the international community.

Thirdly, the issue of the status of Jerusalem must take into account the concrete reality of that city, as experienced on a daily basis by its inhabitants. That is what the Security Council has done through the resolutions it has adopted over the decades on Jerusalem and it is reflected in the draft resolution that we have voted on today. Jerusalem does not lend itself to an unambiguous narrative. More than 300,000 Palestinians live there, representing approximately 40 per cent of the city's population. It is an Israeli city and a Palestinian city. It will become the future capital of two States, but it is already a city of two populations that coexist there.

Fourthly, the historical and religious importance of Jerusalem is key to resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but also to regional and international stability. More than ever before, the need to preserve the status quo at the holy sites of Jerusalem — specifically the 1967 mosque esplanade — must be reaffirmed. But beyond that, any approach to the Jerusalem issue as a whole must avoid crystallizing tensions over the city. The risk that we must be wary of is transforming a political

conflict, which is itself susceptible to a compromise, into an intractable religious conflict. Only the radicals would be set to gain, at the expense of the moderates in the region.

As to my fifth, and final, point, we are following the situation on the ground with great concern. Ten days of localized clashes have already left at least eight people dead and hundreds wounded in Gaza, the West Bank and several neighbourhoods in Jerusalem. The resumption of regular rocket fire from Gaza, which we strongly condemn, is also a worrying sign.

We must do everything possible to ward off the escalation of risks existing on the ground. That is why we continue to call on all parties to restrain themselves and make every effort to restore calm. Beyond that are the potentially negative repercussions throughout the region that must be avoided, following the announcement made on 6 December and its the way it has been interpreted. In particular, we call on all regional actors to contribute to easing the situation.

In the context of tensions on the ground and regional crises, it is essential to recall our collective commitment to preserving the agreed parameters on the status of Jerusalem. Today's vote has given us that opportunity, despite its predictable outcome. On the issue of Jerusalem, both the preservation of the two-State solution and the realization of the aspirations of both parties are at stake, as well as respect for international law, the resolutions of the Security Council and the legitimacy of the Council itself.

Let me conclude by briefly underscoring three points. Given its unparalleled symbolic significance, Jerusalem is in many ways the key to peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians. Without an agreement on Jerusalem, there will be no peace agreement. That is why the fate of that spiritual city can be decided only by the parties, with the support of the international community, and not by a unilateral decision.

A body of international law and international consensus on the two-State solution now exists, with Jerusalem as the capital of both States and based on the outlines of a peace settlement. The Egyptian draft resolution was simply intended to recall those different elements. That is why France voted in favour of the draft resolution. As a permanent member of the Security Council and a friend to both Israel and Palestine, France will spare no effort to bring the parties back

to the negotiating table and achieve an agreement in accordance with the Council's resolutions.

There is no shortcut along this demanding path, and France will continue to hold its promise to both parties on this issue, which I once again emphasize is key to peace and stability throughout the Middle East. That is why it is essential to not give up and to pursue our efforts so that the Security Council can come together again and play its part on this crucial issue. The Council can rest assured of France's commitment to that end.

**Mr. Seck** (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): The delegation of Senegal supported the draft resolution (S/2017/1060) submitted by the delegation of Egypt, as we are absolutely certain of the need to underscore the parameters and principles underpinning the historic and legal issues on Jerusalem, which are very deeply held by the parties to the conflict — the Israelis and the Palestinians — as well as the entire world, given the symbolic importance of the holy city for the three monotheistic Abrahamic religions. Senegal therefore pays tribute to Jordan, in its capacity as custodian of places holy to Islam, Christianity and Judaism.

It is absolutely imperative to preserve the international consensus on the status of Jerusalem, which the Israeli and the Palestinian parties are to consider as part of final status negotiations, with the unanimous support of the United Nations, and in particular of the Security Council. It is necessary to preserve the legal and historic status of Jerusalem in order to ensure that the Holy City retains its diverse identity, as well as its spirit of tolerance, openness and sharing that have always characterized it. That is why Senegal once again calls for strict respect for the status quo regarding Jerusalem, in line with the parameters that are internationally established and recognized — in particular through Security Council resolutions 476 (1980), 478 (1980) and 2334 (2016).

