



**Statement by Ambassador Munir Akram, Permanent
Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations, during the
United Nations Security Council Open Debate on “the Situation
in the Middle East, including the Palestinian Question”
(25 April 2023)**

Mr. President,

Pakistan commends the Russian Presidency for convening this timely debate on the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. We welcome the participation of Foreign Minister Lavrov in this meeting and we also welcome the Foreign Minister of Palestine for his presence.

2. The Prime Minister of Pakistan has condemned Israel's brutal crackdown during the Holy month of Ramadan – using stun grenades and tear gas – against innocent Muslim worshippers at the Al-Aqsa mosque.

Mr. President,

3. The Al-Aqsa Mosque is Islam's the third Holiest site. Violation of its sanctity offends Muslim across the world.

4. Israel's actions violate the historical and legal Status Quo. They violate the right to freedom of worship enshrined in the Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and endorsed by General Assembly resolution 36/55 of 1981.

5. International law, furthermore, unequivocally restricts Israel, the occupying power, from seizing land and building settlements in occupied territories, including East Jerusalem. Security Council resolutions 476, 478 and 2334 inter alia prohibit Israel from altering the demographic composition of the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967.

6. In a recent statement, the United Nations Special Rapporteurs on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory, the Special Rapporteurs on the right of adequate housing, and on the human rights of internally displaced persons, stressed, inter alia, that "Palestinians under Israeli occupation continue to be forced out of their homes and dispossessed of their land and properties on the basis of discriminatory laws" and that such practices, along with Israel's transfer of its own population into the occupied territory, confirm "a deliberate intention to colonize the territory it occupies – a practice strictly prohibited by international humanitarian law. It amounts to a prima facie war crime".

Mr. President,

7. Pakistan has welcomed the adoption of UN General Assembly resolution 77/400 seeking the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legal consequences arising from the policies and practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. The Security Council once perceives this opinion will have to adopt further measures to ensure full compliance with international law.

8. In particular, Israel must comply with its international obligation to respect the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. Given the erga omnes character of the right of self-determination, it is also incumbent on all States, in accordance with the United Nations Charter and international law, to ensure that any impediment to the exercise by the Palestinian people of its right to self-determination is immediately brought to an end.

9. The international community cannot accept the fait accompli Israel is seeking to impose to destroy Palestinian nationhood. There will be no durable peace in the Holy land until the creation of an independent, viable and contiguous State of Palestine, established on the basis of pre-1967 borders with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

Mr. President,

10. Apart from Israel's illegal and disruptive actions, the Middle East has witnessed several positive developments in recent months.

11. Pakistan warmly welcomes to the normalization of relations between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Republic of Iran. We commend the sincere and successful efforts made by the leadership of the Peoples' Republic of China to make this historical diplomatic breakthrough possible.

12. Pakistan also welcomes the diplomatic and political measures initiated to restore peace and normalcy in Syria and in Yemen. We hope that all the countries of the Arab and Islamic world will soon succeed in ending strife and restoring peace and stability across the Middle East and the Islamic world.

I thank you.