



Security Council

Seventy-eighth year

Provisional

9451st meeting

Tuesday, 24 October 2023, 3 p.m.

New York

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Moretti/Mr. Vieira/Mr. França Danese	(Brazil)
<i>Members:</i>	Albania	Ms. Prizreni
	China	Mr. Geng Shuang
	Ecuador	Mrs. Sánchez Izquierdo
	France	Mrs. Paolini
	Gabon	Mr. Nanga
	Ghana	Ms. Barnor
	Japan	Mr. Kitada
	Malta	Mr. De Bono Sant Cassia
	Mozambique	Mr. Kumanga
	Russian Federation.	Mr. Nebenzia
	Switzerland	Mrs. Chanda
	United Arab Emirates	Mrs. Nusseibeh
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Kariuki
	United States of America.	Mr. Pine

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. *Corrections* should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room AB-0601 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (<http://documents.un.org>).



The meeting was resumed at 3.05 p.m.

The President: I would like to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than four minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Flashing lights on the collars of the microphones will prompt speakers to bring their remarks to a close after four minutes.

Before giving the floor to those who wish to speak, I would like to inform Council members and fellow Ministers of my Foreign Minister that he will resume presiding over the Council. Unfortunately, he could not be here at 3 p.m., but he will come back, and he sends his regrets and his best wishes to his fellow Ministers.

I now give the floor to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

Mr. Safadi (Jordan): I deliver this statement on behalf of the whole Group of Arab States. Therefore, I kindly ask you, Mr. President, for the time necessary to speak on behalf of 22 countries.

(spoke in Arabic)

Our common humanity is today being put to the test. Our moral values are being put to the test. The principles for which and on which the United Nations was built are being put to the test. We are facing a new spiral of violence, a war based on despair over decades of occupation, injustice and oppression. Innocent people are being killed. Children are being dismembered. Innocent women and older persons are being killed. Homes are being bombarded and reduced to ruins. Hospitals have no medicine. A raging war is raising Gaza to the ground. The Security Council was established for this moment to apply international law, to maintain peace, to stop the war and violence, to prevent injustice, to say that there is no difference between peoples and that there is no State above the law, regardless of its might and brutality.

However, it seems that Israel is above international law. It is violating international law without any deterrence. It is running roughshod over Security Council resolutions. It is building settlements and clearly violating international law without any consequences. It is confiscating Palestinian land without accountability. It is expelling Jerusalemites from their homes without accountability. It is disregarding the rights of the peoples in the region. The Security Council has not even called for a ceasefire in the current war of Israel

against Gaza — the war that is killing 14 Palestinian civilians every hour and killing 1 Palestinian woman every 20 minutes. The war is breaking the hearts of parents with regard to their children whose houses and schools are being bombarded every 15 minutes. What will a Palestinian mother say to her child when he asks for water and there is no water? If that child survives, will he forget that he was deprived of food and medicine as the result of a war crime, because he was Palestinian? In other words, he has no rights, and international law does not apply to him.

We say, enough with death, enough with violence, enough with war, enough with despair, enough with oppression, enough with double standards in the application of international law. To our friends who seem to think that they are serving Israel by supporting its war against Gaza, who think that their humanitarian and legal responsibility towards the Palestinians are being fulfilled by late calls for the delivery of humanitarian aid to the people in Gaza, we say, in all honesty, their position in support of Israel will not serve it and will not convince Palestinians and will not convince us. All those who support Israel should support bringing the war to an end and a just and comprehensive peace. All those who want to assume their responsibility towards Palestinians must put an end to the killing of Palestinians and must support a just and comprehensive peace with a view to establishing an independent, sovereign Palestinian State, with occupied Jerusalem as its capital, along the lines of 4 June 1967, living side by side with Israel in safety and peace. Thus, every Palestinian and Israeli mother will be happy in seeing the smiles on their children's faces, and Palestinian and Israeli children will be able to hug their parents out of joy and not out of fear.

Condemning the killing of Palestinian and Israeli civilians and calling for the freedom of all is a humanitarian and principled position. Condemning violence and war is a stance that if not taken today would make us abandon our humanity and leave us hostage to accusations of discrimination when addressing other conflicts. Violence is born out of the death of hope just as much as out of other motives that can be eliminated only through justice, freedom and dignity. Any attempt to forcibly displace Palestinians either within or outside their occupied land constitutes a war crime under the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 and its Protocol of 1977. Any attempt to export the crisis — which is caused by the occupation, aggravated

by the occupation and will not end without an end to the occupation — including through the forced displacement of Palestinians to neighbouring countries, is a threat to our national security that we will fully confront.

Six thousand Palestinian civilians have been killed. They all have faces, memories and loved ones. Nearly 200,000 homes have been destroyed and more than 200 schools in Gaza reduced to rubble. Hospitals, schools, mosques and churches were bombarded while civilians took shelter in them. That is not self-defence. We must not allow anger and pain to decide the fate of our region. That will only beget more fury, more anger and more pain. Israel will enjoy security when Palestinians enjoy security. How many wars have been waged in our region? How many innocent civilians have paid the price? We find ourselves today in the midst of another hellish war that portends grave repercussions for our entire region.

Only a just peace will ensure security for both Israel and Palestine. Those who promote the possibility of achieving peace in the region by ignoring the Palestinian people are gravely mistaken. The crisis has become deeper, with no solution, because there are no prospects for an end to the occupation. There are some among the Israeli leadership who are destroying the prospects for a two-State solution. Some are explicitly calling for wiping the Palestinian people off the face of the earth.

The Security Council should adopt a resolution in favour of a ceasefire and an end to the war. It should adopt a resolution condemning the killing and targeting of civilians on both sides and preventing efforts to starve the Palestinians and deny them access to water while torturing them with collective punishment. The Security Council must take a clear stance that can assure the world's 2 billion Arabs and Muslims that international law will be applied without discrimination or selectivity. Let us work together to ensure that this is the last war on Gaza, the last spiral of violence in Palestine and Israel, the last instance in which Palestinians and Israelis are demonized — and that these are the last tears shed by all mothers over the futile deaths of their children amid a conflict. Let us work together to return to a true peace process and to serious negotiations based on resolutions of international legitimacy — that is, Security Council resolutions that until now have been nothing but words on paper — in order to end the occupation and achieve

a comprehensive, durable and just peace on the basis of a two-State solution, within a set time frame and with international guarantees.

We need peace for the Palestinian people, peace for the Israeli people and peace for the entire region. Otherwise we will find ourselves in the same situation that we have been in for decades, year after year. Empty words are spoken without any action being taken on the ground to achieve that peace. Innocent civilians are being killed, hope is being dissipated, despair is becoming deeply rooted and hatred entrenched, while the credibility of the United Nations is eroded and the value of international peace is reduced.

The Council must champion the principles of the rule of law, justice and humanity. Otherwise it is saying that Israel has a right to do what no other country has a right to do, and that the Palestinian people have no right to the same rights as other peoples. Should that happen, the war will become even more ferocious and conflict will be the future of our region. It is up to the Council now. The whole world will benefit if the Security Council chooses to champion justice and peace. If it does not, the Council will bear the responsibility for continued war, killings and destruction, as well as for depriving an entire people of the right to live in security, freedom and independence like all other peoples of the world, on their own territory of Palestine, the land of their ancestors and their children and grandchildren.

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Egypt.

Mr. Selim (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): The Palestinian territory is enduring horrific events. The victims of Israeli military action against Gaza now number more than 5,000 innocent Palestinian civilians, including more than 2,000 children, in a matter of no more than three weeks. The war machine continues to indiscriminately claim lives without distinction. In the face of that humanitarian shock and the loss of life that we are seeing around the clock, it is regrettable, indeed shameful, that some continue to justify what is happening, citing the right to self-defence and to resist terrorism.

Today I want to ask what right a State has to justify a refusal to distinguish between an enemy to be targeted and unarmed civilians destined to live for generations in a specific part of their homeland subject to a blockade? There are 2.5 million civilians in Gaza who are being killed, starved and forcibly displaced.

The scenes that have unfolded since the crisis began have been heart-wrenching. The children who have lost their lives and those who have lost their parents and siblings do not deserve what is happening to them, and that is unforgivable. They are not responsible for what is happening to them, and our collective conscience cannot tolerate their suffering.

Silence at a time like this is a kind of indulgence. Refusing to call things by their real names and merely paying lip service to respect for international humanitarian law, without describing what is happening as an actual violation of that law and of human rights, is tantamount to participating in those crimes. In the context of this latest chapter, the efforts to minimize the suffering that the Palestinian people have endured for more than 70 years are a desperate attempt to justify flagrant violations of international law and international humanitarian law and are tantamount to permitting the perpetuation of the unprecedented suffering that has been inflicted on the people of Gaza. Egypt has always condemned the targeting of any civilians. I want to once again affirm that Egypt will not accept the targeting of unarmed civilians by any party, including their capture for use as a bargaining chip. There can be no justification for that. We call for the hostages to be released. Humanity is indivisible, not selective.

There are some today who are busy playing a blame game as destruction and death continue unabated. They have to recognize that today's situation did not appear out of thin air. It is a result of accumulated practices and policies, conducted with the sole aim of entrenching an illegal occupation, usurping land from its rightful owners and imposing a new demographic reality.

Egypt has warned time and again of the dangers of mere timid calls for a revival of the peace process and of inaction on the part of the international community, which has failed to use the tools at its disposal to enforce the international consensus on the settlement of the Palestinian question, based on a two-State solution and the relevant Security Council and international legitimacy resolutions. We have also warned on several occasions of Israel's continuing and intensifying practices in recent times, especially its persistent attempts to weaken the Palestinian Authority and to suggest that peace is no longer feasible. Israel's policies of separating the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, its blockade of the Gaza Strip, its military incursions into the towns of the West Bank, its desecration of holy sites and its reneging on any agreements to de-escalate the situation on the ground have all led us to this desperate moment.

The resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly over the history of the crisis have reflected an unequivocal and clear consensus that the Palestinian question needs to be voluntarily settled—not imposed by military action or settlements or what we are witnessing today, namely, forced displacement. I reiterate what Egypt said at its Cairo peace summit, namely, that the solution to the Palestinian question is not forced displacement or the displacement of an entire people to other regions. Rather, the only solution is to ensure justice by granting the Palestinians their legitimate rights to self-determination and to live in dignity and safety, in their independent State, on their territory, just like the other peoples of the world. The Palestinian people will not leave their land; rather, they will cling to it. Egypt will not accept the forcible displacement of the Palestinian people, and we will not accept any attempt to settle the Palestinian question at the expense of Egypt and other countries in the region.

A look at history clearly shows that the Palestinian people, despite the challenges, have remained resilient on their land. Throughout history, the Palestinian question has not died, but it has persisted, based on the legitimate demands of the Palestinian people and their indisputable rights. All that the world has achieved by postponing a solution is more tension and pain in occupied Palestine, in Israel and in the entire region.

We observed with regret the Council's inability, on two occasions, to adopt a draft resolution (see S/PV.9439 and S/PV. 9442) or even to call for a ceasefire to end this war. In the light of this crisis situation, we are also surprised by the new proposal to adopt a draft resolution that does not include a demand for a ceasefire aimed at preventing any further deterioration of the situation, which may lead the region to a dangerous turning point with grave consequences. Indeed, some of what is now being proposed in the Council amounts to a new attempt to justify the continuation of this war, which is inconsistent with the Charter of the United Nations, which established the Council and enshrined its mandate.

For its part, Egypt provided a platform, through the peace summit held in Cairo on 21 October, for Heads of State and Government to try to contain the situation and find a political framework to deal with the crisis instead of giving free rein to destruction, killing and violence. The summit deliberately adopted a depoliticized approach that took into account the urgent humanitarian dimension of this catastrophe. We

aimed to reach consensus, even if only in principle, on the de-escalation of conflict with a view to achieving a ceasefire, protecting civilians and ensuring the delivery of humanitarian aid while reviving the peace process. We will not rest until this war ends.

However, we sincerely regret the double standards on dealing with international crises, especially their humanitarian aspects, that we have seen since the beginning of this crisis. Some are rushing and competing to show sympathy for civilian victims in certain places and condemning in the strongest terms possible those responsible for civilian casualties. At the same time, they turn a blind eye towards and rush to justify the killing and targeting of civilians and their lives elsewhere, as if the lives of Palestinians civilians were less important than the lives of others and did not deserve the same efforts to protect and defend them.

I came to the Council today as a representative of Egypt, which opened the door for peace in the region, to warn of the grave consequences that an international failure to deal with the current crisis and its repercussions will have for the prospects for peace in the region and the aspirations of the peoples of the region for security, coexistence and stability. I call on members today, given that the Council is the highest political organ entrusted with the maintenance of international peace and security, to work towards the following actions before it is too late.

First, the Council must ensure a sustainable and immediate ceasefire in Gaza, without any conditions.

Secondly, the Council must put an end to all the practices that aim to forcibly displace the Palestinian people from their land — which is a grave violation of international humanitarian law and amounts to a war crime.

Thirdly, the Council must provide international protection immediately to the defenceless Palestinian people.

Fourthly, the Council must ensure the safe, rapid and sustainable delivery of humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip and must ensure that Israel shoulders its international responsibilities as the occupying Power.

Fifthly, the Council must reach a binding formula to settle the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, based on the agreed parameters set out in the resolutions of the Security Council and the resolutions of international

legitimacy, which provide for the end of the occupation and the establishment of a Palestinian State on the 4 June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Sixthly, the Council must shoulder its responsibilities in working to launch an independent investigation of the flagrant violations of international law and international humanitarian law.

The points I have mentioned represent the least we expect of the Council, which is the principal organ responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security — before it is too late and the current crisis worsens and spills over to other countries of the region and we are forced to return again to the Council to discuss a deeper and bigger crisis than the one we are facing today.

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary.

Mr. Szijjártó (Hungary): Unfortunately, I believe that it is not an exaggeration to say that global security has never been in worse shape since the conclusion of the Cold War. Two armed conflicts are now having the biggest negative impact on global security. One has been taking place in Europe, in my country's direct neighbourhood. Europe is facing a tremendous challenge as a result of that phenomenon.

On the occasion of today's meeting of the Security Council, we must speak very clearly and nothing must be relativized. We therefore feel compelled to say very clearly that there is no excuse — and there can be no excuse — for launching thousands of rockets on the territory of a sovereign country. There can be no excuse for killing a large number of innocent people with such an attack. We therefore find unacceptable any attempts aimed at explaining that phenomenon, putting it into any kind of context or finding any excuse for such a barbarian attack. On that basis, we also want to say very clearly that Israel definitely has the right to protect itself. It is in the interest not only of Israel but also the entire international community for such an attack to never, ever, take place again.

On this occasion, we have to call everything by its name. A terrorist attack has been committed against Israel. It was a terrorist attack committed by a terrorist organization. What therefore has to happen now is a fight against terror and against a terrorist organization. And I believe that I can say that it is the interest of all of us for that fight against terror to be successful. In the

meantime, we also have to be very clear about the fact or the intention that in the meantime, the international community should make every effort to ensure that escalation is avoided. And when I say that escalation must be avoided, I mean that this fight against a terrorist organization must not turn into a war among nations and countries. In that regard, I would like to share two major concerns.

The first is that, after a series of failures over long decades and after a great deal of suffering of the people of the region, a new hope for long-term peace popped up in 2020, when the Abraham Accords were signed in the garden of the White House. That was the first successful attempt to create a long lasting and sustainable peace. In that connection, we have to pay tribute to President Trump, who was able to put together the Abraham Accords, as well as to the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, who participated at the signing of the first agreement. Unfortunately, we see a huge risk posed by the series of terrorist attacks against Israel — that all the achievements reached since the signing of the Abraham Accords in 2020 will be lost and that those terrorist attacks will bring us back to the hopeless situation where we had been for decades. We therefore count a great deal on the Gulf countries and on the Arab countries of the region that have behaved responsibly so as to not let all the achievements reached by the Abraham Accords to be lost.

The second concern I would like to raise is that for us in Hungary, to be honest, it is scary to see some of the images we are seeing from the streets and squares of some European countries and here in North America. We see that terrorist organizations are being praised on the streets. We see rallies taking place in order to praise acts of terror, and we see a modern-age anti-Semitism on the rise in some European countries. And I must say that we find that unacceptable and frightening in the meantime. We all know that this is a major consequence of the massive illegal migratory flows that have hit Europe in recent years and have created parallel societies in many European countries. We all know that if the conflict in the Middle East escalates, we Europeans will have to face additional tremendous and very dangerous waves of illegal migration.

I therefore want to make it very clear here, in conclusion, that it is absolutely unimaginable that any authority in Hungary would approve and allow any rally to take place with the goal of praising a terrorist attack or a terrorist organization.

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister for International Relations and Cooperation of South Africa.

Mrs. Pandor (South Africa): We thank the Federative Republic of Brazil for convening this timely open debate. We found the briefings this morning most instructive. They provided frightening insights into the plight of innocent civilians in Gaza and the West Bank and pointed to the urgent need to ensure the release of Israeli hostages as soon as possible.

South Africa agrees with many of today's speakers that the ultimate solution to the conflict is finalizing the question of the two-State solution. We must work hard through the United Nations to create two States, Palestine and Israel, living side by side in peace and security. That must be in accordance with the established United Nations resolutions on the two-State solution. The Palestinian State should be created along the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

South Africa also joins the urgent calls for an immediate comprehensive ceasefire and for humanitarian corridors to be opened so that aid and other basic services reach all those in need. Most importantly, we call on all parties to exercise restraint and to desist from fuelling this patently unjust war and suffering of innocents.

We also express condolences to the people of Palestine and Israel for the lives lost during the past two weeks. We are horrified at the blatant targeting of civilians, a clear violation of international humanitarian law, the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols. Both Hamas and the State of Israel have committed those violations.

The killing of civilians and the destruction of civilian infrastructure in Gaza by Israeli forces goes against the tenets of international law, which prohibits the targeting of non-combatants, especially women, the aged and children. There is an added obligation on an occupying Power over the people and territory it occupies, in terms of the Geneva Conventions, including a prohibition against collective punishment. That, of course, does not detract from South Africa's concern at the actions of Hamas, which also targeted non-combatants.

While we express concern about the current violence and deaths, we cannot ignore the fact that continued occupation has bred hatred, suffering and pain. Just as

Israel deserves peace and security, Palestinians deserve sovereignty, peace and security. It is our view that, for international law to be credible, it must be applied uniformly and not be selective.