Those parameters were previously defined by the founding resolution of General Assembly resolution 181 (II), which enshrined the two separate States of Israel and Palestine, with Jerusalem as the capital of both States. The final status of Jerusalem is qualified as a *corpus separatum* in resolution 181(II). I take this opportunity to launch an appeal to the parties to display the utmost restraint and to avoid escalation at this very difficult and impassioned moment.

The outcome of the vote this afternoon should not lead to desperation or cause us to give up. Quite the

contrary is true. We need to strengthen our resolve by building on the long-standing agreed parameters, but also on the already existing initiatives, including the Arab Peace Initiative and, let us say very loudly, the commendable efforts made by the United States Administration on the ground.

**Mr. Alemu** (Ethiopia): Ethiopia is a friend to both Israelis and Palestinians — we are not bashful about that, and we display it quite openly. Our position on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has always been consistent, and, we believe principled. As much as we support the right of Israel to exist in peace and security, we also support the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to exist as a free and independent State. That is consistent not only with the relevant United Nations resolutions, but also with the decisions of our continental organization, the African Union.

With regard to the recent developments surrounding the issue of Jerusalem, we had an opportunity to express our position on the matter during the emergency meeting of the Security Council held on 8 December (see S/PV.8128). We believe this is a final status issue that must be resolved through direct negotiations between the two parties, on the basis of the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, while taking into account the legitimate concerns of both the Palestinian and the Israeli sides.

The draft resolution (S/2017/1060) put forward by the delegation of Egypt today reaffirms that long-standing principle on the part of the United Nations, which is why we supported it. It was a well-balanced draft resolution. Although the draft resolution could not be adopted, there is no denying the fact that the latest developments have once again brought the Israeli-Palestine dispute back to the foreground, thereby underscoring the urgency of reinvigorating the peace process without any further delay. In that regard, it is of the utmost urgency to work towards easing tensions and restoring calm as a matter of urgency. It is also vital that the parties tone down the rhetoric and refrain from taking actions that could further aggravate the already tense situation.

Above all, however, removing the long-standing obstacles that have hindered progress so far is imperative in order to create the necessary conditions for the resumption of direct negotiations between the two parties. We believe that should be done on the



basis of the two-State formula, which still remains the only viable option for peace. That is why we supported the call for the intensification and acceleration of international and regional efforts aimed at achieving a comprehensive, lasting and just solution. Despite the lack of unity today, it is incumbent upon the Council to discharge its responsibilities and support such efforts for the sake of peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians — and peace in the broader Middle East region.

**Mr. Safronkov** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I thank the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, for his substantive briefing. We fully support the work of Mr. Mladenov as an objective broker.

We in Moscow we are very carefully following the development of the situation on the Israeli-Palestinian track. We are convinced that resolving the Palestinian question is of fundamental importance for the long-standing normalization of the situation in the Middle East. No other regional challenges can obscure that fact.

The ongoing stalemate in the political process is of deep concern to us. Under those conditions, any kind of unilateral act increases the risk of unleashing a spiral of conflict and makes it more difficult to relaunch direct Palestinian-Israeli negotiations. Washington's recent decisions on Jerusalem were met with serious criticism, which turned into mass protests. That is understandable given that Jerusalem is the cradle of the three monotheistic religions and is the most sensitive issue in the peace process architecture — as well as the fact that the question of the status of the city needs to be considered on the basis of well-known internationally recognized parameters, within the framework of a bilateral dialogue between the Palestinians and Israelis. We call upon all parties to show restraint and to refrain from any actions that could be fraught with dangerous consequences.

