



**Statement**

**by**

**H.E. Dr. Nawaf Salam  
Permanent Representative of Lebanon  
to the United Nations**

**at the  
Security Council open debate**

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

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*Check Against Delivery*

*Permanent Mission of Lebanon to the United Nations  
866 United Nations Plaza, Suite 531, New York, NY. 10017*

Madame President,

I am sure that you, and all members of this council, would agree with me that we all share here the same frustration of having “*The Question of Palestine*” item discussed every three months.

We all wish that this item, the oldest - and still ever present – on the agenda of this august body since the creation of the United Nations, were taken out, had a just and durable settlement to the Middle East conflict been achieved and implemented, based on the numerous resolutions adopted by this Council, and in particular the “land for peace” principle.

Unfortunately, it must be recognized that such a prospect keeps slipping away, and consequently the “*The Question of Palestine*” keeps rooting itself deep in the agenda of this august body.

Indeed, Madame President, how can a just and durable solution be achieved and an independent, viable and contiguous Palestinian State emerge when:

One: The construction of 6,000 new Israeli units in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem has been approved by Israel since the beginning of the year?

Two: A law retroactively legalizing settlements built on the occupied Palestinian territory was adopted last February?

And three: When only few weeks ago, Israel approved the construction of a whole new settlement site?

Madame President,

Last January, during a debate on preventive diplomacy my delegation reminded this council of Lebanon’s initiative in 2016, to seek, based on the Charter of the United Nations and operative paragraph 10 of SC resolution 1701, the “good offices” of the Secretary General in the delineation of the disputed maritime border and Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) between Lebanon and Israel, emphasizing that the non-resolution of this issue “shall remain a source of conflict that threatens peace and security in our region.”

And while we were looking forward to receiving, in this regard, an update on the results of the efforts of the Special Coordinator for Lebanon, Israel, in an utter defiance to international Law, and in a clear attempt to undermine the Secretary-General’s good offices, threatened in a letter dated February 2, 2017 that it “will not allow [what it referred to as] any unauthorized economic activities, including, inter alia, the granting of rights by another State to any third party; exploratory activities, drilling or exploration of natural resources in maritime areas in which Israel asserts sovereign rights and jurisdiction”.

In a letter to the Secretary-General dated March 20, 2017, my government responded to these threats by reiterating Lebanon’s longstanding commitment to International Law, and in particular to the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea regarding the delimitation of maritime borders.

However, these were not the only Israeli threats against my country, as only few weeks later, Naftali Bennet, Israel's Minister of Education, threatened in an interview with Haaretz on March 13, 2017, to launch "a massive attack on the civilian infrastructure-along with additional air and ground action" targeting "the Lebanese institutions, its infrastructure, airport, power stations, traffic junctions" along "Lebanese Army bases" with the aim of "returning Lebanon to Middle ages".

These are despicable words, indeed ... Madame President. Nothing ... nothing could be more barbaric than threatening civilians. As to the outrageous threat of "returning Lebanon to Middle ages", it is only reminiscent of the darkness of "the Middle Ages"!

It remains that these threats, and the continued Israeli violations of my country's sovereignty, having all been documented and recorded in numerous letters addressed by my mission to this august body, allow me now to ask: Isn't it high time for this council to condemn these actions as blatant and deliberate violations of the UN Charter, the basic rules and principles of international law and international humanitarian law, as well as relevant United Nations Resolutions?

Yet, my Government remains firmly committed to the implementation of resolution 1701 in its entirety and calls upon you, one more time, to show leadership and compel Israel to abide by its clear obligations under said resolution.

Madame President,

Do I need to remind that Lebanon has been commended for fighting terrorism? Yet, allow me to thank your government, along many others represented on this Council, for their much appreciated commitment to support my country and strengthen the capabilities of its army to help it address the multiple challenges it is now facing from combating terrorism, to maintaining stability and safeguarding Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Thank You.