In our view, the conflict has again illustrated the inadequacy of our own global Organization, the United Nations, in particular the Security Council, which has the mandate of maintaining international peace and security. The Council has clearly been unable, over time, to prevent conflicts from spiralling into intense violence and harm to ordinary civilians. All of us need to work harder at reforming our Organization so that it is more capable of responding in order to protect civilians. We all recall that in 1994 a genocide occurred in Rwanda, with much of the whole world watching as innocent people were massacred. History cannot keep repeating such cruelty, with all of us watching. We should establish a system of global governance that is fair, equitable and has the capacity to respond to the needs of all persons in situations of threat and harm — a system that is not just a tool for the most powerful countries of the world, but that provides protection for the most vulnerable.

Finally, South Africa is appalled at the Security Council's failure to agree on a unified resolution that signals a full commitment to ending the killing and suffering. There can be no search for compromise resolutions when the Council is faced with a crisis of such proportions. We must urge the Council to do its work and ensure security and peace for the residents of Israel and Gaza.

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia.

Prince Al-Saud (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): We hold this meeting under critical and painful circumstances following dangerous developments in the Gaza Strip that claimed the lives of thousands of civilians. It warns of an imminent humanitarian catastrophe and grave repercussions on the security of the region and the world.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia clearly condemned the targeting of any civilians. We have called for ending the escalation of military operations, stopping bloodshed, releasing hostages and abiding by international laws and conventions. The Kingdom has also made every effort, alongside friendly and brotherly countries, to find an urgent and practical solution to stop the bloodshed and put an end to the escalation and

the ongoing cycle of violence. The Palestinian people are suffering under blockade and the ongoing escalation of the Israeli war machine, which continues to target Palestinian civilian facilities, schools, hospitals and infrastructure. They have claimed the lives of thousands of innocent civilians, including women, children and the elderly. They have injured thousands of civilians. The international community's failure so far to end the Israeli forces' collective punishment of the residents of Gaza and attempts to forcibly displace them will not bring the security and stability that we all desire any closer. The Council has remained silent about those crises, which have gone on for decades, and that is unacceptable. The Council bears the responsibility for its continued inaction, the cost of this protracted crisis, the losses of lives and property and the threats to the security and stability of the region.

The maintenance of international peace and security is foremost among the Council's functions, and yet today we can see that the Council is unable to carry out its role. It is late in reaching a settlement that can address the crisis as Israel continues to violate international conventions, including international humanitarian law, and that casts doubt on the credibility of the mechanisms of international legitimacy and the credibility of those defending them. It is high time that the Council shouldered the responsibilities for which it was established. The international community must take a firm position aimed at halting the military operations, guaranteeing the protection of civilians, ending the blockade, ensuring the speedy delivery of humanitarian and relief assistance, providing medicines, food and water and preventing a humanitarian catastrophe, the expansion of the cycle of conflict and the endangering of regional and international security.

A policy of double standards and selectivity where abiding by international law and United Nations resolutions is concerned has dangerous repercussions that go beyond this crisis. It affects the system of international law and therefore reflects negatively on our ability to maintain international peace and security.

We have warned time and again that this ongoing escalation with a lack of international accountability will lead to further violence, destruction, killing and extremism. It will undermine the voices of logic and moderation. The cycles of violence continue because the relevant United Nations resolutions are not respected. Ignoring the reasons behind the Palestinian-Israeli conflict will not lead to a just solution or achieve peace

and security in the region. We need to work seriously to support the efforts to revive a credible peace process. We are working to achieve a better future for our region, with a peace that we believe will contribute to realizing prosperity for all and guarantee a better future for the peoples of the region and for coming generations. That is the peace we aspire to — a sustainable peace that will guarantee a just, two-State solution and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State along the lines of the 1967 borders, ensuring security, stability and prosperity for all.

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign and European Affairs of Luxembourg.

Mr. Asselborn (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): I would first like to thank you, Mr. President, for inviting me to address today's open debate.

Nothing can justify the atrocities committed by Hamas and Islamic Jihad terrorists against Israeli civilians on 7 October. They constitute acts of barbarism that have shaken the world, and we condemn them in the strongest possible terms. While Luxembourg reaffirms unequivocally Israel's right to defend itself within the framework of international law, at the same time I would like to cite President Biden, who has urged Israel to not allow itself to be guided by rage, recalling that the United States made mistakes in its reaction to the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001. In other words, Israel must act in full compliance with international humanitarian law and ensure the protection of civilians. The people of Gaza are not Hamas. They cannot be held responsible or collectively punished for the crimes committed by the terrorists.

The Secretary-General called for de-escalation and a humanitarian ceasefire. As a first step, humanitarian pauses should be established, which could eventually lead to a ceasefire. That would allow for the delivery of emergency humanitarian aid, facilitate the immediate and unconditional release of hostages and above all it make it possible to bring the civilian population of Gaza to safety. Rapid and unhindered humanitarian access must be re-established without delay. We welcome the first deliveries of humanitarian aid to those living in the Gaza Strip in recent days, and we thank the Secretary-General, Egypt and the United States for facilitating that cargo's safe passage. However, as the United Nations has underscored, the people of Gaza need humanitarian assistance that is sustainable and that covers all in need. As we heard this morning, the

first deliveries of emergency assistance did not include fuel, which is nevertheless essential for hospitals to function and for water desalinization.

United Nations premises and all hospitals, clinics and schools must never be targeted by parties to conflict. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which is currently sheltering more than 600,000 people in the Gaza Strip, and the other humanitarian agencies on the ground must receive the support that they need as urgently as possible if they are to fulfil their mandate. For its part, Luxembourg has decided to contribute a further €2.5 million to humanitarian efforts in Gaza and the region in support of UNRWA, the World Food Programme and the International Committee of the Red Cross. This emergency aid brings our support to almost €12 million for 2023.

I have visited Gaza on several occasions during my time as Foreign Minister. It has been an open-air prison for years, and the living conditions there are extreme. The civilians of Gaza are suffering on two fronts — the Israeli blockade and bombing, and the fact that Hamas is using them as human shields. There is a serious risk that this conflict could turn into a regional conflagration. The same goes for the West Bank, where, as we know, the increased violence of settlers and the forced transfer of Palestinian communities have reached alarming levels. Any spillover of the conflict must be avoided at all costs. We must work concertedly within the international community and with the main actors in the region to avoid any escalation. The Security Council, but also the General Assembly, here in New York, has a key responsibility in that regard. The international community must urgently relaunch the peace process in the Middle East and give it all the attention it deserves. The Peace Day Effort for the Middle East initiative, held here in New York in September, was a first step in that direction.

Luxembourg remains committed to a peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that ensures Israel's right to security while respecting the right of Palestinians to self-determination and dignity. A comprehensive, just and lasting peace based on a two-State solution within the 1967 borders, with two democratic States living side by side and maintaining the status quo of the holy sites in Jerusalem, is the only viable way to end to the cycle of violence. Resolution 2334 (2016), adopted in December 2016,

made that clear. Let us commit resolutely to that path in the name of our common humanity — the humanity we share with Israelis and Palestinians alike.

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Indonesia.

Mrs. Marsudi (Indonesia): I flew 21 hours from Jakarta to attend today's meeting. I want to remind the Security Council that it has a big responsibility to maintain peace and security — not to prolong war or to back any side in continuing war.

Indonesia condemns Israel's continuing and unprecedented aggression against civilians in Gaza. We are seeing a humanitarian catastrophe and crimes against humanity are happening as we speak. Are we going to stand idly by? Attacks against hospitals and religious places, the blocking of access to power, water and fuel and the displacement of the population of the Gaza Strip are being conducted as a collective punishment.

At the same time, civilian hostages are being held and their lives are in critical danger. Therefore, I came here to ask the Council how it is going to exercise its responsibility. When is it going to stop the war in Gaza, create a ceasefire, open access to humanitarian assistance, call for the immediate release of civilians and stop the illegal occupation of Israel? I must repeat: when is the Council going to stop the illegal occupation of Israel? Every second wasted due to political disagreement and a failure to find consensus represents a humanitarian defeat for the Palestinians and creates further instability for the world. How many more people must perish before the Council makes a move? I can assure the Council of one thing: Indonesia will not waste a single second in harnessing global support for immediate action. Through the meetings of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the ASEAN-Gulf Cooperation Council and the Developing Eight Countries Organization for Economic Cooperation, Indonesia has pushed for a united voice to urge the cessation of violence and focus on tackling the urgent humanitarian catastrophe. Indonesia calls on the Council to take action on three points.

First, the Council must make a united call for an immediate ceasefire. Silence is harrowing against the deafening sound of bullets and rockets. The blanket support shown to one side has so far led to the further disproportionate use of force, the violation of

international humanitarian law and impunity. It is our collective obligation to end the cycle of violence before it escalates into a regional and global calamity.

Secondly, the Council must prioritize humanitarian access. More than 2 million people in Gaza are hanging on to their lives for basic humanitarian needs. Convoys of aid delivery are mostly being held immobilized and are in constant danger from crossfire. The Security Council must immediately urge safe and unimpeded passage of humanitarian access and respect for humanitarian law.

Thirdly, the Council must move beyond politics and bring humanity back to the Security Council. I ask the Council to use its great power to be more human. The Palestinians deserve equal rights and treatment. We are all human beings. We all deserve to have a home. We must reject the displacement of Palestinians. We must not let the 1948 tragedy reoccur. The Security Council holds great power and with great power comes great responsibility to address the current situation in Gaza and its root causes and ensure a path to the two-State solution. Indonesia stands with the people of Palestine.

The President: I now give the floor to the Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Portugal.

Mr. André (Portugal): I would like to start, Mr. President, by commending your presidency of the Security Council for this month. Brazil has shown responsible and constructive leadership when it was most needed, in the aftermath of Hamas's ruthless and discriminate terrorist attacks against Israel and amid the ongoing humanitarian disaster in the Gaza Strip.

Let me also reaffirm Portugal's unequivocal condemnation of the terrorist attacks by Hamas, its solidarity with Israel and its recognition of Israel's right and duty to its citizens to eliminate the threat posed by Hamas's lethal capabilities. Terrorism in all its forms should be condemned, and I will be very clear: the hostages must be released immediately and without preconditions. At the same time, Israel's actions must strictly respect international humanitarian law, no matter how rightful its war aims are.

We cannot remain indifferent to the suffering of innocent victims, Israelis, Palestinians and other nationalities, including United Nations workers. The death toll on both sides is staggering. At this moment, our collective priority should be the protection of civilians and addressing the humanitarian situation

on the ground. The increasing Palestinian civilian suffering is not acceptable. We therefore call for the protection of all medical facilities, schools and other critical and civilian infrastructure. The basic tenets of international humanitarian law are not compatible with shutting off electricity, food, water and fuel from Gaza. Preventing further loss of life is a pressing priority. The collective punishment of civilian populations is contrary to international humanitarian law.

We are facing a humanitarian catastrophe that is increasing every day. We must act swiftly. Portugal supports and seconds the call by Secretary-General Guterres for a humanitarian ceasefire. We commend the United Nations work on the ground and pay our respects to those who died in the service of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. We support Secretary-General Guterres' tireless advocacy for aid to reach the population of Gaza. The first aid trucks must be just the beginning of a larger effort and of safe and sustained humanitarian access.

This is a moment of tragedy and crisis, and we must transform it into a moment of hope and opportunity. To do so, we must recognize the nature and the complexity of the issues at stake. Despite the high expectations of the Oslo Accords agreed three decades ago, the Palestinian people have not been granted statehood, while millions of them have been displaced for generations and indeed continue to be uprooted in contemporary times. It must be demonstrated that the non-violent political path is the path worth following. We must return to the diplomatic track. It is the only way to break this cycle of violence and extremism, and we all must work to that end, led by those directly concerned such as the neighbouring countries. The peace summit held recently in Cairo was a relevant initiative allowing for the necessary dialogue and coordination.

Now we must urgently avoid the risks of a broader spread of this conflict, which should be prevented at all costs. With tensions running high, one spark could ignite a regional conflagration. We welcome and encourage the continuation of regional and international efforts, both in the multilateral and the bilateral spheres, to prevent a spillover. We must also look to the future. Once this war is over, we cannot just go back to the status quo ante. It is our collective responsibility to address the structural drivers of this conflict. Sober yet courageous political leadership at all levels is needed, leadership that can show the path towards political and

diplomatic dialogue. That will require the renewed involvement of all relevant actors and a determined effort to implement the Security Council resolutions on the matter and set out a clear and solid path to a Palestinian State fulfilling the two-State solution. That is the only way towards a lasting and sustainable peace.

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and National Community Abroad of Algeria.

Mr. Attaf (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation expresses its gratitude to you, Mr. President, for convening this special meeting of the Security Council under the exceptional circumstances that resulted in a distortion of the fundamental elements of the Palestinian question, which is the topic of our deliberations today. Two phenomena have exacerbated the situation. The first is the nearly complete marginalization of that question and its underestimation at the international level. The second is the unjustifiable tolerance of the Israeli occupation, while unjustly granting it absolute, unrestricted and unconditional immunity.

The marginalization of the Palestinian question means that it has completely disappeared from the priorities of the international community, which is not shouldering its responsibilities or upholding its resolutions and promises vis-à-vis the creation of an independent Palestinian State within the 1967 borders, with Jerusalem as its capital. The marginalization of the Palestinian question also means that there have not been any serious peace initiatives since the 1990s. The current period has seen a paralysis in international diplomacy for nearly three decades, which also means that the Palestinian question has recently fallen victim to a dangerous illusion. Peace, security and stability have been sought in the Middle East on the ruins of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and their national State.

There is an absolute immunity granted for the Israeli occupation, which resulted in the annexation of Palestinian land by force and control over more than 78 per cent of the territory of the West Bank. That has come at a cost, with negative effects for the two-State solution, which is a framework to reach a peaceful, just and permanent solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. We also recall that the immunity granted to Israel has led to a racist policies that are rejected in the occupied city of Jerusalem. The aim is to change its legal and historic status through the larger project of Judaizing Jerusalem

by force. We recall that that immunity has led to further killing, the forced displacement of tens of thousands of Palestinians and the destruction of homes and vital infrastructure over the past two decades.

We all know that immunity has led to the creation of an unprecedented Israeli Administration and to extremist acts. We are seeing a competition in settlement expansion, the violation of the rights of the Palestinian people and the elimination of the possibility of establishing a Palestinian State. We are facing today a new catastrophic chapter in the Israeli occupation, owing, in part, to its bloody and destructive nature and the horrific toll that the occupation has levied against an unarmed people whose rights have been violated; a people who have been deprived of the means of subsistence; and a people who no longer have prospects and whose hopes have been destroyed. The situation today is extremely clear to us, and there is no room for interpretation. The Palestinian people are faced with a very difficult choice. They could choose, on the one hand, to abandon their land and national legitimate rights, or, on the other, genocide and ethnic cleansing leading to the final elimination of the Palestinian national question.

Those developments are putting the United Nations and its principles and values to an important test. We must ensure that the logic of law prevails, not the logic of force, and the logic of legality, not double standards. The legally binding criteria must be respected, and we must oppose the logic of impunity and tolerance for such crimes, particularly in the context of the Israeli settlement occupation.

In that regard, we call on the Security Council to immediately take the following measures.

First, the Council must lift the unjust blockade on the Gaza Strip, given the fact that it is indisputably a war crime and a crime against humanity.

Secondly, the Council must end the senseless bombing, which has led to the deaths of thousands of innocent people. That is also a war crime and a crime of genocide.

Thirdly, the forced displacement of Palestinians, which could also constitute a crime of ethnic cleansing, must end.

Fourthly, the Council must allow for humanitarian assistance to be delivered to the people in Gaza, without conditions. That is the least that the Council can do.

With regard to the long term, I would like to mention the political solution. We call on the Security Council to be aware of the obvious reality — namely, that lasting security cannot be based on crime and injustice; lasting security cannot be built on marginalization, exclusion and discrimination; and lasting security in the Middle East can be built only on a just and lasting solution to the Palestinian question, according to international law, the principles and substance of which have been developed at the United Nations, within this Chamber. Would the Security Council accept not implementing the 87 resolutions that have been adopted since the beginning of that conflict just because the occupying Power had decided not to respect them? Would the Council accept for those resolutions to remain only within this Chamber because the occupier is above any accountability? Would the Council accept the violations of all its resolutions on the question of Palestine, for one reason, namely, that the occupier would like to be unique? We are undeniably at a historic crossroads, which reaffirms the specific responsibility of the Security Council, which must fully shoulder its duties.

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

Mr. Yıldız (Türkiye): Türkiye joins others in thanking the Brazilian presidency for organizing this open debate.

It is a timely meeting, as one of the greatest tragedies of recent history is unfolding in front of our eyes. As we speak here, innocent Palestinian people in Gaza, with a population of 2.5 million, squeezed into a very tiny territory, are under constant and indiscriminate bombing. More hospitals, schools and places of worship have become a shelter for them, as Israeli missiles continue targeting them regardless of where they are or whether they are sick or wounded. As of today, the Israeli military has killed more Palestinian children since 7 October than it did in all other military Israeli offences on Gaza since 2006 combined. The number of children killed is quickly approaching 2,000. There can be no justification for the collective punishment of civilians in Gaza.

Some prefer to look the other way in the face of such atrocities. They prefer not to speak about crimes against humanity and war crimes. They prefer to pretend as if the Palestinian people are just numbers and have no souls or rights. This is absolutely unacceptable. This is sheer hypocrisy and an embodiment of a double

standard that constitutes the very root cause of the problem we are facing today. If we continue treading the same path, today's problems between Israel and Palestine will only increase in magnitude. We urge immediate action to prevent the conflict from spilling over to the wider region and beyond. Therefore, for us, what needs to be done is crystal clear.

First, the cessation of hostilities must be achieved through an immediate, unconditional and lasting ceasefire.

Secondly, the unhindered flow of humanitarian assistance into Gaza must absolutely be ensured. To that end, I hope the Council will enforce keeping the Rafah crossing open for the steady flow of humanitarian assistance.

Thirdly, the two parties, Israel and Palestine, must be brought together to agree on the two-State solution, living side by side, in secure pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Palestine. It is true that such a vision for settlement has remained elusive despite several serious attempts.