We must not forget that precisely such a method of settlement was approved in many Security Council resolutions adopted in recent decades. They remain fully in force today. Against the background of the settlement activity by Israel, the provocative rhetoric on both sides, the outbursts of violence and the difficult humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip, we continue to hear about the erosion of a possible realization of the two-State solution to the Palestinian problem. At

the same time, we remain committed to a resolution that provides for an independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side in peace and security with Israel. And West Jerusalem will be the capital of the State of Israel.

We welcome the further consolidation of the unity of the Palestinian people with the assistance of the Egyptian leadership. We consider it a step in the right direction. For our part, we will continue encouraging all Palestinian parties to overcome their internal divisions as quickly as possible.

A just and comprehensive settlement in the Middle East is something that can be achieved only if there is a firm international legal basis, which includes the Security Council's relevant resolutions, the Madrid principles and the Arab Peace Initiative. Russia will continue acting both on a bilateral basis and through the Middle Eastern Quartet of international mediators to help to intensify international efforts in the quest to find a way out of the current impasse in a resolution to the Middle East question. We think that the energetic role played by the regional players, in part by Egypt and Jordan, is important. At the same time, we need to ensure a fully functional United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. That is the main mechanism for alleviating the burden of the Palestinian refugees in the Middle East and, ultimately, it is extending assistance to those Arab States where the refugees find themselves.

We believe that, in the current conditions, including those throughout the whole region, the issue of moving as quickly as possible to revive direct Israeli-Palestinian negotiations is becoming increasingly topical. We therefore reiterate the relevance of our proposal to convene a summit in Russia between the leaders of Palestine and Israel. We are ready to be honest mediators. Russia supports trust-based and friendly relations with all the peoples in the Middle East without exception — Israelis, Palestinians and Arabs. Our relationships are not burdened by the negative heritage of the past. Russia's policy has never included colonialism or interference in the internal affairs, which, let us be honest, became the reason of the lamentable situation that we have in the region today. But we cannot give up. Let us look to the future. The priority tasks remain the same — pooling our efforts, fighting terrorism and settling the regional crisis. Implementing the proposal of Foreign Minister Lavrov to conduct a comprehensive review in the Security Council on the situation in the

Middle East would help to resolve this task. We are ready for such cooperation.

**Mr. Skoog** (Sweden): We regret that the Security Council was unable to adopt draft resolution S/2017/1060 before us. Here in the Council, we recently outlined in detail the reasons that we disagree with the recognition by the United States of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and with the plan to move the United States Embassy to that city. We voted in favour of the draft resolution for a number of reasons.

First, it stresses that Jerusalem is a final-status issue and can therefore be resolved only through negotiations, in line with the relevant United Nations resolutions. Furthermore, it reaffirms that the holy city of Jerusalem, as a city holy to three religions, has a specific status. Most important, it reaffirms the view of the Council, expressed in previous resolutions, that any decision and actions that purport to alter the character and status of Jerusalem have no legal effect and must be rescinded.

We also agree with the call on all States to refrain from the establishment of diplomatic missions in Jerusalem, in line with resolution 478 (1980). The European Union (EU) has a firm position on Jerusalem, which explains why all EU member States represented on the Council voted in favour of the draft resolution today. I would also like to state clearly that today's vote does not impact the resolutions adopted by the Council. The status of Jerusalem remains unchanged under international law.

Finally, looking forward, we urgently need to relaunch the peace process. It is high time to show commitment and to move ahead with a detailed peace plan that addresses all final-status issues in a manner consistent with the known parameters. The Security Council has the responsibility to do that. All stakeholders, including regional actors, should now engage more than ever for peace in the Middle East.

**Mr. Cardì** (Italy): Italy voted in favour of draft resolution S/2017/1060, as it reaffirms the well-established principles and messages that are already enshrined in several resolutions on the issue of Jerusalem. The text is consistent with Italy's position on the matter. As we said at the emergency Security Council meeting on 8 December (see S/PV.8128), we believe that the status of Jerusalem as the future capital of two States needs to be negotiated between Israel and Palestine, within the framework of a peace process that

will eventually lead to the establishment of two States living side by side in peace and security, taking into account the legitimate concerns and aspirations of both parties.

