



Statement

by

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**at the
Security Council**

**The Situation in the Middle East,
including the Palestinian question**

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Mr. President,

The situation in the Palestinian occupied territories is indeed alarming. According to UN OCHCA, the past two weeks have witnessed the highest number of fatalities and injuries in the West Bank as of 2005. This in itself not only justifies the call for this high level debate - which we would like to thank Spain for organizing - it also calls for swift action on behalf of this august body.

Since the beginning of this month, two Palestinians on average have been killed on a daily basis, and over one thousand injured, let alone increasing settlers attacks on Palestinian property. Israeli provocations and assaults at the Haram Al-Sharif have not stopped in obvious attempts to change the agreed upon status quo by seeking to establish a temporal if not geographical division of the holy site, contrary to what Mr. Netanyahu claims.

Israel, the occupying power is acting, one more time, in total disregard to its obligations under International Law and International Humanitarian Law to protect the civilian Palestinians. Hence, our call on this Council, one more time, to resort to all ways and means at its disposal to ensure the protection of the endangered lives and properties of Palestinians living under Israeli occupation, pending this council's assumption of its full duties and responsibilities to put an end to the Israeli occupation and help the Palestinian State achieve its independence.

Mr. President,

The events of the past month are but the tip of the iceberg of occupation which is now almost 50 years long. As a matter of fact, the need to provide for an International Protection for the Palestinians living under Israeli occupation becomes self-evident if we simply recall the fate of the most vulnerable, that is the Palestinian children under occupation, and only to note that one Palestinian child was killed by the Israeli occupying forces every 3 days between 2000 and 2013 and that 62% of the 95,000 Palestinian children who have been detained by the Israelis, since 1967, have likely been subjected to some form of physical violence.

And how can one not mention the case of the two Palestinian children who were recently burned to death by extremist Israeli settlers: the 18 month-old Ali Dawabsheh who was killed in July 2015 in an arson attack in Douma and Mohammed Abu Khdeir, the 16 year-old Palestinian, who was kidnapped, beaten, and burnt alive by Israeli settlers in East Jerusalem in August 2014.

Mr. President, notwithstanding such acts of appalling savagery, Benjamin Netanyahu, in a total contempt to our intelligence, dared to claim in his latest speech before the General Assembly that "Israel is civilization's front line in the battle against barbarism"!

Moreover, instead of facing the reality of the occupation, and its inherently oppressive structures and repressive methods, Israeli officials and propagandists endeavor to represent the mounting violence in the West Bank and Gaza, as an eruption of so-called "terrorist hatred" motivated by nothing else but pure anti-Semitism and blood-thirsty Islamic fanaticism.

Mr. President,

I am sure that you have recognized here a familiar situation of "blaming the victim", only reminiscent of William Ryan's *Blaming the Victim* famous book, a 1971 classic work in which it is shown how victim blaming functions as an ideology used to divert responsibility and to justify racism and social injustice. In fact, "Blaming the victim," is so odious that it was rightly depicted by one of the great 20th century thinkers as "one of the most sinister features of the Fascist character".

Mr. President,

In Israel, like elsewhere, racism is not only blind ... but deadly too. Let us only consider how on Monday, Haftom Zarhum, an innocent Eritrean asylum seeker fleeing the scene of acts of violence was shot, then lynched. This dismaying act is documented in videos in which an angry Israeli mob is shown hurling benches and chairs and kicking him in the head, assuming he was an Arab terrorist just because he was dark-skinned, all the while screaming things like "Death to Arabs!" Worth asking Mr. Netanyahu whether this is also another example of Israel as "civilization's front line in the battle against barbarism"! Obviously, we do not have the same lexicon as Mr. Netanyahu for in ours, racism and xenophobia, let alone acts of burning people alive and of lynching, are examples of barbarism and not of civilization.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, allow me to repeat that the situation in the Palestinian occupied territories is very alarming. Not only can this Council prevent this situation from further deteriorating, it can also unlock the path to a just and durable peace in the Middle East, provided it resolves to act on the basis of the principles and rules of International Law and of International Humanitarian Law. Here, seeking balance, where no balance exists or can exist, as between the occupier and the occupied is no Justice. It is not even a travesty of justice ... it is injustice *tout court*. Conversely, pending the end of the Israeli occupation, this Council can and must move now to provide International protection to the Palestinian people, the sooner the better for the relevance of the council, and above all for the just cause of peace in our part of the world.

Thank you.