What is required now is a guaranteed mechanism for monitoring, verifying and, when needed, enforcing the obligations of the parties. Otherwise, what is written on paper runs the risk of remaining on paper, as has happened up until now. Türkiye is ready to assume its role in regional ownership, together with other countries in the region.

The responsibility for stopping the bloodshed and starting a meaningful process for peace lies, first and foremost, with the Security Council. The last time this body spoke with one voice and agreed on a resolution regarding Gaza was in January 2009. Resolution 1860 (2009) was adopted at the time with Türkiye's contributions as a member of the Security Council. We urge the Council to put an end to its indifference to the ongoing carnage, which can have no place in the twenty-first century.

The President: I now give the floor to the Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany.

Ms. Baerbock (Germany): A cry of agony can be heard across the Middle East. You can hear the cry in Israel, where families mourn their loved ones — killed, tortured, brutally abducted by Hamas terrorists. You can hear it in Gaza, where parents fear for the lives of their children. You can hear the cry in neighbouring countries, where families worry about the violence

spilling over to them. Here in the Chamber, we hear the cry. If we want the agony to stop, we must heed all those cries, knowing that it will stop only if it stops for everyone.

This conflict is testing us, the world community. Each of us looks at this conflict from our own perspective and history. We need to respect that. But if we want to find a way out of this crisis, we cannot stop there. We must seek to understand each other's pain. Imagine what it would feel like if our sister were abducted, if our child were hit by a missile. We must hear each other out. Then we need to see how we can take small but courageous steps to end the suffering together.

I speak to the Council as the Foreign Minister of a country that bears historic responsibility for the worst imaginable crime — the crime committed by Nazi Germany — the Shoah, the systematic murder of 6 million Jews, with the aim of eradicating Jewish life from Europe. Never again — to me as a German, that means that we will not rest knowing that the grandchildren of Holocaust survivors are now being held hostage by terrorists in Gaza.

For Germany, Israel's security is non-negotiable. Like any other State in the world, Israel has the right to defend itself against terrorism within the framework of international law. Addressing the plight of Palestinians in no way contradicts this clear and unwavering stance. It is a key part of it.

In Israel, I was shown videos of the most horrendous brutalities against human beings that one could possibly imagine — of young girls being thrown onto trucks as hostages. Imagine if they were my or your children. All hostages must be released immediately. I thank all partners who are working on it non-stop.

In Jordan, I met Palestinian refugee families, schoolgirls who told me that 53 of their family and friends had been killed in Gaza over the past few days. I repeat, 53 — each of them someone's daughter, someone's son. Imagine if they were your daughter, your son. All civilian lives matter just the same. Humanity is universal, and so should be our empathy.

The fight is against Hamas, and not against civilians. That is why it is crucial for us that this fight be carried out in line with humanitarian law, with the greatest possible consideration for civilians in Gaza. That is why my country, Germany, is increasing its humanitarian aid to Gaza by €50 million, of which

€19 million will go to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. That is why we need humanitarian windows so that those who are suffering can get help in Gaza.

In doing so, we must not be fooled by Hamas's playbook. Hamas is playing with human suffering, using women and children in Gaza as human shields, hiding its weapons under supermarkets, apartment blocks and even hospitals, with obvious intent. Their plan is to fan the flames of hatred and violence, spark regional escalation and tear us apart as a world community. We can choose to see the conflict through our own eyes only, give in to grief and anger, or we can move ahead together, as small as our steps may be, so that Hamas can never again perpetrate such acts of terror.

The rules of the Charter of the United Nations and international humanitarian law should guide our work for a new tomorrow towards a meaningful peace process, allowing Israelis and Palestinians alike to live side by side in peace and security, in two independent States, knowing that peace will work only if it works for everyone.

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Ms. Bruins Slot (Kingdom of the Netherlands): I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing.

On 7 October, the world witnessed a horrific terrorist attack on Israel. The horrendous violence carried out by Hamas was not aimed at military targets. Rather, it was an attempt to destroy people's souls by taking hostages and murdering civilians, and this threat from Hamas is far from over. In that context, we should all stand united by supporting Israel and its right to self-defence against the terror threat of Hamas. As we have said before, the use of force in self-defence must be necessary and proportionate, and international humanitarian law must be respected by all parties. That means that every possible measure must be taken to protect civilians, humanitarian workers must be able to do their job safely and without hindrance and United Nations premises and personnel must remain safe from harm. All of that requires Israel to show restraint in the use of force,

The Kingdom of the Netherlands shares the concerns that have been voiced by so many today. The situation for civilians in Gaza is catastrophic. They are in dire need of aid, and we cannot afford to lose more time. So

far, while the first convoys have entered Gaza, we need a sustained flow of humanitarian aid covering all basic needs, and much more is needed, including fuel. Water supplies must be restored immediately. Humanitarian pauses are crucial to enabling much-needed aid to get through, and a permanent humanitarian corridor is the only way to prevent the situation getting much worse. The Netherlands will step up its humanitarian response. We have committed an additional €10 million for immediate humanitarian relief, of which €8 million is earmarked for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. That funding is aimed at improving living conditions for Palestinian citizens, including through mental health and psychosocial support.

We are extremely concerned about the conflict spreading beyond the borders of Israel and Gaza, and we call on all concerned to prevent that from happening. We also urge all the parties to do their utmost to prevent further escalation in the West Bank. In that context, we will continue providing our development aid for stability. The Palestinian Authority has an important role to play, and has it in its power in preventing further deterioration. It deserves our strong support. Settler violence is also worsening an already tense situation, and that must stop.

Let me conclude by saying that our thoughts and prayers are with all the victims and the hostages, who should be released immediately and unconditionally. When the United Nations was created in the aftermath of the Second World War, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was one of the first major crises needing urgent attention. Today, more than 75 years later, the need to find a solution to this conflict is more pressing and crucial than ever. The Netherlands calls on the Council to provide the leadership required to manage the crisis, contain it and provide a prospect of sustainable peace and security for Israelis and Palestinians as the only way forward. In that context, I would like to thank the United Nations for its efforts and express my gratitude to its staff acting on the ground. We cannot go back to the status quo. A two-State solution is more urgently needed than ever because both sides need it, both are entitled to it and both deserve it.

The President: I now give the floor to the Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Libya.

Mr. El-Baour (Libya) (*spoke in Arabic*): The Government and the people of Libya condemn in the strongest terms the brutal aggression being perpetrated by Israel's savage occupation forces against the Gaza Strip, which has so far claimed the lives of more than 5,000 civilians and injured thousands more. That is in addition to the hundreds trapped under rubble whom civil-defence teams have not yet been able to reach, owing to the intensity of the horrific shelling being carried out by the Israeli occupation forces with the aim of exterminating the people of Gaza.

The annals of human history are replete with details of the woes of victims of many ethnicities and religions and the documented atrocities of wars. They cannot erase the identities of the perpetrators, proponents and funders of those atrocities, along with crimes of colonialism, racist practices, the deliberate killing of women and children, contempt for humankind and systematic terrorism. All of them are crimes against humanity and peaceful coexistence. No media power in this world can falsify what is happening in Gaza City or impose fake narratives and information about the events, as we have seen in the massacre resulting from the bombing of the Al Ahli Hospital, in which more than 500 civilian martyrs were killed. That blatant aggression has exposed the hollowness of slogans about human rights. Where are the sermons and the commitment to human rights and international law, especially those that we hear from the self-proclaimed civilized countries? What message are they sending the world today? The world's peoples are fully aware of what is happening on the ground in occupied Palestine. We have had enough of double standards and counterfeit facts.

The ongoing painful developments are nothing but a natural outcome of the apartheid policies that the brutal Israeli occupation forces have practiced against the Palestinian people for seven decades. Those policies have brought us to this point and have deprived the Palestinian people of their legitimate rights enshrined in international and humanitarian resolutions and conventions. We cannot accept the spurious argument that the current crisis began on 7 October, or that the violations by the Israeli forces against the Palestinians that preceded it, along with desecrations of Islamic and Christian sacred sites in Al-Quds Al-Sharif, were perpetrated by parties unknown. For that reason, we will not accept the demand that we condemn the Palestinian people's resistance or stand idly by and support the

aggression against civilians. At this difficult time, some of the States that support the brutal aggression want us to accept Palestinians' forced displacement from their homes to neighbouring Arab States, which is a war crime seeking to gain the world's support.

International law and international humanitarian law, along with the relevant laws concerning the protection of civilians, are instruments that are legally and morally binding on us all. We must therefore base our judgment of the actions of the Israeli occupation forces and the Palestinian resistance on them. Maintaining double standards in defining which civilians should receive international protection and military support to ensure their safety is a shameful stance that shows contempt for civilian lives.

My country calls for this aggression to stop immediately and for an end to the excessive force by which the Israeli occupation forces aim to perpetrate genocide and complete destruction on a pretext of protecting their citizens, as we have all seen and heard on television, along with declarations by leaders of the occupying army that they will annihilate the people of Gaza, occupy the city and turn it into an Israeli settlement. Let the historical record reflect my country's position, in which we demand that the international community act immediately and urgently to stop this aggression and prevent it from achieving its goal of annihilating Gaza City and the Palestinian territories. We also demand that the international community take a clear position on Palestinians' right to establish an independent State with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, rather than being forced to create a new geographic and demographic reality that wipes out the Palestinian question and makes us talk about 2023 borders and the right of Gazan refugees to return to their homes.

In conclusion, the Government and people of my country reject the notion that Palestinians have to bargain for their right to access food, water, electricity and fuel in a normal manner. It is incredible that the entry of 20 or 30 trucks transporting medicines and food in batches to more than 2 million human beings should be regarded as an achievement of international diplomacy or a humanitarian triumph. Today the priority is to provide a secure environment to all the residents of the region to achieve a just peace.

The Israeli authorities should be held accountable for their brutal occupation and for disregarding international humanitarian law and the Geneva

Conventions concerning the use of force during war. They should be held responsible for cutting off the supplies of fuel, water, electricity and food and for preventing them from reaching the occupied and besieged regions. If the international community is unable to put an end to those violations, then it should speak up and tell the world about its inability to do so. The Palestinian resistance should not be taken as a pretext for attempting to wipe Gaza off the map.

The President: I now give the floor to the Deputy Foreign Minister for Slovenia.

Ms. Štiglic (Slovenia): Let me thank the Secretary-General and the briefers for their introductory statements.

We are following with great concern the current situation in the Middle East. This cycle of violence has brought additional tragedy and suffering primarily to innocent civilians.

Slovenia remains steadfast in its commitments to the principle that every life counts. That principle should guide our actions in times of peace and prosperity, and even more importantly, in times of conflict and crisis.

One of the youngest visitors to the Slovenian office in Ramallah is a six-year-old girl called Sarah. She fell in love with the Slovenian anthem, which speaks of nations living together in peace and coexistence, and has even learned the words in Arabic. On the other side, I have been told about children from the Kfar Aza kibbutz and the paper kites they made with their parents on Simhat Torah to send to Gaza as a wish for peace.

Keeping in mind, Sarah, the children of the Kfar Aza kibbutz, the children of Gaza and indeed all the children of the region, the messages that we want to convey today are simple.

First, Slovenia condemns in the strongest terms the terrorist attack by Hamas on Israel. The brutality and killing of innocent civilians can never be justified. We call on Hamas to stop rocket fire into Israel and release all hostages immediately and unconditionally. Slovenia supports Israel's right to self-defence, in accordance with international law, including the principle of proportionality.

Secondly, Slovenia calls on all parties to fully respect international humanitarian law and humanitarian principles. That includes full, immediate and unhindered humanitarian access to and within Gaza. The civilian population there, the majority of

whom are innocent women and children, should not bear the brunt of the response for the Hamas attacks for which they are not responsible, and they should not be used as human shields.

Without access to water, food, medical supplies, fuel, gas and electricity and with constant attacks on civilian objects, schools, hospitals and protected shelters, the situation in Gaza is turning into a human catastrophe. In this context, we join the calls for an independent investigation of the attack on Al Ahli Hospital.

Thirdly, there is an urgent need for a humanitarian ceasefire or pause for aid to be delivered and distributed to those in need in a fast, sustained and safe manner. The first deliveries hardly respond to the immense needs on the ground. Slovenia will continue to support the indispensable work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. And we have recently substantially increased our funding to the Agency.

Slovenia reiterates its full support for the work of the United Nations system and the broader humanitarian community, from the good offices of the Secretary-General to the efforts of each and every medical and humanitarian worker on the ground. Many of them work tirelessly and too many of them have paid the highest price for humanity to prevail.

Slovenia recognizes and supports the efforts of several States and leaders to avert the crisis and humanitarian disaster. We call on all countries in the region and beyond to act responsibly and to cooperate and engage in a constructive dialogue to de-escalate that conflict. In this context, we welcome the Cairo peace summit.

Finally, people in the region have for decades suffered immensely. As a matter of urgency, we must recommit ourselves to resuming a meaningful peace process, leading to a two-State solution that brings peace and security to both sides. Slovenia has supported and will continue to support initiatives aimed at reinforcing and reinvigorating the Middle East peace process, including the recently launched Peace Day effort. Peace and security for both Palestinians and Israelis can be achieved only through a credible political process.

As we sit in this Chamber, let us think about who we want to create a better world for. To me, there is an obvious answer: for all the peoples of the region; for

the women, children and men who were taken hostage; for those running to shelters when the alarms sound; and for those who have fled their homes or are living in refugee camps and experiencing constant fear, violence and deprivation.

Today we are observing United Nations Day. When the Organization was established, it represented hope for global peace and unity. Those who were children when the United Nations started to deal with the Palestinian question are grandparents today. We, the international community, have failed them. But their children's children deserve a brighter future. We must make sure that their hopes, their dreams and their aspirations are met with opportunity, peace and security. The Security Council bears a special responsibility in that respect.

The President: I now give the floor to the First Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba.

Mr. Peñalver Portal (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): We align ourselves with the statement to be delivered by the representative of Senegal in its capacity as Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

We reiterate our deep concern about the escalation of violence between Israel and Palestine, which is a consequence of decades of Israeli practices of illegal occupation and colonization, in flagrant violation of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people on their own territory, as well as the prolonged disrespect for the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law, including numerous relevant United Nations resolutions.

Cuba rejects and has always rejected the death of civilians and innocent people of all parties involved in this conflict, regardless of their ethnicity, origin, nationality or religious faith. We condemn, in the strongest terms, the killing of civilians, especially women, children and humanitarian workers of the United Nations system; the indiscriminate bombing of the population in Gaza and the destruction of houses, hospitals and civilian infrastructure; as well as the cutting off of water, and electricity services, food and fuel to that population, which considerably worsens the precarious humanitarian situation resulting from the blockade of the Gaza Strip. Nothing can justify those actions, which constitute collective punishment, serious violations of international humanitarian law and war crimes and crimes against humanity.

We demand an immediate ceasefire and the delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza, and the warmongering rhetoric must stop.

It is shameful that once again the Security Council has been unable to fulfil its mandate. The United States Government has been complicit in and responsible for Israel's impunity for its past crimes by obstructing the action of the organ with regard to the Palestinian question, thereby undermining peace and stability in the Middle East. It is shameful that the United States has vetoed in the Security Council 46 draft resolutions related to the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, the most recent of which (draft resolution S/2023/773) was vetoed just a few days ago.

On this occasion, the crime is even greater, as it has made it impossible to put an end to the humanitarian catastrophe of extreme proportions in the occupied Palestinian territory of the Gaza Strip and also, to some extent, in the West Bank. As a result, it has not been possible to stop the current pattern of violence, which will contribute only to exacerbating tensions and aggravating the humanitarian impact on civilians. We demand that the United States Government refrain from continuing to paralyse the Security Council by using the undemocratic and obsolete veto power to protect the excesses of the Israeli Government. We advocate the pursuit of a timely solution through negotiation in order to prevent further escalation of the violence and its grave humanitarian consequences.

We emphasize the urgent need for a broad, just and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on the two-State solution, which will allow the Palestinian people to exercise their right to self-determination and to establish an independent and sovereign State within the pre-1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital, while also guaranteeing the right of return for refugees. We reiterate our firm rejection of the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territory, including that of East Jerusalem, together with Israel's illegal annexation policy and all its colonizing practices. We condemn the latent plans to annex the Palestinian territories of the Jordan Valley and other parts of the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

We request the urgent mobilization, under the coordination of the United Nations, of emergency humanitarian aid to address the catastrophic situation in Gaza. We call on all parties involved to facilitate the entry and distribution of that indispensable

humanitarian aid. We will continue to strongly support the State of Palestine's accession to full membership of the United Nations. We also support its President's call for an international peace conference.

We reiterate our demand for Israel's total and unconditional withdrawal from the Syrian Golan and all occupied Arab territories. We demand the cessation of external interference in Syria and full respect for its sovereignty and territorial integrity, while supporting the search for a peaceful and negotiated solution to the situation imposed on that sisterly Arab nation.

We advocate the preservation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action with Iran, in which the tools of multilateral diplomacy prevailed. It is regrettable that the United States unilaterally withdrew from the nuclear agreement in May 2018, constituting a significant setback that must be rectified as soon as possible. We support the inalienable right of all States to develop the research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

We demand an immediate and unconditional end to the arbitrary and illegal unilateral coercive measures imposed by the United States against sovereign nations in the Middle East. We reiterate our call for an end to double standards, selectivity and political manipulation, which violate the cause of international peace and security to the detriment of the Security Council's mandate.

The President: I now give the floor to the Undersecretary of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland.

Mr. Gerwel (Poland): I thank Brazil for convening this debate.

Poland follows with great concern the current devastating crisis in the Middle East. At its very onset, we condemned the brutal attacks on civilians carried out by Hamas. Terrorism aimed at the civilian population cannot be tolerated under any circumstances. The suffering of the innocent is never justified. That is why we are convinced that Israel has the right to defend itself and its citizens, in compliance with international law and international humanitarian law. We also join all those calling for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages taken by Hamas.

Poland supports all international efforts aimed at restoring peace. The international community needs to engage with regional actors to encourage and persuade

all sides to step back. That is crucial to prevent regional escalation. Poland stands ready to support any process that would help to achieve a diplomatic solution to the ongoing conflict.