We also supported the draft resolution because it opens up a political horizon rooted in the two-State solution and in the intensification of international and regional efforts for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East. In that regard, we continue to see a crucial role to be played by the United States. We look forward to hearing the views of the United States Administration on possible proposals for an Israeli-Palestinian settlement, while building on the extensive contacts and intense dialogue developed with all parties over the past year.

At the same time, we reiterate our deep concern about the increased tension over the past weeks, and we reaffirm our firm condemnation of the latest rocket attack against Israel. An escalation of violence would be negative for all parties and must be prevented. We call on all actors in Palestine and in the Middle East to show responsibility and to exercise restraint. The only way forward is through negotiations and the rejection of violence.

**Mr. Yelchenko** (Ukraine): Today, the delegation of Ukraine voted in favour of the draft resolution (S/2017/1060) proposed by Egypt on the status of Jerusalem. We are convinced that the issue of Jerusalem is a final-status issue, which should be resolved only through negotiations and in strict compliance with the relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolutions 476 (1980), 478 (1980) and 2334 (2016). The draft resolution also reaffirms the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force. Ukraine knows only too well the consequences of the violation of that principle.

We are strongly convinced that there is no other viable alternative to the two-State solution. We urge both sides to engage in a constructive negotiation process with goodwill and with no preconditions. Given the highly sensitive nature of the issue of Jerusalem for all sides involved, we hope that the current escalation can be contained and that it will not get out of control.

Finally, I would like to add my delegation's voice to the procedural point raised by my colleague from Uruguay. I urge the remaining and incoming members of the Council to take that point into serious consideration.

**Mr. Wu Haitao** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China voted in favour of the draft resolution (S/2017/1060) that was just put to the vote.

The question of Palestinian is at the core of the Middle East issue. It is a fundamental part of the Middle East peace process, within which the issue of Jerusalem is particularly complicated and sensitive and is key to finding a solution to the Palestinian issue. For many years, a series of Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2334 (2016), have included provisions regarding the status of Jerusalem.

The draft resolution submitted by Egypt is a continuation of the content and spirit of past Security Council resolutions. We urge the Security Council and the international community to remain united in a common effort to ensure a prompt de-escalation of tension regarding the situation of Jerusalem in order to maintain regional peace and security in the Middle East and to preserve the overall Middle East peace process.

China has always firmly supported and promoted the Middle East peace process. We support the just cause of the Palestinian people for restoring their legitimate national rights. We support the establishment of a fully sovereign and independent State of Palestine, based on its 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital. That position of China will not change.

China will continue to be guided in general by the four-point proposal put forward by Chinese President Xi Jinping this past July for the promotion of the settlement of the question of Palestine by advancing a political settlement based on the two-State solution and by promoting peace, stability and development in the Middle East.

We urge the international community to respect the relevant Security Council resolutions, the land-for-peace principle and the Arab Peace Initiative, to strengthen efforts for the resumption of peace negotiations and to find a solution to the key issues, including the final status of Jerusalem, through dialogue and negotiation in order to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Palestinian issue at an early date.

**Mr. Inchauste Jordán** (Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Bolivia voted in favour of draft resolution S/2017/1060, submitted today by the delegation of Egypt, because the draft resolution reaffirms that the final status of the city of Jerusalem should be resolved through negotiations and that any decision or act that seeks to

change the status or the demographic composition of Jerusalem does not have any legal effect. Such actions should be null and void and should be revoked in line with the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. Furthermore, we reiterate that it is essential to reverse the negative trends on the ground, which are jeopardizing the two-State solution, and to strengthen the regional and international efforts to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

In that regard, we once again call on the Government of the United States of America to reconsider its decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and to move its diplomatic representation to that city, since that would only undermine any possibility of dialogue between the parties and make it even more difficult to reach a long-term peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Moreover, that same decision is a clear violation of resolution 478 (1980), which refers to, *inter alia*, the withdrawal by Member States of their diplomatic missions from Jerusalem.

