



Statement

by

**H.E. Dr. Nawaf Salam
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to the United Nations**

**at the
Security Council**

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

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Mr. President,

Allow me at the outset to reiterate before this council that my government remains committed to the letter of Resolution 1701 and looks forward to its implementation in its entirety.

In this context, let me also convey to you that all Lebanese parities whether in the Government or in the opposition would like to see this Council exercising its leadership in urging Israel to abide by its obligations under said Security Council resolution, that is to completely stop its violation of Lebanese sovereignty whether on land, sea, or air; and to withdraw forthwith from all parts of Lebanese territory which it continues to occupy.

Mr. President,

For almost two years, hundreds of thousands of young men and women across the whole Arab World took to the streets seeking freedom, dignity, and good governance. This was enough to lay waste to the idea of 'Arab exceptionalism,' a pseudo-theory advanced by some pundits to explain the so called Arab resistance to democratization. Whether based on the racist cliché that democracy is incompatible with Islam or inimical to Arab Culture or on the erroneous stigma that Arabs are not ready yet ready for democracy or hold democratic values to less esteem than do any other people, this pseudo-theory of "Arab exceptionalism" found its deathbed in the winds of change that have been blowing in our region.

Unfortunately, however, some other forms of "exceptionalism" continue to survive in this part of the world.

While you will be having the day after tomorrow an open debate on "the strengthening of the rule of law in the maintenance of peace and security", it will be important to keep in mind that one country in our region continues to challenge with unquestioned impunity the principles and norms of International law and to ignore all resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and this Council on "The situation in the Middle East and the Question of Palestine".

As a matter of fact, this "exceptionalism" is best illustrated in that Israel failed to withdraw from the Palestinian territories which it occupied in 1967, as per its legal obligations under Security Council resolutions 242 and 338. It also continues to build settlements in the occupied territories in violation of International Law, International Humanitarian law, General Assembly and Security Council resolutions and the Advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice. Indeed its annexation of East Jerusalem, the extension of its laws to the Golan Heights and its erection of "The Wall" constitute as well similar violations.

Likewise, the punitive blockade to which Gaza has been subjected represents a collective punishment in a form that violates Articles 33 and 55 of the Fourth Geneva Convention governing the conduct of an occupying power in relation to the civilian population living under occupation.

Moreover, since 1967, Israel, as an occupying power, has constantly and systematically violated its basic duties under International Humanitarian Law.

Such violations have included:

- The transfer of population.
- The annexation of land.
- Collective punishments.
- The punitive demolition of houses.
- Use of torture.
- Political assassinations.

In addition, Israel has been charged with grave violations of human rights and with a number of “war crimes” in its conduct of military operations in the occupied territories. Notwithstanding, it continues to behave as if it were above the law.

Mr. President,

Hasn't the time come to put an end to such “exceptionalism” and to hold Israel accountable to its international obligations?

Mr. President,

On the 29th of this month, you will be holding another open debate on resolution 1325 and women and peace and security.

Indeed the Security Council is to be commended for having adopted the landmark resolution 1265, in which it expressed its willingness to “respond to situations of armed conflict where civilians are being targeted, or humanitarian assistance to civilians is being deliberately obstructed, including through the consideration of appropriate measures at the Council’s disposal in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.”

Since then, the Council started mainstreaming a protection of civilians’ approach into its work, and enhanced the role of its peacekeeping operations to that effect in various country-specific situations, including the DRC, Somalia, Cote d’Ivoire, Chad, Haiti, Libya, Liberia, and Sudan.

But when it comes to the Arab-Israeli conflict, exceptionalism is king. In fact, the Security Council has dramatically failed to respond in any tangible manner to the offences it vowed to address, namely the targeting of civilians in armed conflict, in particular women and children, and the deliberate obstruction to humanitarian assistance, let alone even consider sanctions against the perpetrator, Israel, the Occupying Power.