It is our common duty to ensure the provision of humanitarian assistance to innocent civilians in Gaza. We call for the relevant United Nations agencies and their implementing partners to be allowed access. We welcome the initial transfer of humanitarian aid to Gaza via the Rafah crossing. We commend the efforts in that regard by the United Nations, Egypt and Jordan, as well as other parties, and we hope that other deliveries will follow. We also express our gratitude to the personnel of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, as well as that of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, who are bravely assisting those in need. As we can see, they have proven themselves ready to make the ultimate sacrifice while helping others. That should remind us that the security of all those providing humanitarian assistance is critical.

Taking into account the current tragic situation, especially at this moment, we should not leave Palestinians in Gaza without support. For decades, Poland has been involved in providing humanitarian and development aid in the Middle East, with a particular focus on Palestine and Lebanon. In the face of the current crisis, it is important to continue assistance activities, and we will do so through bilateral and multilateral channels. Poland's participation in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon is clear proof of our wider political commitment to the stabilization of the Middle East. We are determined to continue our participation in that mission.

Poland knows very well the consequences of war, invasion and terror, which are felt for generations. That is why we reiterate that the escalation and spreading of the conflict will have devastating and long-lasting consequences. That is why we also call on all parties not to succumb to the logic of violence.

We all know that the Middle East peace process has always been a fragile one and that no act of violence will bring us closer to a positive solution. We should make every effort to reach a cessation of hostilities and return to a diplomatic path towards resolving the dispute. We remain committed to a negotiated and viable two-

State solution based upon the internationally agreed parameters. Our overarching goal is the preservation of the principles of international law.

The President: I now give the floor to the Vice-Minister for Multilateral Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Colombia.

Ms. Taylor (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): The conflict between Israel and Palestine is without any doubt a cause of great concern for Colombia and the entire international community. The violence that has been escalating since 7 October, which mainly affects the civilian population, demands decisive and coordinated action from the United Nations, in particular the Security Council, as the principal organ responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security.

In keeping with its historical and traditional position of promoting a peaceful solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and as a country committed to peace and international humanitarian law, Colombia emphatically rejects any impact on the civilian population, including the loss of thousands of lives that we have seen in recent days and the worsening of the human conditions.

In that connection, Colombia recalls the importance of respect for the principles of distinction and proportionality and the protection of essential goods and access to vital resources in order to ensure the survival of the civilian population. Colombia therefore joins the voices of the Secretary-General, United Nations agencies and many others, including those of the many mass demonstrations that have been held around the world to condemn the situation.

The world is crying out for guarantees of respect for life and the entry of humanitarian aid intended to alleviate the suffering of the civilian population. Unfortunately, children, women, the elderly and the sick are the main victims of this conflict.

Colombia urgently calls on the Council to take measures to address the blockade that is currently preventing the entry into Gaza of humanitarian aid, fuel, hospital supplies, medicines and resources that are indispensable for administering essential public-health functions such as the use of power generators in hospitals and the use of water distillation plants. Resources and supplies must reach all the conflict-affected areas, including northern Gaza. Humanitarian operations must be protected and facilitated, as provided

for in the Rome Statute. A failure to do so would mean a regression back to the darkest chapter of human barbarity, characterized by the absence of the basic rules for the conduct of war. Today we are witnessing a total disregard for international humanitarian law, which my country, faithful to its historical position, emphatically rejects.

Violence only leads to greater suffering and deepens the obstacles to a peaceful and sustainable solution. My country reiterates its call for an immediate cessation of hostilities between the parties to the conflict and the resumption of peace negotiations that would allow for a stabilization of the situation, with the understanding that the conflict must be resolved through dialogue and that a solution must be found on the basis of multilateralism. In particular, it is crucial for the solution to be based on full compliance with the many resolutions of the United Nations by bringing about the two-State solution, as established in General Assembly resolution 181 (II) of 1947, the vision of which the Council has affirmed in subsequent decisions.

The international legal order must be preserved, and it is the basis for peace. To that end, and in accordance with what the President of the Colombia said in his address to the Assembly in September, Colombia emphasizes the urgency of convening an international peace conference as soon as possible, in order to prevent the current conflict from becoming protracted or spreading to other regions (see /A/78/PV.4).

We must abandon barbarity, and in order to do that we must open the space for securing immediate peace, as the only way to exit this decades-long conflict. Let us put an end to war in order to protect life and save the planet.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Aboul Gheit.

Mr. Aboul Gheit (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to express my deep gratitude to Brazil for convening this urgent meeting to discuss the grave situation in Gaza.

Honestly, we believe that the Security Council's credibility is at stake, as the war of revenge that is taking place today in Gaza has no goal other than to inflict collective punishment on millions of people whose only crime is that they live in the Gaza Strip. That is a violation of international law and international humanitarian law, which constitute the basic pillars of the international order, the peace and security of which the Security Council is responsible for.

On 11 October, the League of Arab States adopted a clear position regarding the events that took place in Israel and the Gaza Strip. The League of Arab States unequivocally condemned the targeting and killing of civilians on both sides, a position that was welcomed by all members of the international community, and we hope that everyone will remember that that position was adopted out of our belief in the need for all parties to respect international humanitarian law.

One of the principles of international humanitarian law relates to the distinction between armed combatants and civilians. That principle has been violated every hour and every minute by Israel in the Gaza Strip over the past two weeks. Yet it is the principle that guarantees that humankind will not descend again into the depths of barbarism and brutality witnessed in the wars that preceded the adoption of the Geneva Conventions. I therefore stress that immediately stopping the Israeli war on the civilian population in Gaza is the only way to prevent a major humanitarian catastrophe and a massacre that the world would never forgive itself for.

It is a rabid war. Hundreds of innocent civilians are being killed every day. Stopping it is the responsibility of the Council as a guarantor of international peace and security. It is a war with no real strategy other than blind vengeance, and it does not have a known time frame. The truth is that we are surprised by those who cling to what they call the right to self-defence as a justification for committing the most heinous crimes, and we are even more surprised by those who accept that this war is being waged outside the scope of international humanitarian law — that is, the law of war — and without any red lines. We see before us a plan being implemented every day to punish the people of Gaza — all of them, without discrimination — by bombing their homes, starving them and depriving them of the most basic necessities of survival, such as food, water, medicine and fuel.

We are all following with great concern the fact that the occupation forces continue to push the people of the Gaza Strip to leave their homes and forcibly displace them from the north to the south of Gaza, as if the goal was to create a humanitarian catastrophe, whether inside the Gaza Strip or on its border with Egypt, which would open the door for a second wave of forced displacement for the people of Gaza, all of whom are refugees originally. The world must be aware of that. The League of Arab States rejects forcible displacement, not only as a crime under article 49

of the Geneva Convention, but also as a systematic strategy that Israel seeks to implement to liquidate the Palestinian question. I am fully confident that the Palestinian people are aware of that threat to their question, just as I am confident that the Arab countries in the region are also aware of the gravity of the situation. But it is shameful for the world to allow the official of any country to repeat such nonsense, which will not be applied on the ground and serve only to increase everyone's anger, bitterness and violence. The Palestinians and Arabs will not endure a second Nakba. We hope that the world, through the Council, will understand the significance of that assertion.

The urgent priority today is to establish a sustainable mechanism to ensure the delivery of aid from Egypt into Gaza through the Rafah crossing, and to establish a connected supply line to transport humanitarian aid into the Strip until calm is restored. The trucks that have entered in recent days are merely a drop in the ocean of the needs of the population. People in Gaza have been relying on 100 trucks loaded with necessities daily, namely, food, medicine and fuel.

I remind the Security Council that the Palestinian-Israeli conflict did not start on 7 October, and the Palestinian question is not and will not be one of the tributaries of the war on terrorism. We warned, as did others, that the situation in all occupied Palestinian territories — whether Gaza, the West Bank or East Jerusalem — where Palestinians are living under military occupation based on racial discrimination is not sustainable. Actions of violence will only beget more violence and the desire to retaliate. It is time to address the root cause for the mutual waves of violence. Ending the occupation and establishing an independent Palestinian State along the lines of 1967 can ensure peace for all.

Standing on the right side of history means, in reality, standing unequivocally on the side of Palestinian rights and the Palestinian people and not on the side of the occupying Power. The only formula that would preserve the dignity and freedom of the Palestinian people and ensure safety for the Israelis is the two-State solution. I hope that current developments will compel us to think about the future and future generations, without repeating the mistakes of the past.

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

Mrs. Buenrostro Massieu (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mexico is attending this meeting in view of the critical escalation of hostilities between Israel and Hamas and the prevailing situation in the Gaza Strip, an integral part of the occupied Palestinian territory. If not stopped immediately, this conflict is on track to produce a humanitarian disaster of immeasurable and unprecedented proportions.

We acknowledge and appreciate the humanitarian work undertaken by the United Nations, under the leadership of the Secretary-General, and deeply regret the deaths of 35 United Nations workers.

Mexico reaffirms its strong and unequivocal condemnation of terrorism and violent extremism in all its forms and manifestations, committed by whosoever, wherever and for whatever purposes. As the Council has affirmed, any act of terrorism constitutes a threat to international peace and security.

My country also reiterates its strong condemnation of the 7 October terrorist attacks against Israel by Hamas and other extremist organizations in Gaza, which have claimed the lives of more than 1,400 people. Mexico echoes the Secretary-General in demanding the immediate and unconditional release of the hostages in Hamas custody, including two Mexican nationals.

The Israeli response, on the other hand, has resulted in almost 5,000 deaths, more than 14,200 injuries and incalculable damage to civilian infrastructure. Mexico recognizes Israel's right to protect its citizens and its territory, as well as to guarantee its security, but that must be done in full compliance with international law and the principles of necessity and proportionality that govern any use of force.

We call for an immediate and sustained cessation of hostilities throughout the occupied Palestinian territory, including indiscriminate attacks and violence against civilians by all parties to the conflict and for the lifting of the state of siege currently imposed on the Palestinian population in Gaza, in accordance with resolution 1860 (2009).

According to international humanitarian law, any indiscriminate or directed attacks against the civilian population under any circumstances, as well as against medical and humanitarian personnel or against civilian objects and essential infrastructure, are contrary to the principle of distinction, which is applicable to all situations of armed conflict at all times and in all places.

Such conduct could constitute war crimes, as they are grave breaches of the 1949 Geneva Conventions. Any reprisal is contrary to international law.

Mexico condemns and repudiates, in the strongest terms, the events that took place in the Al Ahli Hospital, located in the northern Gaza Strip, as well as all other attacks in recent days on civilian facilities and property. An independent and impartial investigation into those attacks is therefore imperative in order to establish the facts, attribute responsibility and ensure accountability.

We welcome the passage of humanitarian assistance through the Rafah border crossing, connecting Egypt to the Gaza Strip. However, the shipments that have entered are insufficient. We therefore call for the urgent and uninterrupted entry of humanitarian supplies, including water and fuel. Civilians must also be allowed to pass through the corridor between Gaza and Egypt, as well as through the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

Mexico also expresses great concern about the increased intensity and frequency of incidents of violence, military roadblocks and attacks by Israeli settlers, and we are alarmed about a possible Israeli military incursion into northern Gaza, which would only aggravate conditions for the civilian population.

In that context, Mexico considers the use of the veto by the United States on 18 October (see S/PV.9442) to prevent the Security Council from acting to be unacceptable. The draft resolution proposed by Brazil (S/2023/773) was a balanced text of an essentially humanitarian nature.

Since 1945, Mexico has maintained an unwavering stance against the use of the veto, and we reiterate our call to those who have not done so to join the Franco-Mexican initiative on restricting the use of the veto, which already has 106 signatories.

Responsibility for resuming the peace process and de-escalating the violence lies with the parties to the conflict. The Security Council and the international community have a collective responsibility to encourage a political process aimed at promoting a lasting peace. We also acknowledge Egypt's convening of a peace summit last weekend and call on regional actors to exercise maximum restraint and prevent the conflict from escalating.

No occupation is lawful. It is always the result of a breach of international order, in contravention of the Charter of the United Nations. Nor is there a right to an

indefinite occupation, which has already altered — to the benefit of the occupying Power — the demographic, economic and social realities of the occupied territory and those of its inhabitants, creating potentially irreversible changes on the ground.

Under international law, any acquisition of territory by force is null and void, and the international community has an obligation to demand that the occupying Power cease its occupation and all other acts affecting the territorial integrity of the State of Palestine and abide by the relevant resolutions of the Council. Until we address the structural causes of the conflict, including oppression and recurrent human rights violations, we will continue to see more cycles of violence and destruction.

Mexico favours a comprehensive and definitive political solution to the conflict, on the basis of a two-State solution that addresses Israel's legitimate security concerns and allows for the consolidation of a politically and economically viable State of Palestine, living side by side with Israel within secure and internationally recognized borders, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions.

As the Mexican Minister for Foreign Affairs pointed out on 23 September at the General Assembly, we must “recognize the right of the people of Israel, but not at the expense of the Palestinian people”.

Mexico, a country whose foreign policy is based in international law, will always champion the peaceful settlement of disputes over the threat or use of force. We will therefore continue to support all efforts aimed at establishing peace based on mutual respect and full respect for international law.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Kim Sangjin (Republic of Korea): The current situation in Israel and Gaza, initiated by the heinous terrorist attacks by Hamas on 7 October, is extremely alarming. We strongly condemn the abhorrent and indiscriminate Hamas terrorist attacks 17 days ago. Those attacks by Hamas cannot be justified under any circumstances. The Republic of Korea urges for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages.

We are facing the most dangerous moment of the past five decades in the region. Until now, more than 6,000 people, mostly civilians, have died in Israel and Gaza. The number of casualties is rapidly increasing. Innocent civilians are losing their lives. Those alive are

suffering from acute shortages of necessities, including water, food and medical supplies. United Nations staff members, health workers and journalists are not safe in the current situation.

All civilian lives matter, and all civilians must be protected under international humanitarian law. Therefore, all parties must abide by the rules under international humanitarian law, and the protection of civilians is the core pillar in that regard. Rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian aid is also essential for the survival of the civilian population and must be guaranteed under international humanitarian law. Humanitarian workers and medical personnel must also be protected.

In that regard, we welcome the Secretary-General's announcement on 21 October of the initial provision of humanitarian supplies to civilians in Gaza through the Rafah crossing, with additional deliveries of supplies on 22 and 23 October. We hope that enough humanitarian supplies can be constantly delivered to those in need. We highly appreciate all diplomatic efforts by major players in the region, including Egypt and the United States, to facilitate rapid, safe and unimpeded access for humanitarian relief.

Unfortunately, the entire area is increasingly vulnerable, and we are now facing a high risk of serious spillover to other parts of the region. The level of tensions in the West Bank is steadily growing, and ongoing exchanges of fire across the Blue Line in southern Lebanon is very worrisome. The international community must use all possible means at its disposal to prevent further exacerbation of the current situation.

Protecting civilians and preventing spillover must serve as our guiding priorities at this fragile moment. At the same time, to break the cycle of violence, we also have to renew our efforts to revive the political process. We believe that sustainable peace in the region can only be achieved through sincere negotiations based on the two-State solution, with security and dignity for both Israel and Palestine.

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

Mr. Wenaweser (Liechtenstein): I want to start my statement today by expressing our grave condolences to all the victims, both in Israel and in Palestine. The indelible scars left on all those affected must inspire us to redouble our efforts to seek peace.

We thank you, Mr. President, and your team for the tireless efforts to seek consensus on a Security Council draft resolution last week that would have called for humanitarian pauses to allow full, rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access. We were disappointed that, in the end, the Council was unable to live up to its responsibility under the Charter of the United Nations owing to the use of the veto. The political organs of the United Nations must not be silent in this situation, which is a tragic crisis of our collective obligation to protect civilian populations.

Liechtenstein condemns the terrorist attacks against Israeli civilians by Hamas and other groups, and the massive violations of international humanitarian law, in particular the targeting of civilians, mass killings, abduction, hostage-taking and the threat of killing hostages. The firing of rockets from Gaza on civilian targets and the deliberate targeting of civilians are grave violations of international humanitarian law and amount to war crimes and possibly crimes against humanity.

We affirm the right of Israel to defend itself in accordance with international law, including international humanitarian law and in particular its principles of discrimination and proportionality. A siege of Gaza, as declared by Israeli military leaders, amounts to an act of collective punishment that violates international humanitarian law. The large numbers of civilian casualties that have resulted in Gaza to date — a very large number of them children — are unacceptable.

For the immediate future, we must set the protection of civilians as our highest priority. International humanitarian law, including the basic principles for the protection of civilians therein, must be safeguarded at all times by all actors, and there must be accountability for their violation. We note in that respect the investigation of the International Criminal Court that has been active for almost a decade and look forward to the Court's concrete action.

The United Nations, and the Council in particular, have a crucial responsibility in this situation. Preventing a further escalation of the war in Gaza, which has already led to dangerous violence and heightened instability in the West Bank and in the wider region, is one key aspect. But the peace and security that the Council is mandated to protect, in this most dire of situations, is fundamentally also people-centred. To that end, ensuring safe and unimpeded humanitarian

access to the population in most urgent need of assistance is crucial, in conjunction with the full respect for all relevant provisions of international humanitarian law by the conflict parties. We commend Secretary-General Guterres for his leadership, and we hope that the Council will be able to live up to its responsibilities. In rising to the challenge, the Council's approach must be grounded in our shared humanity and guided by international law.

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

Mr. Hilale (Morocco) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting, presided over by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Brazil. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General and Mr. Tor Wennesland, the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, for their valuable briefings.

My country's delegation would like to align itself with the statement delivered by His Excellency Mr. Ayman Safadi, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

We gather here today under difficult circumstances for the Palestinian question. The bloody and brutal events of the past weeks and the accompanying grave tensions warn that we are facing an unprecedented situation and that the conflict could even become more dangerous, with major repercussions for the entire Middle East region.

Following the eruption of those events, the Kingdom of Morocco presided over a ministerial meeting of an extraordinary session of the League of Arab States, held on 11 October, which resulted in resolution 8987. It called on all parties to exercise self-restraint, reaffirmed the need to protect all civilians, condemned the suffering of the brotherly Palestinian people and stressed our support to the Palestinian people in their land. Moreover, we warned against any attempt to displace the Palestinian people.