We once again wish to recall that it was the United Nations that established the special international status for the city of Jerusalem and that the Security Council decreed that any measure that alters the geographical, demographic or historical character of the city of Jerusalem is null and void and has no effect.

Bolivia continues to believe that the sole long-term alternative for settling the conflict is the two-State solution, whereby ultimately a free, sovereign and independent Palestinian State will be established within the pre-1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital, pursuant to the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions.

**Mr. Sadykov** (Kazakhstan): Our delegation voted in favour of draft resolution S/2017/1060, which was introduced by Egypt. Kazakhstan's position on the Middle East peace process remains unchanged. My country urges the parties to maintain the historical status quo of Jerusalem in accordance with previously reached international agreements. We support negotiations aimed at achieving the two-State solution and stand for their early resumption, especially in a bilateral format and without preconditions. The ultimate goal should be the restoration and promotion of the peace process pursuant to the relevant Security Council resolutions, the Madrid principles, the principle of land for peace, the road map for peace and the Arab Peace Initiative.

It is also necessary to identify mutually acceptable principles to advance the peace process, as well as to develop a concept for future negotiations and the implementing mechanism. We therefore urge the leaders of Israel and Palestine to take concrete steps in their areas that will strengthen prospects for peace based on the inalienable right of the Palestinians to statehood and right of Israel to its own durable, long-term security.

**The President:** I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Japan.

Japan's position on the Middle East peace process remains clear and steadfast. Japan supports a two-State solution and believes that the final status of Jerusalem is part of a range of issues that should be resolved through negotiations, based on the relevant Security Council resolutions and previous agreements between the parties. With that in mind, Japan voted in favour of draft resolution S/2017/1060.

Japan listened carefully to Ambassador Haley's statement today. Japan appreciates President Trump's reaffirmation of his strong commitment to facilitating a lasting peace agreement and support for a two-State solution in his recent announcement, and notes well the importance of the President's clear acknowledgement that the final status of Jerusalem, including sovereign boundaries within the city, must be subject to negotiation between the parties. We welcome that the United States will continue to play an important role in advancing the peace process.

We are concerned about the possibility of the worsening of the environment surrounding the Middle East peace process or the deterioration of the situation of the wider Middle East region. The continuing unrest on the ground is worrisome. It is important that the parties commit to making meaningful progress in the peace process. Japan appreciates the efforts made by Member States to bringing parties closer to the negotiation table. Peace can be achieved only through negotiations between the parties. Japan, too, will continue to remain constructively engaged in this issue to promote an environment conducive to meaningful negotiations with a view to achieving a two-State solution.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer of the Observer State of Palestine.

**Mr. Mansour (Palestine) (*spoke in Arabic*):** First of all, I thank Japan in its capacity as President of the Security Council for convening this important meeting. We also thank the 14 Security Council members who voted in favour of draft resolution S/2017/1060 and recognized the urgency of this matter and the need for serious follow-up and action in the light of the recent provocative decision announced by the United States of America, which is contrary to international law and to United Nations resolutions regarding the Holy City of Jerusalem. We are grateful to the Arab Republic of Egypt for its efforts in leading the process and introducing the draft resolution, as the sole Arab member of the Council.

The total rejection of the American decision and the international consensus on Jerusalem are beyond clear. The message today has been unequivocal: all the relevant Security Council resolutions concerning the status of the Holy City of Jerusalem and other Palestinian territory occupied by Israel since 1967 are legally binding and must be respected, without exception. They include resolution 2334 (2016), which constitutes a road map and an established component of international law, and which only reflects the reality of the situation. The latest American decision regarding Jerusalem lacks that sense of reality, as did its words earlier this morning and this afternoon. They do not accord with reality, and we unequivocally reject them in their entirety.