The Kingdom of Morocco also participated in the Cairo peace summit, on 21 October. We reaffirmed the need to de-escalate, stop the bloodshed, put an end to military attacks, protect all civilians and not target them, pursuant to the principles of international law. Moreover, we reaffirmed the need to allow for the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the residents of the Gaza

Strip in an urgent, continuous and sufficient manner, as well as to reject any displacement of Palestinians from their homes, which is a threat to the national security of neighbouring countries. In addition, we stressed the need to launch a genuine peace process that would lead to the implementation of the two-State solution according to the internationally agreed parameters. His Majesty King Mohammed VI, Head of the Al-Quds Committee, gave instructions yesterday to send urgent and significant humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people, including food, medicine and water. We will coordinate the delivery of that assistance with the Egyptian and Palestinian authorities as part of His Majesty's commitment to resolving the Palestinian question. On King Mohammed's instructions, two planes left Morocco for Egypt's El Arish airport today, Tuesday evening, carrying urgent humanitarian assistance for Palestinians in Gaza.

The Kingdom of Morocco reiterates its full solidarity in support of the legitimate rights of its brother Palestinian people, based on a two-State solution, as agreed by the international community, that would lead to the establishment of an independent and viable Palestinian State along the lines of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side with Israel in peace, safety and security. Morocco reaffirms the importance of putting an end to all measures that jeopardize the legal and historic status of the holy city, with a view to furthering peace and stability and ensuring that this political conflict does not become a religious one, with dangerous repercussions for all. Jerusalem must remain a symbol of peaceful coexistence for all three monotheistic religions and a city of mutual respect and dialogue, as stipulated in the Al-Quds Appeal signed by King Mohammed and His Holiness Pope Francis in Rabat on 30 March 2019.

In conclusion, I would like to quote from a letter that King Mohammed sent on 12 February 2023 to the participants in the high-level conference for the protection of and support to Al-Quds:

"We believe that peace in the Middle East is a strategic option. The Kingdom of Morocco will therefore continue to make every possible effort and use its relations with all parties and international actors to contribute to any international effort to relaunch the dialogue and negotiation process, as it is the only way to put an end to the conflict and achieve security, stability and prosperity for the Middle East".

The Kingdom of Morocco stands ready to coordinate with all partners and to engage in any international efforts that would end the current tragic and grave situation in Gaza.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of New Zealand.

Ms. Schwalger (New Zealand): I thank Brazil for organizing today's debate. I also thank Secretary-General Guterres, Special Coordinator Wennesland and Deputy Special Coordinator Hastings for their briefings.

Even as the Council convenes, the deadly violence and bloodshed in Israel and Palestine continues. By day's end, more civilians will have tragically and needlessly lost their lives, some of them infants and children. It is intolerable to see civilians continue to suffer disproportionately as innocent victims of this conflict. New Zealand condemns Hamas's terrorist attacks on Israel absolutely. We are appalled by their brutality, their targeting of civilians and the taking of hostages, which are clear violations of international law, and we call for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages. We support Israel's right to defend itself, in full compliance with international law, including with regard to actions taken in Gaza. Ultimately though, there is no military solution that will bring about a just and lasting peace for Israelis and Palestinians.

The protection of civilians and delivery of humanitarian assistance are the most urgent priority. New Zealand joins the calls for a humanitarian pause to provide neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian organizations with an opportunity to assist and protect the people in Gaza who desperately need it. When New Zealand last served on the Security Council, in 2015 and 2016, we championed resolution 2286 (2016), which demands greater protection for health care in armed conflict, including hospitals and medical personnel. Health-care facilities should never be used for military purposes or as objects of attack.

We are also deeply concerned about the significant flows of internally displaced persons, whose safety and security must be protected. We call for establishing designated safe areas that are strictly off limits as targets or for military use, as well as for humanitarian corridors that can ensure that vital assistance reaches the places where it is most needed. We expect Israel and Hamas to act in accordance with international humanitarian law, which imposes obligations on all

parties engaged in armed conflict. Israel also has an obligation under international humanitarian law, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention, to provide for the basic needs of civilians in Gaza, including food, water, energy and shelter, and to facilitate humanitarian aid. Those legal obligations cannot be dispensed with in times of conflict. New Zealand urges all parties, including Israel and Egypt, to facilitate access as soon as possible for the delivery of urgent humanitarian assistance to civilians in Gaza through the Rafah border crossing. We need to see a significant increase from recent levels in the volume of aid arriving in Gaza. For its part, New Zealand is supporting humanitarian appeals for populations in Gaza, the West Bank and Israel. We stand ready to increase our support in the coming weeks.

We deeply regret that the Security Council has been unable to adopt a draft resolution and discharge its duties under the Charter of the United Nations. As the Secretary-General has said, we must ensure that we advance all efforts to avoid any regional spillover to the wider Middle East. We welcome all opportunities to urgently de-escalate the hostilities, including initiatives by the United Nations and other countries in the region and beyond. This is not a time for political posturing or for using the conflict to advance any cause except bringing peace and security to Israel, Gaza and the wider region. It is a time for de-escalation.

Finally, New Zealand remains committed to a two-State solution, which envisions an independent State of Palestine living in peace and security alongside the State of Israel. A new political horizon is essential. We call on the international community to take urgent action to advance the Middle East peace process. Without it, the armed conflict may eventually cease, but there will be no winners. We will never be free of the violence, the loss of innocent lives and the hatred, antisemitism and Islamophobia that have erupted in Israel, the occupied Palestinian territories and around the world since 7 October. As the Secretary-General has said, too many lives — and the fate of the entire region — hang in the balance. We cannot afford to fail. We must act now.

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

Mr. Ruidíaz Pérez (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): We appreciate the opportunity to participate in today's open debate and to be able to reaffirm the importance

we attach to this critical matter. We also thank the Secretary-General, the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and the Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for the Occupied Palestinian Territory for their briefings.

I will read an excerpt from our statement and hand in the full version. Chile advocates for a two-State solution and for the right of Israel and Palestine to live in harmony, within safe and recognized international borders, and in full respect for the human rights of all its inhabitants. That solution, however, is very far from being a reality, which has taken a new turn since the terrorist acts perpetrated by Hamas on 7 October and the indiscriminate response of the State of Israel directed at the civilian population living in the Gaza Strip. Chile has unequivocally condemned the actions of Hamas, as well as all acts of terrorism and violence and hostilities against the civilian population. Therefore, we also call for the unconditional release of all hostages held by the terrorist organization, while ensuring their well-being and treatment in accordance with international law. Similarly, Chile views with deep concern the military operation in Gaza. The use of force in the framework of the legitimate defence of a State that has been attacked must be guided by the principles of proportionality, distinction and precaution.

However, in the light of the facts, those principles have not been upheld. Since 7 October, public infrastructure, civilian homes and educational and health centres have been bombed, which has killed hundreds of people, one third of them children. Furthermore, the Israeli blockade of the Strip has prevented the entry of food, water, medical supplies and fuel to generate electricity, all of which are vital to human existence. Together with the order to evacuate the northern area of the Gaza Strip, which constitutes the forced displacement of the population, those actions constitute violations under the provisions of international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

Concerning the Palestinian people, Chile has long taken the position of supporting the right of the Palestinian people to establish a sovereign State, as set out in General Assembly resolution 181 (II), of 1947, and resolution 242 (1967). We urgently call for full and immediate compliance with resolution 2334 (2016), of 23 December 2016, which reaffirms, among other provisions, that the establishment by Israel of settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory,

including East Jerusalem, has no legal validity and constitutes a flagrant violation under international law. Similarly, we have made gradual progress in recognizing Palestine as a political entity. In 1998, we established our country's representative office to the Palestinian National Authority in Ramallah, and, together with other countries in the region, we recognized the State of Palestine in 2011. However, we must acknowledge that the current situation in Gaza has been preceded by a series of condemnations that Chile has referenced in various multilateral forums. In addition to those already mentioned, they include forced evictions, the revocation of residency permits, the arbitrary detention of Palestinians, including children, and the imposition of a complex system of checkpoints.

We are very troubled by the events that are taking place, and it is the moral imperative of humankind, as enshrined in international humanitarian law, to help to ensure the cessation of indiscriminate attacks against the civilian population. In that regard, Chile has voiced and will continue to voice its position clearly and consistently in bilateral and multilateral forums in seeking coordinating mechanisms with other States to create the conditions necessary to reach a cross-cutting agreement to help to find a political solution to the conflict.

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

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): Pakistan thanks the Brazilian presidency for convening this urgent high-level debate of the Security Council. We thank the Secretary-General, the Special Coordinator and the Deputy Special Coordinator for their briefings.

I would like to first convey to Foreign Minister Al-Malki of Palestine the full support and solidarity of the Government and the people of Pakistan for and with our Palestinian brothers and sisters in these tragic and challenging times. Israel's relentless and indiscriminate bombardment of Gaza over the past 17 days has killed more than 5,000 Palestinian children, women and men, and injured another 15,000. An Israeli general has declared that Israel's attacks this time will be "massive and destructive". Pakistan strongly and unequivocally condemns the Israeli air strikes and military action in Gaza, particularly the attacks on schools, residential buildings and even hospitals, such as the Al Ahli Baptist Hospital, where hundreds of sick and injured civilians were killed. Those Israeli attacks on civilians, civilian objects and infrastructure and the blockade of water,

food and fuel, as well as the forced transfer of people from the occupied territory, are flagrant violations of international humanitarian law and amount to war crimes. Those responsible for those atrocity crimes must be held accountable.

Pakistan calls for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire. The continuation of the Israeli campaign in Gaza will lead to further massive civilian casualties and could trigger a wider and more dangerous conflict. We regret that the Security Council has been unable to issue a call for a ceasefire. A heavy responsibility rests on those who contribute to the prolongation of the conflict. We commend the role played by Egypt and United Nations agencies in facilitating the delivery of some humanitarian assistance through the Rafah border crossing, including the relief items provided by Pakistan. But that is not enough. We hope that a sustainable pipeline of life-saving humanitarian assistance, including water, food, fuel and medicines, will be established for the besieged people of Gaza.

The displacement of the Palestinian people of Gaza is another violation of international humanitarian law. The Council must reject Israel's attempts to displace the Gazans within or outside Gaza.

Any attempt to create a false equivalence between Israel, the occupying Power, and the Palestinians, the victims of the occupation, is legally, morally and politically untenable. Pakistan condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. Yet, under international law, the struggle of people living under foreign occupation for self-determination and national liberation is legitimate and cannot be equated with terrorism. It is the suppression of the struggle that is illegal. Throughout history, colonial Powers have portrayed national liberation movements as terrorism. Some in the Council have offered protection to their allies that are oppressing occupied peoples in Palestine and Kashmir. Under the Charter of the United Nations, States have the right to self-defence against attacks on their sovereignty and territorial integrity. Yet a State that is in forcible occupation of a foreign territory cannot invoke the right to self-defence against those whose territory it has illegally occupied.

The perpetuation of the Israeli occupation will not bring peace to the Holy Land. Durable peace will emerge from the internationally agreed two-State solution and

from the creation of a secure, viable, contiguous and sovereign State of Palestine on the basis of the pre-June 1967 borders, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

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

Mr. Chindawongse (Thailand): I thank Brazil for organizing this important open debate and all the briefers for their information. We listened very carefully to the debate today.

Thailand is deeply concerned about the escalation of hostilities and violence in the Middle East caused by the unprecedented developments in Israel and Gaza. We hope that the Security Council will continue its efforts to take action to address this urgent situation, which has had great humanitarian consequences, and towards achieving peace in the Middle East. In the meantime, we look forward to further consideration and action on the issue at the resumed emergency special session of the General Assembly this week.

The heightened hostilities and the scale and scope of the violence have claimed thousands of innocent lives, with many more injured and displaced, including children, women, the elderly and the sick. The massive and escalating use of force has destroyed their livelihoods and communities. And because of the detrimental impact on civilians, we oppose the withholding of access to basic necessities, such as water, food, electricity and fuel, as a weapon of war. We also oppose the targeting of critical civilian infrastructure.

Thailand offers its deepest condolences for everyone who lost their lives and to their bereaved families. Our deepest sympathies are extended to all those who are suffering. We are also victims. Thai citizens have been killed or injured. We are deeply concerned about the safety of Thai nationals, as well as those captured and held hostage. We strongly appeal for their immediate release and safe return. Thailand condemns in the strongest terms all forms of violence and attacks on civilians in conflict situations, including capturing and taking them hostage. Thailand urges all sides to respect and fulfil their obligations under international humanitarian law and to ensure the safety and dignity of civilians in conflict situations. The protection of innocent lives and civilians must be a priority at all times.

As the situation escalates, the most urgent concern is for all civilians who have been affected. Unimpeded access to humanitarian assistance must be ensured. We

appeal to the international community to continue to mobilize humanitarian assistance to civilians in Gaza to ensure that they have access to basic necessities, including safe and clean water, food and medical care. Thailand joins in the call for all sides to take immediate steps to prevent the escalation of violence and implement an immediate ceasefire. We appeal to all sides to seek all avenues to resolve the current situation and work towards long-term peace through diplomacy.

We also urge the Security Council to do its utmost to restore peace and security in the region, in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Thailand will continue to continue to support the United Nations and the international community in any way it can to de-escalate the situation. We reaffirm our support for genuine dialogue, with a view to finding a mutually agreed peaceful solution to the issue, in accordance with the two-State solution, by which the States of Israel and Palestine live side by side in peace and security, within secure and recognized borders, consistent with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

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

Ms. Al-Thani (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's important meeting. We welcome the presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Brazil at our meeting earlier today. We thank the Secretary-General and the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and his Deputy Coordinator for their briefings.

We align ourselves with the statement made by the representative of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

It is with extreme concern that the State of Qatar has been following the dangerous developments in the Gaza Strip. We reiterate our call on all parties to de-escalate and implement a comprehensive ceasefire at all fronts. We call for the immediate release of all hostages, in particular civilians, the delivery of urgent aid to the Gaza Strip and the opening of safe corridors for the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

The State of Qatar reaffirms its condemnation of all forms of attacks on civilians, in particular women and children. We are categorically opposed to the comprehensive blockade imposed by Israel, the occupying Power, on the Gaza Strip. The blockade has

deprived 2.3 million people, half of them children, of their basic necessities, including water, food, medicines and electricity, as Israeli bombardment has claimed the lives of more than 5,000 Gazans, including more than 1,000 women and 2,000 innocent children. Exploiting the ongoing conflict is unacceptable. Israel uses the conflict as a pretext to adopt a policy of collective punishment against the brotherly people of Palestine, including forced displacement and forcing civilians to displace or move to neighbouring countries. That is a grave violation of international law.

The State of Qatar reaffirms that increased Israeli attacks on the Gaza Strip and civilian targets, including hospitals, schools and homes, are a dangerous escalation of the situation, which will have grave effects on regional security and stability. That is also a serious violation of international law and relevant Security Council resolutions.

On several occasions in recent months, the State of Qatar has warned about the hardening of Israel's policies, including rejected attempts to change the historical and religious status quo of the holy sites, repeated incursions into the Al-Aqsa Mosque, settlement policies, the annexation of land, the destruction of Palestinian homes, as well as arbitrary measures against Palestinian prisoners. The State of Qatar reiterates that it is important for States to cooperate in an attempt to curb the violence and prevent the risk of a spillover of violence, whose price will be paid by the peoples of the region.

Over the past two weeks, the State of Qatar has engaged in tireless diplomatic efforts at the highest level with a number of senior leaders and officials in the region and with influential capitals and other stakeholders at the international and regional levels. It has become well known that the State of Qatar truly believes in engaging in mediation and dialogue towards the peaceful resolution of conflicts. Therefore, we keep open the channels of communication with all parties, which has led to several successes as a result of Qatari mediation efforts. Thanks to mediation by the State of Qatar, a number of hostages have been released from the Gaza Strip in recent days. We will continue our intense efforts with brotherly and friendly States and international partners to that end.

The State of Qatar strongly rejects the remarks made by the representative of Israel earlier today. The Israeli representative spoke about the politicization of

humanitarian support provided by the State of Qatar to civilians in Gaza. Israel presented a false image of the mediation efforts by the State of Qatar, which were welcomed by all brotherly and friendly countries, the United Nations and international partners. We were also commended many times during this meeting for the mediation efforts of the State of Qatar and its role in that regard. Support provided by the State of Qatar to civilians in Gaza is humanitarian and development in nature. It is provided through United Nations channels and is based on our humanitarian and moral obligation to the brotherly Palestinian people. It also responds to appeals from international partners calling on the State of Qatar to play a leading role to achieve stability in the interest of Gaza and countries of the region. We reaffirm that the State of Qatar will continue its humanitarian efforts to protect the lives of all people in this catastrophic crisis in the Gaza Strip.

The State of Qatar reiterates the need to facilitate the delivery of immediate, safe and unhindered humanitarian assistance to all those who need it. The role of the United Nations and that of international organizations should be strengthened in order to address the urgent humanitarian situation. We also appreciate the pivotal role played by the Arab Republic of Egypt. We as well commend the efforts of the Secretary-General and of other United Nations agencies, including the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

In that regard, the State of Qatar has ensured the provision of emergency assistance by sending many aeroplanes carrying humanitarian assistance to the Al-Arish airport in recent days, to be transported to Gaza. That is in addition to the ongoing humanitarian assistance that the State of Qatar is providing to improve the poor living conditions in the Gaza Strip as a result of the blockade that has now been in place for more than 16 years. Our assistance includes building homes, health facilities and infrastructure, such as roads, and fuel for generating electricity, as well as financial support to UNRWA in an attempt not to dash hopes for peace, security and stability.

Regrettably, the Security Council has not been able to adopt a draft resolution by consensus to put an end to this crisis. In that regard, we continue to hope that the Council will uphold its responsibility under the Charter to maintain international peace and security.

During the last period, the Council listened to many voices stressing that partial solutions and the imposition of *fait accompli* render the current situation unsustainable and result in an ongoing cycle of violence. The new cycle of violence that we are witnessing makes us sure that the only guarantee for achieving sustainable peace in the region is reaching a just and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian question, in accordance with the Arab Peace Initiative and the two-State solution. That ensures the establishment of an independent State of Palestine on the basis of the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and the Palestinian people's enjoyment of their inalienable rights. To that end, tangible measures and earnest efforts will be required to resolve that central issue, which is vital for peace in the Middle East.

In conclusion, the State of Qatar believes that peace remains possible, even in the bleakest and most dangerous conditions. We call upon the parties concerned and the international community to transform the terrible tragedy we are witnessing into an incentive to intensify efforts and reach a comprehensive, just and lasting solution.

The President: There are still 40 speakers inscribed on the list. I would like to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than four minutes in order to enable the Security Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Flashing lights on the collars of the microphone will prompt all speakers to bring their remarks to a close after four minutes.

I now give the floor to Mr. Niang.

Mr. Niang: The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People thanks Brazil for its presidency of the Security Council this month and expresses appreciation for the briefing by Mr. Tor Wennesland, the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process. The Committee also commends Secretary-General António Guterres for his tireless efforts to address the crisis we are facing.

Over the years, we have repeatedly warned that the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, was unsustainable. Without a political horizon, and in a context of relentless human rights violations, the deterioration of the situation and escalation become inevitable. Yet the Security Council remains unable to bring a halt to the bloodshed and to protect civilian lives — as regrettably witnessed with the exercise of the veto last week (see S/PV.9442).

On 7 October, I issued a statement condemning the killing and wounding of hundreds of civilians in Israel. We also condemned the taking of hostages. We welcome the recent release of four captives and thank Qatar and Egypt for their efforts to that end. I further call for the release of all captives and all political prisoners. On 17 October, the Bureau of the Committee issued a statement that, *inter alia*, condemned the killing and wounding of thousands of civilians and the targeting and widespread destruction of civilian infrastructure in the Gaza Strip.

Israel, the occupying Power, bears responsibility for protecting the civilian population and for the unfolding humanitarian disaster. Everyone repeatedly warned about the risks of explosion, as Israel's 16-year-old illegal blockade on Gaza has transformed the Strip into an open-air prison and impoverished the population. We strongly condemn Israel's reprisal air strikes and bombardment of the densely populated Gaza Strip, in which, as of 23 October, more than 5,087 Palestinians, including women and over 2,055 children, have been killed, and more than 15,000 Palestinians have been injured. Thousands of others are said to remain under the rubble of their destroyed homes.

Particularly abhorrent war crimes are attacks on medical facilities, such as the Al Ahli Anglican Hospital in the Gaza Strip, where an air strike killed some 500 people, including children, women, men and medical personnel; or places of worship sheltering civilians, such as the attack on the Greek Orthodox Church of Saint Porphyrius, which killed and wounded dozens. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs estimates that more than 1.4 million Palestinians in Gaza have been displaced.

The Committee further condemns Israel's military orders for Palestinians in northern Gaza to evacuate to the south of the Strip, because there is nowhere safe to go in Gaza. The forced transfer of people is a grave breach of international law. We second the call by the Secretary-General and United Nations agencies for Israel to rescind the evacuation order. We cannot stand by and watch another Nakba being inflicted on the Palestinian people.

Wars have rules, which the Organization and the Council must work for, uphold and ensure compliance with — always. Collective punishment, the denial of humanitarian assistance and military attacks on homes, hospitals, places of worship, schools and facilities where

civilians seek refuge are violations of international humanitarian law. We call for an immediate ceasefire. Israel must immediately lift its total siege of Gaza and allow access to food, water, electricity and medical and other life-saving supplies, as their deliberate denial is tantamount to collective punishment of the 2.3 million Palestinians living in Gaza, half of whom are children. We commend Egypt for facilitating the entry of crucial humanitarian aid into Gaza through the Rafah crossing and urge Israel to allow an unimpeded flow of assistance. Similarly, we praise Egypt's convening of the Cairo international summit for peace in the Middle East on 21 October. We need more dialogue — not less.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has reported losing 35 staff members, who were killed by Israel's bombings. Its facilities are sheltering more than 600,000 internally displaced persons, while its life-saving supplies are dwindling. The Agency has called for \$104 million in emergency support. We call on all Member States to provide urgent financial assistance to UNRWA and to continue strongly supporting its indispensable mission.

We regret that the situation in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is also deteriorating rapidly, with 91 Palestinians, including more than 20 children, killed since 7 October by Israeli occupying forces and settlers.

The Committee welcomes the decision by the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel to collect evidence of war crimes committed by all sides since 7 October 2023. It also joins the call for the International Criminal Court to launch a fact-finding mission to investigate violations of international humanitarian law. There must be accountability for all human rights violations and international law breaches perpetrated in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem.

The current crisis has once again proven the centrality of the Palestinian question to the Middle East and global stability. While we are absorbed by the immediate need to secure a ceasefire and to provide desperately needed humanitarian assistance, we must emphasize that there is no military solution to this conflict. We must focus on our long-standing objectives, namely, the end of the Israeli occupation and the fulfilment of the inalienable rights of the

Palestinian people, including to self-determination and independence. Those are the pillars of a just and lasting peace.

I appeal to the Security Council and to all Member States to overcome divisions and to act now to stop the bloodshed and protect the Palestinian people. We reiterate our call for an immediate ceasefire and for the delivery of urgent and unimpeded humanitarian assistance to all those in need.

Lastly, the Committee reiterates its appeals for serious international efforts leading to the sovereignty and independence of the State of Palestine on the basis of the 1967 lines, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions, and providing a just solution to the plight of Palestine refugees. That — and not bloodshed — is the only path to a just and lasting resolution of the question of Palestine and to peace in the Middle East.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Guatemala.

Ms. Rodríguez Mancia (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are facing a moment of deep sadness and pain for humankind. We offer our heartfelt condolences for the many victims. We sympathize with their families, and we demand the release of the hostages, including babies, children, women and the elderly. The Council cannot forget that the crisis we are currently facing was triggered by the atrocious terrorist attacks of the Hamas group on 7 October, which have deeply affected both Israelis and Palestinians and people of other nationalities, causing death, damage, suffering and destruction, as well as a humanitarian situation of enormous proportions.

Guatemala reiterates its condemnation in the strongest terms of the terrorist attacks committed by Hamas against the State of Israel and its civilian population. Hamas confuses the Palestinian cause with the justification for terrorism, and that is a serious moral and strategic error for the Palestinian cause and the efforts that have been carried out at the international level to achieve peace in the territory.

We also condemn the attacks by the Hizbullah terrorist group on Israel, which violate resolution 1701 (2006), establishing the Blue Line, and the border between Lebanon and Israel and have claimed the lives of both Israeli and Palestinian civilians.

Now more than ever, we must remember the words of Golda Meir, if the pro-Palestinian groups put down their weapons today, there would be no more violence, but if the Israelis put down their weapons today, there would be no State of Israel. The Council's failure to recognize the right of the State of Israel to self-preservation and to defend its people does not contribute to the pursuit of dialogue, peace and security in the region or in the world and puts all of humankind at risk.

The Council must act to reduce polarization and discourage hate speech and actions, and the only way to do so is to unite against terrorism, clearly and unequivocally condemning the actions of Hamas and other terrorist organizations with violent and extremist ideologies and demanding that they cease their practices of placing arsenals and terrorist infrastructure in the basements of hospitals, schools and religious centres which threatens the protection of civilians and uses them as human shields.

In view of the catastrophic situation that has arisen, we are pleased to know that humanitarian aid is already arriving, and we urge those involved to accelerate the pauses, but, at the same time, to take care and verify that they are not misused by terrorist groups to commit new acts that affect civilians, thereby worsening the already disastrous situation.

In order for the Security Council to effectively exercise its responsibility to prevent and resolve conflicts that affect international peace and security, it must adopt balanced resolutions that take into account all the elements that arise in a situation, including, in this case, the legitimate right to self-defence of the State of Israel, protecting the Israeli people in their self-preservation.

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

Mr. Rae (Canada): The day 7 October 2023 will be forever emblazoned on our hearts. Young women and men, nursing babies, mothers, fathers and grandparents were all killed with a cruelty that knew no limits. They were killed for one reason — because they were Jews. Acts of unspeakable terror — yet speak of it we must — were committed, and the victims were slaughtered in their innocence for one reason — because they were Jews. And in too many places those deaths were not condemned, even today, even in this Chamber. In some, they were celebrated; in too many, they were denied. No context, no false equivalence, can possibly justify this terrible atrocity.

We thank you, Mr. President, for the way Brazil's presidency of the Council has given the terrorist atrocity by Hamas on 7 October and its tragic impact on human life and dignity, as well as the peace and security in the region, the attention that those issues so richly deserve.

We must stand united in recognizing the horror of the massacres of 7 October, and yes, in full support of peace for both Israelis and Palestinians, who deserve to live in security with dignity and without fear.

Canada is unequivocal in its support for Israel's right to defend itself. No State, no country represented in this Chamber could possibly fail to respond to the nature of the attack that was suffered on that day. Not one of us, in all honesty, can look in the mirror and say our Governments would not respond.

All has to be done in accordance with international law. But Israel has another right which all of us have as well — the right to mourn, to comfort the afflicted and to honour each of the 1,400 killed, as do the Palestinians and all those who are losing loved ones in this terrible conflict.

As has been said by others, even wars have rules. Counter-terrorism measures must comply with all obligations under international law. The duty to protect civilians applies to each and every one of us.

We continue to demand that Hamas release all hostages. The taking and holding of hostages is an ongoing war crime. It must stop and it can stop, today.

We would like to recognize the leadership that has been demonstrated by so many partners in seeking to reduce the fallout and civilian loss of life. That includes tireless diplomacy by our friends in the United States, an important regional gathering by Egypt, critical negotiations led by Qatar and the active engagement of so many Ministers today, as invited by Brazil as President. In all these settings, we have shared our grave concerns about the humanitarian situation in Gaza, which continues to deteriorate. We welcome the agreements that have been reached between Israel and Egypt to enable the start of crossings into Gaza, but in order to prevent a deeper catastrophe for Palestinian civilians in Gaza, we must all do more.

Earlier today, my Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, stated that Canada supports humanitarian pauses in order to protect civilians, to get more humanitarian assistance in and to get foreign nationals out of Gaza. Thus far, Canada has committed \$60 million in

humanitarian assistance. It will go to trusted partners, including United Nations agencies, to address the urgent needs of the most vulnerable civilians in this crisis.

(spoke in French)

It is essential that this conflict does not escalate or spread to neighbouring regions. Iran's rhetoric in support of Hamas, the statements of the terrorist group Hizbullah and the launching of rockets by actors in Lebanon and Yemen are incendiary and deeply troubling. We are seriously concerned by the ongoing actions of Iran and groups recognized as terrorists by the Council to destabilize peace and security in the Middle East.

The atrocities of 7 October reminded the world once again that antisemitism is not a relic of the past, but a daily reality experienced by too many Jewish communities around the world.

We note that last week Canada appointed the former Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, Deborah Lyons, as our new Special Envoy on Preserving Holocaust Remembrance and Combatting Antisemitism. She is working together with Amira Elghawaby, Canada's Special Representative on Combating Islamophobia, to respond to the growing dangers of hatred in all its forms. Canada firmly supports the Israeli and Palestinian peoples in their right to live in peace, security and dignity and without fear, and we remain more than ever committed to a two-State solution. There can be no peace in the Middle East without a viable political horizon to realize that vision.

(spoke in English)

Canada does not believe for a moment that Hamas represents the Palestinian people. Let me say this to Palestinians, Israelis, Jews, Christians, Muslims and the followers of all faiths. Let those who are united in suffering be joined together in the search for peace. Let me paraphrase a few lines from a famous soliloquy by Shakespeare. Israelis and Palestinians all have hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions. They are fed with the same food. They are hurt with the same weapons. They are subject to the same diseases. They are healed by the same means. They are warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer, as all of us are. They mourn when their children and loved ones die. They aspire to freedom, and they seek security. They share trauma and pain and sadness. May they all find

truth, justice and reconciliation. On this day — United Nations Day — let us seek together to finally end the scourge of war between Israel and the State of Palestine.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Iravani (Islamic Republic of Iran): I thank Brazil for convening today's open debate. The topic on the agenda is highly significant, and the timing of the meeting is also exceptionally sensitive. We are witnessing appalling, brutal massacres and atrocities and the collective punishment of the Palestinian population in Gaza, in clear violation of international humanitarian law. The terrorist attacks on the Al Ahli Arab Hospital, resulting in the killing of more than 500 innocent civilians, including women and children, can only be described as a heinous war crime.

As the Secretary-General underlined in today's briefing, the Palestinian anti-occupation effort of 7 October did not occur in a vacuum. Palestinians have suffered in the painful history of occupation, aggression, discrimination and the imposition of apartheid policies by the Israeli regime for decades. Despite the overwhelming support of the vast majority of Member States, as evidenced by numerous General Assembly resolutions affirming the Palestinian nation's right to self-determination, the Security Council has faced significant obstacles in taking decisive action. The primary impediment to that action has been the unwavering support of the United States, which has exercised its right of the veto on more than 40 draft resolutions in the Council. The Council's inability to act has unfortunately emboldened the Israeli occupying regime, resulting in the perpetration of even more egregious crimes.

The inalienable rights of Palestinians, including the right to self-determination and the right of return, have continued to be denied and gravely violated by the occupying Israeli regime. The international community, together with the Security Council, bears both moral and legal obligations that demand immediate action. They should intensify their commitment by providing comprehensive protection for Palestinians, which includes halting Israel's military aggression, establishing an immediate ceasefire, ensuring unimpeded humanitarian access, reopening the Rafah border crossing and facilitating the swift delivery of essential supplies to Gaza.

Today the United States Secretary of State once again attempted, wrongly, to blame Iran. Iran categorically rejects his groundless allegations. Our commitment to peace and stability in the region remains unwavering. Iran aligns itself with the international community in endorsing the call for an immediate ceasefire and an end to Israel's relentless military aggression, as well as the vital importance of halting the forced displacement of more than 1 million people from Gaza. The United States' unwavering support for occupation and aggression has rendered it an active part of the problem. It has further exacerbated the conflict by overtly aligning itself with the aggressor at the expense of the innocent Palestinian population. Its rapid provision of military and logistical support to the oppressive occupying regime has therefore made the United States complicit in the brutal massacre of innocent Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

It is regrettable that today in this Chamber, the United States, Canada and certain other Western States have attempted to shift the blame from the wrongdoer to the victim. They equate the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and self-defence with terrorism, while attempting to claim an unjust right to self-defence for the occupying regime, Israel. International law is clear on the matter. There is no provision for an occupying regime to invoke the right to self-defence under Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations. But international law and the Charter do indeed recognize the legitimate right to self-determination, as well as to self-defence, of the Palestinian people, including members of resistance groups such as Hamas. Iran continues to fully support the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people in their struggle against Israel's occupation and military aggression. We are committed to standing with Palestinian aspirations until the occupation has ended.

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

Mr. Kyslytsya (Ukraine): I recognize the representative of Putin's regime in the permanent seat of the Soviet Union. He represents the aggressor that is denying the right of my country to exist, terrorizing and killing our people, kidnapping children, raping women and taking hostages. I do not think that I should continue with the list of those crimes after they have been mentioned for hours in this Chamber in the overwhelming majority of statements condemning terrorism. I would like to continue, however, by

thanking the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Tor Wennesland, and the Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Lynn Hastings for their briefings.

It has been 18 days since the hostilities in the Middle East provoked by Hamas's brutal and indiscriminate terrorist attacks across Israel began. In that regard, we firmly support Israel in its right to defend itself in accordance with Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations. There can be no justification for any type of terror in the modern world, and Ukraine reaffirms its strong condemnation of the Hamas attacks, which have killed and wounded several thousand people, including citizens of Ukraine. We also condemn the practice of hostage-taking — a practice that Ukraine has also suffered from in its liberation war against Russia — and demand the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages. That terror is not only targeting human lives today but also aims to undermine the prospects for a peaceful future for two peoples, as there can be no place for structures such as Hamas in such a future. That is why Hamas has plunged the region into hostilities. That is why its militants embed themselves in the civilian population and use civilians as human shields. We strongly condemn that shameful practice.

Ukrainians feel the pain of war deeply. We convey our condolences to the families of victims and wish those injured at Al-Ahli Hospital a speedy recovery. It is now critically important to avoid further increases in the number of civilian casualties, both in Israel and in Palestine. We urge the parties to strictly abide by the rules of warfare and respect the norms of international humanitarian law. Every possible precaution must be taken to minimize harm to civilians. Ukraine is convinced that humanitarian support and access must be maintained into Gaza to enable essential aid, water, food and medicines to reach civilians. Moreover, all hostages must be released immediately.

It is also clear that we must avoid the further escalation of any conflict in the region. The Middle East peace process remains the basis of any efforts aimed at restoring regional stability and security. Ukraine has consistently supported the implementation of the principle of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security, and advocates the settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict through political and diplomatic means.

We are confident that a just, comprehensive and sustainable peace in the Middle East can be realized within the framework of the unconditional implementation by the parties of the relevant Security Council resolutions and other international agreements.

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

Mr. Gertze (Namibia): I thank you, Mr. President, for giving me the opportunity to address this agenda item.

Namibia aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Senegal in his capacity as Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, on which Namibia serves as a Vice-Chair.

My delegation is grateful for the comprehensive briefings provided by the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Mr. Tor Wennesland, and his Deputy, Ms. Lynn Hastings.

For the past 17 days, the world has watched in horror as the unprecedented escalation of violence, brutality, indiscriminate killing and wanton destruction of livelihoods and property reached catastrophic levels in the conflict in the Middle East. That has resulted in carnage and a dire humanitarian situation that deteriorates by the hour. Namibia condemns the violence and brutal loss of life and extends its condolences to the loved ones, relatives and friends of all who have lost their lives in those horrific conditions.

As the entire world, in particular the relatives of victims on both sides of the carnage, look to the United Nations, especially the Security Council, it is in the hope that it will fulfil the mission for which it was established nearly 80 years ago: to take responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. The failure of the Security Council to act in the current grave circumstances is not only disappointing but also affirms in its own way that there are significant inconsistencies in our application of the Charter of the United Nations. Equally, our commitment to international law, human rights and international human rights law has become increasingly perceptive and is applied selectively, given that, despite the nearly 80-year-long conflict between Palestine and Israel, there is still a refusal to acknowledge the prolonged occupation, settlement expansion and annexation as the root cause of the current crisis.

While we have heard arguments about the legitimacy of Israeli security concerns, those can be juxtaposed with the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. United Nations reports give credence to the fact that there is a tendency to use policies that justify territorial expansion and security concerns as a pretext to justify the collective punishment of an entire population. The use of indiscriminate and disproportionate force against innocent civilians, including children, should be where we draw the line. Anything short of that is a tacit affirmation that might is right.