Resolution 2334 (2016) clearly condemns settlements, violence, and terror directed against civilians. It calls for efforts to promote peace. It is entirely wrong to say that it is the implementation of international law, not the building of illegal settlements, that stands in the way of bringing about peace. It is a farce when the Security Council and its resolutions and international law, rather than the illegal stance of the occupying Power and its settlements, become the problem — as we heard today from the representative of a permanent member of the Council.

That was firmly reaffirmed in statements by Governments and civil society organizations throughout the world, as well as during the emergency meeting of the Security Council on 8 December (see S/PV.8128), the resolutions of the Arab Ministerial Council in Cairo on 9 December and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation summit meeting in Istanbul on 13 December. It was also reaffirmed by the position taken by the African Union, among others, and the



overwhelming support demonstrated by Council members with regard to today's draft resolution. The veto stood in the way of the adoption of the latter, but the will of the international community will find another framework. The draft resolution reiterates that any decisions intended to alter the character or status of Jerusalem have no legal effect, are null and void and must be rescinded, in compliance with resolutions of the Security Council.

We appeal to all States to heed the call not to establish diplomatic missions in the Holy City and not to recognize any measures or actions in violation of the relevant resolutions. We also call for the intensification of international and regional efforts aimed at achieving a just, lasting, comprehensive and peaceful solution, based on the relevant resolutions, international legitimacy and the peace principles in order to end the Israeli occupation of our occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem.

The result of the vote today is a demonstration of the position of the international community, which recognizes the sensitivity and specificity of the situation of Jerusalem, as well as the Palestinian right to the city. Yet, regrettably, one State has stood today in opposition to the rest of the world on this long-standing issue that has been universally respected — including by the former United States Administration — since 1947. The only exception is Israel, the occupying Power, which has flagrantly violated international law and all relevant resolutions day after day and only acted in total contempt of this Council.

The United States has chosen to disregard international law and ignore international consensus to side with Israeli occupation at the expense of our rights and the just nature of our cause. With this veto, the United States has missed an opportunity to rectify its illegal decision with regard to the city of Jerusalem, remaining on the wrong side of history. Nevertheless, we reiterate that this American decision has no legal effect on the character and status of the Holy City of Jerusalem by any means.

However, this decision affects the status of the United States as a peace broker and in fact underscores its bias, undermining its role in any future peace process. What we have heard today is totally biased in favour of the occupying Power, rather than a neutral position between us and the Israelis. It is indeed paradoxical that, while we were awaiting a peace plan from the

United States, the Administration instead decided to further obstruct peace and delay its realization. That underscores yet again the failure of the old formulas. Going forward, there should be a new mechanism, apart from the old formulas and the imperative of a collective process.

The Security Council's resolutions are binding and remain valid until their implementation. A veto cannot negate adopted resolutions. No veto in the past has been able to do so, and no veto in this era ever will, either. It is truly paradoxical that the same State casting its veto today asserts the Council's authority in all other cases, demanding respect for resolutions on every other issue aside from Palestine. When it comes to Palestine, there is imbalance. We refuse to accept that Palestine be the exception to every rule. The international community has concurred, speaking in one voice, insisting on respect for the applicable laws and resolutions that are the core of the peaceful solution to the Palestinian question.

The United States decision encourages Israel to persist in its crimes against our Palestinian people and to continue its occupation of our territory. No rhetoric will hide that complacency in prolonging the occupation. No veto can conceal those facts, nor can it legitimize any provocative, unilateral decisions or actions in violation of Security Council resolutions.

No one can deny that such provocations fuel the unending cycle of tensions and ignite religious sentiment among billions of Muslims and Christians around the world. Everyone knows those actions make peace more elusive and threaten to transform this political and regional conflict into a devastating religious conflict with grave consequences for regional and international peace and security, benefiting only the forces of extremism and terror.