The alarming escalation in tension and violence over several decades — specifically in 2023 — demonstrates the urgent need to address the root causes of the conflict without confining ourselves to 7 October as a reference point, as the conflict predates that fateful day. Israel continues to employ policies and practices that are contrary to relevant Security Council resolutions, international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

As immediate courses of action, Namibia calls for an immediate cessation of the brutal conflict. Namibia condemns the abhorrent attacks on civilians, and strongly believes that the state of siege and the military onslaught with the stated objective to obliterate lives in the Gaza Strip amounts to a genocide, in violation of the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols. The international community cannot afford to be indifferent in the face of the human catastrophe that is unfolding.

The attempts to enforce the mass displacement of Palestinians from the Gaza Strip are deplorable and must be condemned with the contempt they deserve. Those attempts to forcibly transfer Palestinians out of Gaza will only create an even bigger humanitarian crisis. In addition, it is imperative that humanitarian access be provided to enable the delivery of immediate humanitarian assistance commensurate to the needs of civilians in Gaza.

We advocate for conditions to be created for mediation and dialogue. Our own experience has taught us the value of multipronged approaches to pursuing liberation. While appreciating the diplomatic efforts being advanced by players from the region and beyond, we wish to caution that war starts where diplomacy fails. A ceasefire is necessary to create conducive conditions for and to build trust to support the safe release of hostages and reinvigorate the peace process.

Finally, Namibia reaffirms its resolute support for the legitimate struggle of the Palestinian people against the Israeli occupation and the exercise of the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and independence, with East Jerusalem as their capital, through political, diplomatic, peaceful and non-violent means. It is only through legally established statehood that social normalcy, legal equality, economic opportunity and sustainable development can be realized. We therefore call for the urgent and unconditional implementation of long-standing resolutions and decisions in support of a two-State solution as the only viable plan by which both the peoples of Palestine and Israel can live side by side in peace and security. To have endured 75 years of oppression, suffering, instability, insecurity and occupation is inhumane. That must end — now is the time.

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

Mr. Rakhmetullin (Kazakhstan): We fully endorse the utmost concerns of the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, and the entire international community about the further aggravation of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which has a shockingly high death toll and no ceasefire in sight. Apart from the unending tragedy for the peoples of Israel and Palestine, the conflict escalates further tensions at all levels that could lead to the destabilization of the entire region and beyond.

Kazakhstan condemns the attacks by Hamas against civilians in Israel and the capture of hostages, including foreigners. We support the call of the Secretary-General for the immediate and unconditional release of hostages and for unimpeded access to humanitarian aid to be ensured. As the President of Kazakhstan, Mr. Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, stated at the summit of the Commonwealth of Independent States held in Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic, on 13 October: “Challenges to which solutions have not been found for decades cannot be resolved by terrorist actions. There is no justification.”

While fully recognizing the legitimate rights of Tel Aviv with regard to security and defence, we call on Israel to refrain from the disproportionate use of force, which has led to numerous victims among the civilian population of the Gaza Strip and the destruction of civil infrastructure, levelling it to the ground. In

this situation, it is crucial to comply with the norms of international law and implement the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, which secure the legal rights of the Palestinian people. Violence leads to counter-violence, and will inevitably have tragic consequences for the two States, the Middle East and the entire world.

Kazakhstan would like to express its solidarity with those who have appealed to Israel to revoke the time frame it has fixed for the evacuation of residents from the northern Gaza Strip and to ensure the protection of civilians, who should not become hostages to the conflict and victims of collective punishment. In that regard, Kazakhstan calls on all the parties to work for an immediate ceasefire and to focus their efforts on achieving a peaceful settlement, based on ensuring stability and security for all the residents of the region and in accordance with the concept of a two-State solution, which is the only viable option for a durable peace. It should be reached through dialogue and in full compliance with the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant resolutions of the Council.

In view of all of this, Kazakhstan calls for a revival of dialogue among all sides of the conflict, in addition to new measures for improving the humanitarian situation of the population of Gaza, with a view to building confidence and reducing further threats. We also reiterate the urgency of ensuring support for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East in its critical efforts to mitigate the deteriorating situation in Gaza and promote long-term stability and development in the area.

In conclusion, Kazakhstan stands ready to join every collective mediation effort, especially by calling on both Israel and Palestinian leaders to demonstrate political goodwill so that both sides can live in peace, security, progress and prosperity, the long-cherished goals of both nations and of all of us.

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

Mr. Muhamad (Malaysia): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important open debate. My thanks also go to the briefers for their updates.

Malaysia aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, and the statement to be delivered by the representative of Mauritania on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

We express our deepest condolences to the families of those who have died in the ongoing hostilities, including United Nations personnel. We commend the courage and commitment of the staff of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and other humanitarian workers who continue to serve in Gaza.

Gaza has been described as the world's largest open-air prison. But while the people of Gaza have indeed endured much hardship, the scale of the current Israeli onslaught has shocked us all. The ongoing continued pummelling of Gaza has created a humanitarian catastrophe of indescribable magnitude. And it will get worse. It will get worse if the Security Council continues to be paralysed and if it continues to be an arena for one-upmanship, blame games and finger-pointing. Since the assault on Gaza began, more than 5,000 innocent civilians have been killed, including more than 2,000 children. How many more innocent civilians have to die? How many more children have to be orphaned, killed or maimed before the Council decides that enough is enough?

The Council must act urgently and decisively. The killings of innocent civilians must stop. We must ensure that civilians and civilian infrastructure are being protected in accordance with all the applicable international laws. Malaysia joins others in demanding for an immediate ceasefire. That is absolutely vital if we are to prevent further loss of life and ensure that the necessary humanitarian work is carried out. We also call for unhindered and unfettered humanitarian access so that aid can reach everyone in need anywhere in Gaza. It is important for that to include permitting fuel to be brought into Gaza, since it is crucial for keeping hospitals and ambulances running, ensuring a clean water supply and cooking food. Malaysia also opposes the forced displacement of the Gazan population. It is against international law. The reality is that there is no safe place in Gaza at the moment.

The horrors of the war have fuelled anger among people everywhere. Tensions are increasing in the West Bank, which has already recorded its highest-ever number of casualties in one year. The dangerous ramifications of the conflict, if it continues to escalate, cannot be overstated. The options before the Council are stark. It can act now and save lives, or continue to dither and let more innocent people be killed. Malaysia therefore reiterates its call for the Council to take united, effective and urgent action for the sake of

humanity. A failure to act will further erode the already dwindling trust and confidence in multilateralism and will only confirm the hypocrisy, double standards and unequal treatment that we have seen. We cannot afford that, especially when we are already struggling to build solidarity to tackle climate change and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

The vicious cycle of violence must end. More than half of the population of Gaza are children and young people. They deserve hope for their future, not gloom and despair. Malaysia remains steadfast in its belief that lasting peace can be achieved only through the establishment of a free and independent State of Palestine in accordance with a two-State solution, based on the pre-1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Sierra Leone.

Mr. Sowa (Sierra Leone): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this open debate. I also thank the briefers for their contributions earlier today.

The current situation in the Middle East and the response over the past weeks are an indication that the Security Council needs to be constructive, deliberate and sincere in its approach to its work and actions. The world is counting on the Council, which must not renege on the fulfilment of its mandate.

Sierra Leone unequivocally condemns in the strongest terms Hamas's indefensible heinous attack on Israeli civilians on 7 October. We condemn equally strongly Hamas's taking of hostages, and we call for their immediate and unconditional release. We have noted with grave concern the escalation of violence since the attacks of 7 October, particularly Israel's response. While noting the right to self-defence as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, a right available to all States, we are of the firm view that any response must be in line with international law, in particular international humanitarian law, human rights and other relevant legal norms. We therefore unequivocally condemn attacks on civilians and civilian objects. In that regard, we also condemn in the strongest terms the heinous attack on the Al Ahli Baptist Hospital in the Gaza Strip, which is totally unacceptable. We support the call for an investigation into the matter. In addition to urging for timely investigations, Sierra Leone calls for accountability mechanisms to be fully engaged in preserving any evidence of violations of

international law in order to ensure accountability. We deeply sympathize with the families of the victims of the regrettable recent escalation of violence and the ongoing occupation. While we can offer only our deepest sympathies at this stage, the Security Council itself can and must act.

While we welcome the diplomatic engagements that have led to the limited flow of humanitarian aid into Gaza, Sierra Leone is gravely concerned about the ever-deteriorating humanitarian situation, coupled with the simultaneous escalation of the violence. The deteriorating humanitarian situation and the inability of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East to provide adequate humanitarian assistance to civilians in Gaza owing to the indiscriminate bombardments, requires a humanitarian ceasefire and the establishment of corridors for the delivery of humanitarian aid to civilians. The humanitarian ceasefire must ensure full, speedy, safe and unimpeded humanitarian access for United Nations humanitarian agencies and their implementing partners. Sierra Leone joins the strong call for the unrestricted provision to civilians of adequate essential goods and services, including electricity, water, fuel, food and medical supplies. That is in strict compliance with international humanitarian law, in order to ensure the survival of civilians.

We note with concern the danger of a spillover of the current crisis in the Middle East region. If consolidated action is not taken, a spillover will compound the existing fragile situation in the region. Regrettably, the region is marked by mass displacement and an unimaginable humanitarian crisis, insecurity and loss of civilian lives. With this recent escalation, we are fully convinced that it is only genuine dialogue and negotiations based on the two-State solution that will guarantee lasting peace between Israel and Palestine.

In conclusion, Sierra Leone calls for concerted efforts to explore diplomatic and political avenues geared towards finding a peaceful, just and lasting solution to this conflict.

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

Mr. Peñaranda (Philippines): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's open debate. We highly appreciate the insights shared by the briefers.

The Philippines notes with grave concern the recent escalation of hostilities in the Middle East. We condemn the killings, terrorist attacks and other acts of violence by Hamas that took place in Israel on 7 October and, in that regard, acknowledge the right of Israel to self-defence, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. We mourn the loss of innocent lives and extend our sympathies to all affected civilians in Israel and the Palestinian territories. We deeply regret the violations of international humanitarian law, which have imperilled the safety of civilian populations.

The ongoing conflict, profoundly rooted in decades of tensions, grievances and complexities, deeply concerns us, with its broad and profound impact on countless innocent civilians, including Filipino nationals and their families. Joining the call of the international community, the Philippines strongly urges the swift release of all hostages. We call for the end of the taking and detainment of individuals, particularly women and children. We reiterate our plea to the international community to come together and provide essential humanitarian aid and support to the affected. More importantly, we urge all concerned to immediately put in place urgent solutions that would prevent the conflict from further escalating, spreading and protracting.

The Philippines supports the efforts of the United Nations to deliver urgent humanitarian assistance and essential supplies to Palestinian civilians caught in the midst of the conflict in the Gaza Strip. We commend the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and other United Nations agencies for their efforts and sacrifice in these challenging times. The Philippines lends its full support to calls for ensuring the safety of civilians seeking refuge in UNRWA premises across Gaza.

We welcome the opening of a humanitarian corridor with Egypt. It is important that the United Nations humanitarian system be supported and enabled to respond to the scale of the needs of the affected populations in a predictable and sustainable manner. We are also hopeful for a solution to be reached in the soonest possible time in order for the Rafah crossing to start receiving foreign nationals, including Filipinos still in Gaza.

We also continue to support United Nations peacekeeping missions in the region. We believe that a multilateral approach is crucial in addressing this crisis and preventing further escalation.

The Philippines urges the Security Council to endorse and support coordinated efforts with United Nations entities for the safe evacuation and protection of migrants in conflict zones. We earnestly appeal to all parties involved to cooperate in safeguarding their security. With approximately 30,000 Filipino nationals in Israel and a further 130 in Gaza, their safety and well-being remain paramount to us.

Reaffirming our position, the Philippines firmly supports a two-State solution, consistently aligned with past international agreements and relevant United Nations resolutions. Both Israelis and Palestinians deserve a future where their rights, aspirations and security are recognized and upheld.

This enduring Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains a pivotal determinant for the peace and stability of the region. A lasting resolution can be achieved only through comprehensive dialogues and negotiations anchored firmly in international law. The Philippines ardently urges all parties to elevate dialogue as the primary tool for a peaceful and lasting resolution.

The Philippines underscores the urgency of peace and stability in the region. The Security Council, through prompt action, has the crucial task to bridge divides and champion the path to peace. Lives are being lost. We must persevere to make diplomacy prevail. Now is the time for decisive and unified action.

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

Mr. Albanai (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, and congratulate your friendly country on the assumption of the presidency of the Security Council this month. I wish you every success in leading the work of the Council towards promoting international law, pursuant to the principles and values enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, amid the grave circumstances that we have witnessed during the past few days.

Today we meet amid tragic developments resulting in the suffering of the brotherly Palestinian people. Those developments have serious implications for security and stability in the region and, in fact, the entire

world. What we are witnessing today in the form of a serious escalation of military operations carried out by the Israeli occupying authorities against our Palestinian brothers in the Gaza Strip, in addition to the collective punishment they are suffering through the targeting of unarmed civilians by continued air strikes, leading to thousands of innocent victims, including children, women and men, as well as the continued targeting of basic services and the cutting off of electricity, water, food, fuel and the calls for the forced displacement of the Gaza Strip's residents — all of these are not acceptable to any religion, law or human nature.

The current events do not require regular statements that we hear time and time again. I quote Ali ibn Abi Talib, peace be upon him, that a friend is one who is honest with you, not one who believes you. Today I address a number of my friends — the Ambassadors of the member States of the Security Council, both permanent and elected. I ask them to listen to me as someone who brings them advice, someone who does not want from his words anything but uniting behind the equal application of law, without exceptions, selectivity or double standards.

I tell my friends and the Council that they have failed to take a clear and honest position about the continued violations faced by the unarmed Palestinian civilians. The Council was the safe refuge for small States and peace-loving States. I speak from personal experience. The Council was the United Nations organ that restored legitimacy and the rule of law to a State that is small in size, but big in contributions — the State of Kuwait — when we were invaded in 1990.

What is the message that the Council is sending today? What are the principles that the Council is enshrining in the minds of future generations? Have we reached a stage where geopolitical issues have become trade-offs to limit humanitarian suffering? Have we reached such an ugly stage in the history of this Organization that we no longer care that some States are above the law, and that there are different degrees of civilians according to nationality? Do not empty the Council of its substance, do not deviate its path and do not undermine its role. Keep your trust and responsibility to the fullest extent. That is the Council's role, and it is not done out of kindness.

The State of Kuwait expresses its solidarity with the brotherly Palestinian people in defending their just cause and legitimate rights. That is a firm, steadfast and

principled position. We reiterate our call for complete and comprehensive peace based on what has been agreed in the Council's resolutions and as per the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative until an independent, sovereign Palestinian State is established, with East Jerusalem as its capital and within the borders of 4 June 1967.

I say confidently and transparently that there will be no peace, security or safety until the occupation ends. The State of Kuwait reiterates the importance of an immediate end to the Israeli war, Israel's criminal practices against the Gaza Strip and the escalation in and around the Strip. We emphasize the need to work with the international community on immediate and urgent action to that end in accordance with international law.

The State of Kuwait calls on the international community to support the resilience of the Palestinian people and their continued presence on their territory. We warn against any attempts to displace them outside Gaza and further exacerbate the issue of refugees, whom should be granted their rights on the basis of a comprehensive settlement of the conflict that addresses all issues of final status pursuant to international legitimacy — which we all know by heart but many continue to ignore. The State of Kuwait also calls for collective resistance to any attempt to shift the crisis exacerbated by continued occupation to neighbouring countries.

We still owe our brothers in Palestine a great deal as, despite all our efforts, we have not done enough. The State of Kuwait has been a pioneer in supporting Palestinians, their just cause and their legitimate demands politically, humanly and morally. I am honoured to reiterate the announcement of an air bridge carrying tens of tons of humanitarian and relief assistance, as per the official instruction by His Highness the Emir of the country, Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and upon direct instructions from the Crown Prince, His Highness Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

In conclusion, I tell my sons and daughters of coming generations with pride and honesty that the political leadership, Government and all the people of Kuwait — everyone, young and old — carry their cause in their hearts and seek inspiration from their resilience. We will not forget them for as long as we live, and we will not waver in our support for them. Geopolitical changes will not affect us, as their cause is just and their aspirations are legitimate. The State of Kuwait has been and will remain a loud voice of truth, as there is no other higher voice.

The President: There are still many speakers inscribed on the list. I wish to kindly ask all speakers to limit their statements to no more than four minutes in order to enable the Security Council to carry out its work expeditiously.

I now give the floor to the representative of Lebanon.

Mr. Hachem (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): We have witnessed for more than two weeks a brutal war that is void of any respect for the most basic norms of international humanitarian law. It is also void of the most basic human concepts. There is no law or doctrine that justifies the systemic killing of a population that has lived in an open-air prison for more than half a century.

The blockade in the Gaza Strip is preventing access to all necessities of life, namely water, electricity, communication, health services and medicines, and to humanitarian aid, while subjecting it to the shelling of critical installations, civilian infrastructure, hospitals and houses of worship. This is in addition to the indiscriminate killing of infants, children, women, older persons, patients and journalists. No mercy is shown and no distinction made between a humanitarian worker who is trying to alleviate the suffering, a journalist trying to report the truth, a doctor trying to heal the wounded, a Red Cross volunteer trying to mitigate the suffering or a United Nations employee trying to implement international resolutions.

Speaking of international resolutions, we regret to inform the Council that they have been disregarded completely and ignored by the Israeli occupying authorities, who have ignored the Charter of the United Nations, international human rights law and international humanitarian law. In other words, they have ignored all relevant laws and norms. The arrogant Israelis have not even responded to the repeated calls of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, because they do not believe in this international Organization and do not believe in peace.

The Arab States accepted peace in a united position in 2002 through a Saudi initiative proposed by His Majesty King Abdullah at the Beirut Summit, based on clear foundations that are fair and comprehensive and grant the brotherly Palestinian people the right to establish their State and restore their stolen land. However, unfortunately, the victim has accepted but the murderer has not.

The Head of Government, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and all officials in Lebanon are carrying out international and local communications and making every effort to dissociate Lebanon from this bloody conflict. We emphasize that Lebanon never desired nor pursued war. Our goal is to preserve the calm along the Lebanese borders because we want to protect Lebanon and the Lebanese, and we are committed to resolution 1701 (2006) and all subsequent international relevant resolutions.