We therefore caution once more against such recklessness and call for full respect for the historic status quo at the holy sites, including at the Haram al-Sharif, and for the special custodial role of Jordan in the protection of the Muslim and Christian holy sites. We will continue all efforts and coordination in that regard to ensure such protection and to rebuff all provocations and illegal measures undermining the historic status quo.

This illegal and irresponsible decision will change nothing for the Palestinians. Jerusalem will always remain the heart of Palestine. Our history, our culture,

our heritage and our religion as Muslims and Christians are so attached to this city, so woven into it —the cradle of civilization and land of the prophets.

East Jerusalem remains occupied and is an integral part of the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967. It is the capital of the State of Palestine, as recognized by the majority of States around the world. However, this decision has permitted Israel to continue in the plotting and scheming of its settlers to encroach on Palestinian rights, rather than deterring Israel and compelling it to respect international law to achieve peace and security.

Therefore, we once again call on all peace-loving nations around the world to stand firm in support for the rule of law and for the steadfast Palestinian people defending their land, including Jerusalem, their identity, holy sites and their natural place in history and geography, and to oppose injustice, oppression and subjugation.

In the coming days, while the world will be celebrating Christmas and the birth of Jesus Christ, lights will remain turned off in the land of Jesus Christ and celebrations will not take place in Jerusalem, Bethlehem or Nazareth. Joy has been stolen from us by a decision that, in the name of realism, has denied reality and violated the rights of an entire nation and insulted the feelings of believers around the world.

Protests have erupted against this decision, not only in Palestine but across the globe, in defence of justice, freedom and dignity and in rejection of colonialism and unilateralism. In Palestine, thousands have demonstrated against the United States decision and face killing, repression, arrest and oppression by the Israeli occupying forces. Eleven Palestinians have been killed, 3,500 wounded and hundreds arrested. Five hundred of them were shot. Israel has also detained hundreds of our people, including children.

We pray for the families of the martyrs. We wish a speedy recovery for the wounded and freedom for the detained. How many more lives will be sacrificed before our people can finally enjoy the same rights as those enjoyed by the rest of the world? We reiterate that the arrogance of the occupying Power will only serve to strengthen our determination to liberate our land, achieve our independence and restore our rights and dignity.

The time is past due for our people to achieve their rights, including to self-determination, and to finally live in freedom, dignity, peace and security in their

independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, side by side with all peoples of the region and the globe. We urge the Council to continue to firmly stand on the side of right. Those in favour of peace do not ratify illegal acts and measures; instead, they uphold the rights of the Palestinian people, as enshrined in international law and General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. They also recognize the State of Palestine and stand in support of freedom, which is the key to ensuring that peace will finally prevail in the land.

**The President:** I now give the floor to representative of Israel.

**Mr. Danon (Israel):** Today, the United Nations has taken another step backwards. It has taken another step away from advocating for truth and justice.

Almost exactly one year ago, in this very Chamber, the Council adopted the shameful resolution 2334 (2016). It was a resolution that had the audacity to attempt to designate Israel's presence at the Western Wall — Judaism's holiest site in Jerusalem — as a flagrant violation of international law. Those words pierced the hearts of Jews everywhere. They mocked generations of Jews who prayed towards Jerusalem for thousands of years. They belittled the ancient declaration of the Jewish people that states, "next year in Jerusalem".

Yet here we are again. We find ourselves fighting the same battle for truth and morality. Those who voted for today's resolution have only reaffirmed the United Nations decades-long double standard when it comes to Israel and are guilty of blatant hypocrisy. Every other country in the world has the right to designate its own capital city. But when it comes to Israel, somehow this most basic national right is questioned and condemned. We thank the United States for staying loyal to the truth and vetoing today's absurd draft resolution. President Trump, Vice-President Pence, Ambassador Haley and the entire Administration proved that the United States does not back down from what is right. They continue to advocate for real dialogue and the hope for peace in our region.

The Palestinians, however, have once again displayed a disturbing trend. Every time the prospects for meaningful negotiations emerge, the Palestinians run away. Every time there is a chance for hope, the Palestinians sabotage the effort. All too often, the international community only makes it worse. In 1947,

the Palestinians rejected resolution 181 (II). In 2000, they walked out of the Camp David talks and began a war of terror against Israelis. In reply to Prime Minister Netanyahu's repeated offers to negotiate, the Palestinians have just one response: give in to our demands or suffer the consequences of incitement and violence.

The American Administration is now working tirelessly to revive negotiations. Like us, it is eager to spark new hopes for peace. By declaring the obvious — that Jerusalem is the capital of the State of Israel — President Trump was simply stating a fact. He hoped to encourage both sides to move forward at the negotiating table. But, once again, the Palestinians respond with endless rockets fired at our civilians.

Let me be clear. We will continue to stand strong. When it comes to Jerusalem, we do not back down. Some 3,000 years ago, King David declared the city of Jerusalem to be the capital of the Jewish people. Jerusalem has been Israel's capital for almost 70 years. Our nation has never given up when faced with an adversary. We will not allow others, including the United Nations, to determine our fate, in particular when it comes to Jerusalem: not then and not now.

This week Jews all over the world are celebrating the holiday of Hanukkah. We welcome the good wishes sent from so many nations, many of whom are represented at the table today. But it seems that some of those who wish us well have forgotten exactly why we celebrate Hanukkah. Hannukah is not about gifts. It is not about food. Hannukah is about the liberation of Jerusalem. In the year 167 B.C.E., a Hellenist king attempted to outlaw Jewish practice and desecrate our Temple in Jerusalem, but he failed. A small group of brave fighters — the Maccabees — drove out the Hellenists and reclaimed Jerusalem. That is what we are celebrating. That is why we light the candles. We are honouring our brave ancestors who reinstated Jewish sovereignty over our capital, Jerusalem, more than 2,000 years ago.

History did not always turn out that way for our people. Just a hundred years after the miracle of Hannukah, our Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed. The Jewish people were exiled from Jerusalem but the connection between Jerusalem and the Jewish people was never broken. It will never be broken — not by the Romans, not by the Babylonians, not by the Ottoman Turks, not by the British Empire and not by the United

Nations. Today, even as our adversaries once again seek to delegitimize our presence in Jerusalem, the Jewish people will prevail, as it always has.

We have heard hateful statements from some world leaders over the past few days. We have heard statements from countries that continue to be hostile to the Jewish people and to Israel, and from leaders of nations that, throughout history, restricted Jewish prayer at the Western Wall. Even as late as 50 years ago, Jews were denied access to the Western Wall. Let me therefore be very clear. The leaders of countries that oppress minorities, jail journalists and quash all opposition have no right to lecture Israel. The leaders of countries poisoned by violent anti-Semitism cannot condemn Israel for the so-called lack of tolerance and acceptance.

Let me repeat what we have said time and again. Jerusalem, under a sovereign Israel, is more free and open to people of all religions than at any other time in history. We pledge to ensure that all people, of all religions, will continue to be able to freely practice their faith — in Jerusalem and throughout our entire country.

Last year, as the Security Council voted on resolution 2334 (2016), I held up a Bible and reminded members of the thousands of years of Jewish history and presence in Jerusalem. This year, facing another resolution attempting to deny the truth, we will fight back once more. The members of the Council can vote again and again — hundreds and hundreds more times — to denounce our presence in Jerusalem, but they will never succeed in changing the Bible. The Council cannot rewrite history.

Not long ago, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, a wise Jewish leader, called the United Nations a house of darkness and lies. But he also noted that with just one small candle of truth, one could turn the darkness into light. We will continue to light the candle of truth.

Tonight, millions of Jews around the world will light the seventh candle of Hanukkah. They will celebrate the unbreakable bond between the Jewish people and our eternal capital, Jerusalem. Now is the time for all countries to finally recognize that Jerusalem is, always has been and always will be the capital of the Jewish people and the State of Israel.

**The President:** There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

*The meeting rose at 1.55 p.m.*