The Israelis are issuing offensive statements on a daily basis, threatening to return Lebanon to the Stone Age and crush its people, in addition to Israel's daily attacks on Lebanon, its territory and its people by land, sea and air. Those attacks constitute daily provocations for all citizens who care for their country and its sovereignty. Lebanon addresses those verbal and military aggressions with the highest degree of self-restraint, in respect for international resolutions and out of a desire to maintain stability in the southern region. Lebanon highly appreciates the important role played by the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), through coordination with the Lebanese army, in de-escalation and preserving stability. We express our gratitude to UNIFIL, its leadership and the contributing countries.

I would raise the alarm regarding the desperate Government of Israel, which has continued its illegal settlements in recent months and its repeated violations of Christian and Muslim holy sites, including through attacks on worshippers.

I warn against taking measures that engulf the entire region in a blazing fire that will be hard to extinguish. We cannot search for peace in another area. We must begin by urgently and immediately implementing a ceasefire, deliver humanitarian assistance, lift the blockade, protect civilians and focus our efforts on the root causes of the conflict. There will be no peace in the region without a just resolution of the Palestinian question, the establishment of a Palestinian State based on the 4 June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and the withdrawal of Israel from all occupied Arab territories in Lebanon, Palestine and Syria. In the absence of such a political solution and in the light of the third week of the war against Gaza and the inability of Western countries to halt Israel's intention to blindly avenge itself, the risk of a wider conflict will continue to affect the entire Middle East. Therefore, we warn against the repercussions of that conflict, not only for our own region's security but also for the security of Europe in particular and the world in general.

Israel's use of incendiary weapons, such as white phosphorous, which have long-lasting impacts on populations and the environment, attests to the fact that Israel continues to commit unlawful acts. The shelling of innocent civilians provides additional evidence, as we saw in the incident at the Al Ahli Hospital. Israel's targeting of Lebanese and foreign journalists working in Lebanon, the martyrdom of the Lebanese journalist Issam Abdallah, the injuries to others and the killing of 13 journalists in Gaza attest to its policy of suppressing freedoms and misleading public opinion.

We reaffirm once again that Lebanon is fully committed to upholding international legitimacy, the Charter of the United Nations and the resolutions of the Security Council. Lebanon has never been the aggressor. It has always been the victim of the aggression perpetrated by Israel since the 1960s, as best evidenced by the record of daily Israeli violations that the Council has documented. In 2000, Lebanon succeeded in liberating a large part of its territories. However, Israel has intentionally maintained its occupation of various parts of Lebanon, including the Sheba'a Farms, the Kafr Shouba Hills and the outskirts of the town of Al-Mari, which is partly connected to the town of Al-Ghajar, so as to maintain a tense environment in the area and to justify its continued aggression. We strongly emphasize that the area on the outskirts of the town of Al-Mari is under occupation and does not merely have a military presence.

Anyone who thinks that the massacres, killings and attacks committed in Gaza and on Lebanon's southern borders will distract us from the existential issue of Syrian displaced persons in Lebanon is mistaken. The issue of Syrian displaced persons is a national priority for all Lebanese people. There is one unified call in Lebanon: we want a road map that will lead to a lasting settlement through cooperation with the international community. Lebanon cannot continue to face an impasse on that issue. We face two imperatives: one is that there can be no return before a political settlement is reached, and the other is that any return will require a minimum level of reconstruction.

Lebanon stands fully ready to cooperate with the United Nations and to work together with it hand in hand to find an appropriate solution that complies with the law and guarantees the dignified return of Syrians in safety to their homes, while taking into account the minimum requirements for such a return, including ensuring the dignity of the returnees. Lebanon has

fulfilled its humanitarian duties towards a brotherly people who were suffering from a major crisis. But today, following the end of the fighting, many of the refugees can return without any difficulty.

We ask you, Mr. President, and through you the permanent and non-permanent members of the Security Council, to consider that investing in the security and stability of Lebanon is of national, regional, European and international interest. Assistance from one source or another is not the whole issue. There is a shared interest in the security and stability of Lebanon so that it will not collapse economically, socially or in terms of its security or military status. Lebanon's security is part of the region's security, and Lebanon's stability is part of the stability of Europe and the world. When Lebanon and the Middle East are affected, there are repercussions that affect Europe and the entire world. Lebanon does not raise its voice at the expense of the brotherly displaced persons — they are oppressed like us. Lebanon raises its voice because it can no longer shoulder the burden of asylum-seekers, refugees, displaced persons and aggressors.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Viet Nam.

Mr. Dang (Viet Nam): Viet Nam is gravely concerned about the ongoing escalation of tensions and conflicts in the Middle East, especially the disproportionate number of civilian casualties. We regret that the Security Council has to date been unable to take any concrete action to address the situation. Viet Nam unequivocally condemns all indiscriminate attacks on civilians and critical civilian infrastructure. We call for an immediate ceasefire. All violence must stop now. International law and international humanitarian law must be fully complied with. All necessary measures to protect civilians must be deployed, including the immediate, unconditional and safe release of all hostages. Critical infrastructure must be protected and made accessible to the civilian population, in accordance with resolution 2573 (2021).

Viet Nam calls on the international community, in particular all the parties concerned, to create favourable conditions for the cessation of hostilities and the resumption of dialogue and negotiations, and to allow for the timely and unimpeded delivery of humanitarian relief to those in need, while ensuring the safety of humanitarian workers. Viet Nam welcomes and supports the mediation and reconciliation efforts

of the United Nations and its Member States, as well as regional and international organizations. It is essential that all parties contribute actively and constructively to those efforts to achieve a peaceful and lasting resolution to the conflict.

In that regard, we call for the revival of the Middle East Quartet peace process. At the same time, we call for the immediate end of any provocative actions that fuel violence and animosity between both sides. That includes halting the expansion of settlements in the West Bank, the demolition of homes and the expulsion of the Palestinian people. The status quo of holy sites in Jerusalem must also be upheld. In the long run, no ceasefire can be sustained without addressing the root causes of the protracted conflict. The ongoing round of violence underscores the urgency of finding a comprehensive solution. There can be no sustainable peace until a two-State solution is realized, in accordance with international law and relevant United Nations resolutions, which includes the establishment of the State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital and borders based on the pre-1967 lines.

Lastly, it is our hope that the members of the Council can work together to take swift and decisive action, de-escalate tensions, protect civilians, end hostilities and fulfil the Council's mandate and primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. We, the Member States, have entrusted the Council to act on our behalf. It is now the Council's duty to carry out those urgent tasks.

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

Mr. Al-Fatlawi (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank you, Mr. President, for your sincere efforts leading to the convening of this meeting. We thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Brazil, Mr. Mauro Luiz Iecker Vieira, for presiding over this morning's meeting. We also express our appreciation for the opportunity for the delegation of Iraq to present its views and position on the Palestinian question and the recent events in the occupied Palestinian territory.

We thank the Secretary-General for his participation in today's meeting and for his statement. We also appreciate the briefings by Mr. Wennesland and Ms. Lynn Hastings.

The delegation of Iraq aligns itself with the statement made by the Minister for Foreign of Jordan on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

As the international community has witnessed, Palestinians in Gaza are being subjected to a systematic, deliberate and explicitly declared genocide by the Israeli occupation forces, targeting civilians in residential buildings, compounds, houses of worship and hospitals. That is in addition to the systematic violations of human rights, the blockade, the starvation, the cuts to the supply of electricity, water and food, the indiscriminate bombing that has claimed thousands of innocent civilians, especially women, children and the elderly, and the forced displacement. The crime and carnage at the Baptist Hospital are proof of the brutal acts perpetrated by the Israeli occupation forces. They continue a pattern of crimes that those forces have repeatedly committed against the people of Palestine for 70 years. We deplore the fact that those crimes and violations are either being overlooked by the international community or are the subject of scores of international resolutions that the Israeli occupation authorities have ignored. They have not been implemented and no binding measures have been taken to ensure their implementation. That has emboldened the occupation forces to continue to commit their crimes with impunity and undeterred. They go against international law, the Charter of the United Nations and international treaties and conventions.

My delegation is participating in this meeting not just to denounce, reject and condemn the violations and crimes that Israel has committed against defenceless Palestinian civilians, but to reiterate our previous demands and the principled positions we share with a majority of countries all over the world. The Government of Iraq condemns all such crimes in the strongest terms, and demands that the international community generally, and the Security Council in particular, shoulder its legal, moral and humanitarian responsibilities to maintain international peace and security and end these brutal acts and continued grave violations of international law, international humanitarian law and all international and humanitarian instruments and norms pertaining to the protection of civilians, while making the perpetrators accountable.

Iraq also calls on the Council to avoid selectivity and take urgent measures to follow up on its resolutions, work for an immediate ceasefire, open border crossings to allow the entry of humanitarian and relief deliveries — and bring a complete end to the blockade

on Gaza, to settlement-building, demographic change, the demolition of Palestinian homes, the confiscation of land and property, the displacement of indigenous Palestinians, the arrests and raids and the desecration of houses of worship and holy sites, including the Al-Aqsa Mosque. All of those are reasons for the response of the Palestinian people in resisting occupation and defending their freedom and dignity. We call for ensuring the safe and comprehensive exchange of prisoners and detainees. We call for the establishment of a fund to rebuild what the Israeli occupation forces have destroyed in the Gaza Strip.

The increase in the number of martyrs and injured in Gaza, the continuing destruction and the exacerbation of the humanitarian situation there, together with the silence of the international community, all constitute a new test of the international order and the international community's ability to prove its credibility as it advocates for humanitarian values — justice, freedom, an end to racial discrimination, slavery and occupation, the right to self-determination and serious consideration of the dire situation in the Palestinian occupied territory and of the Palestinian people. It is the practices of the Israeli entity that are the source of the instability in the region and a threat to regional and international peace and security.

In conclusion, I want to reiterate Iraq's principled position in support of a resolution to the Palestinian question and in support of the Palestinian people. We stand in solidarity with them in their quest to enjoy their legitimate rights in accordance with the resolutions of international legitimacy, including their right to self-determination and to establish their independent State, with Jerusalem as its capital.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Skoog.

Mr. Skoog: I speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its 27 member States. Out of respect for your plea, Mr. President, I will deliver an abbreviated statement. Our full statement will be available on our website.

I want to thank the Secretary-General and the United Nations briefers and staff for their valiant and tireless efforts in a difficult situation. Our thoughts today are with all the innocent victims, Israelis, Palestinians and citizens of many other countries, as well as staff members of the United Nations and other humanitarian organizations. We commend all the humanitarians who are continuing their invaluable work under dire circumstances and at great sacrifice.

There can be no justification for terror. The European Union has condemned in the strongest possible terms Hamas's brutal and indiscriminate terrorist attacks across Israel. We call on Hamas to immediately release all hostages, without any conditions. Human suffering cannot be a bargaining chip. We have also strongly emphasized Israel's right to defend itself, in line with international law, including international humanitarian law and the Geneva Conventions in particular, in the face of such violent and indiscriminate attacks. The international humanitarian law is clear — the protection of all civilians must be ensured by all parties to the conflict. We condemn all acts directed against civilians and call for protecting all civilians, especially children. We urge the parties to exercise restraint and remind them of their obligations under the universal principles of international humanitarian law. We call for the protection of medical facilities, schools and United Nations premises, as well as other infrastructure meant to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance. All civilian infrastructure must be protected.

The United Nations has been clear. The catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza is about to reach breaking point. We need to prevent an even bigger human catastrophe. The civilian population is in desperate need of food, water, fuel, electricity and medical care, as well as safe shelter. Access to those necessities must be urgently restored. That is why the EU supports the Secretary-General's call for safe, full and unimpeded access throughout Gaza and a sustained effort to deliver vital life-saving assistance to the vulnerable population. What is needed now is to establish humanitarian corridors and pauses to ensure the release of hostages and allow the safe passage to Gaza of relief supplies and humanitarian personnel, while ensuring their full protection and preventing the abuse of such assistance by terrorist organizations, so that it ends up in the hands of those in need.

We welcome the opening of the Rafah crossing. It will be crucial to ramp up the delivery of assistance to meet the enormous needs. The provision of urgent humanitarian assistance is vital and the EU, together with its partners, is ready to continue supporting the civilians most in need in Gaza. The EU has already stepped up its emergency assistance to the Palestinian people, tripling it to a total amounting to more than €75 million to support civilians in need and triggering the full activation of the EU integrated political crisis response to ensure a fast and coordinated humanitarian

response. Individually, EU member States have increased their financial support. The EU has also launched an EU humanitarian air bridge, with flights to Egypt to bring life-saving supplies to humanitarian organizations on the ground in Gaza. It is also essential to allow citizens of third countries to leave Gaza. We call on all sides to allow safe passage for those who wish to leave and return to safety in their home countries.

It is crucial to prevent regional escalation, including a deterioration of the situation in the West Bank. The EU is actively discussing the issue with partners and key stakeholders, and we call on actors in the region to refrain from any action that could further aggravate the situation. We underline once again the need to engage broadly with the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli authorities, as well as regional and international partners that could have a positive role to play in preventing further escalation. We welcome the cooperation of regional actors aimed at opening humanitarian access to Gaza, and we remain committed to lasting and sustainable peace, based on a two-State solution and the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, through reinvigorated efforts for the Middle East peace process, including the Peace Day Effort.

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

Ms. Squeff (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Argentina considers it a priority to prevent the escalation of the clashes between Israel and the Gaza Strip. Moreover, every effort must be made to ensure that the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip does not continue to worsen and that humanitarian assistance reaches those in need. It is essential that the civilian population be protected, regardless of nationality. Hamas must release the hostages immediately and unconditionally. My country joins all calls for a sustainable ceasefire.

Argentina shares the concern of the international community over the recent escalation of violence in the Middle East. We condemn terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and consider that terrorist acts are unacceptable, unjustifiable and should be deplored by the international community as a whole. In that context, I would like to emphatically and unequivocally reiterate, as my Government did on 7 October, Argentina's firm condemnation of the terrorist acts perpetrated by Hamas against Israel. Argentina demands the immediate and unconditional release of the hostages of all nationalities, among whom are Argentine citizens, and we hold those who kidnapped them directly responsible for the well-being of those citizens.

My country recognizes Israel's right to self-defence and to protect its population, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. The civilian population must be protected in all circumstances, in accordance with international law. Experience in the Middle East has shown us that hospitals, schools and United Nations facilities are the places that civilians most often turn to for shelter. Those institutions must be respected without exception, and any attack on them constitutes a violation of international humanitarian law. Argentina condemns the attack on the Al Ahli Arab Hospital located in the northern Gaza Strip, which resulted in hundreds of deaths and injuries.

As various United Nations agencies have confirmed, the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip is catastrophic. The Palestinian population living in Gaza must have access to essential public services in order to be able to meet their fundamental basic needs. It is imperative that safe humanitarian corridors be opened so that international aid can reach those in need as quickly as possible. In that connection, we welcome the reopening of the Rafah crossing for the delivery of humanitarian aid into Gaza. We hope that is a first step towards the sustainable provision of essential supplies in a safe and unhindered manner. Argentina is willing to collaborate with international humanitarian efforts through the White Helmets Commission. We have conveyed our willingness in that regard to both Israelis and Palestinians.

My country is concerned about the increase in tensions on Israel's borders with Syria and Lebanon, which could lead to a further deterioration of regional stability. We therefore appeal to all parties to avoid an escalation of confrontations, consequences of which are impossible to predict. Argentina is convinced that there is neither a military solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict nor one imposed through terrorist attacks. On the contrary, it is only through good-faith negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians and on the basis of the vision of two States living side by side in peace and security within secure and internationally recognized borders that a definitive peace in the region can be achieved.

The United Nations and the international community as a whole must recommit to the Middle East peace agenda. The risks of inaction are more than evident, and we have been observing them in horror in recent days. The Security Council and the General Assembly have responsibilities under the Charter of the

United Nations and must assume those responsibilities. The credibility of the United Nations system depends on it. Furthermore, the international community should not lose sight of the fact that the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip will require significant and sustained international assistance for the reconstruction of the basic infrastructure, homes and buildings that have been destroyed.

Thousands of people have died since the beginning of this crisis. Therefore, before concluding, I would like to convey on behalf of the people and the Government of Argentina our heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims, be they Israeli, Palestinian or of other nationalities. As it has done in the past, Argentina will continue to support all peace efforts and initiatives for the benefit of the people of Palestine, the people of Israel and all the peoples of the Middle East.

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

Mr. Ragutthahalli (India): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this open debate on the Middle East today, which comes at a crucial time.

India is deeply concerned about the deteriorating security situation and the large-scale loss of civilian lives in the ongoing conflict. The mounting humanitarian crisis is equally alarming. The escalation of hostilities in the region has only exacerbated the dire humanitarian situation and has once again underscored the fragile nature of the ceasefire. The 7 October terror attacks in Israel were shocking, and we condemn them unequivocally. Our Prime Minister was one of the first global leaders to convey his condolences for the loss of lives and his prayers for the innocent victims and their families. We stood in solidarity with Israel at their moment of crisis, when they were facing those terror attacks.

We have also expressed deep shock at the tragic loss of lives at the Al Ahli Hospital in Gaza, where there were several hundred civilian casualties and thousands of civilians were injured. Our heartfelt condolences go out to the families of the victims, along with our prayers for the speedy recovery of the injured. Our Prime Minister clearly spelled out that those involved must be held responsible. Civilian casualties in the ongoing conflict are a matter of serious and continuing concern. All parties must protect civilians, especially women and children.

The unfolding humanitarian crisis needs to be addressed. We welcome the efforts of the international community aimed at de-escalation and the delivery of humanitarian goods to the people of Gaza. India has sent 38 tons of humanitarian goods, including medicines and equipment, to the people of Palestine. We also urge the parties to work towards creating the conditions necessary for peace and resuming direct negotiations between the parties, including through de-escalation and by eschewing violence.

India has always supported a negotiated two-State solution to the Israel-Palestine issue, leading to the establishment of a sovereign, independent and viable State of Palestine, living within secure and recognized borders side by side in peace with Israel, taking into account the legitimate security concerns of Israel. To that end, we reiterate the need for an early resumption of direct peace negotiations. We also continue to support the Palestinian people through our bilateral development partnership, which covers a wide range of sectors, including health, education, women's empowerment, entrepreneurship and information technology. We also support grass-roots Palestinian institutions in their developmental initiatives. We have supported the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East for decades in its provision of humanitarian services. In the current challenging times, India will continue to send humanitarian assistance to the people of Palestine.

The current escalation has once again underscored the need for the immediate resumption of credible, direct negotiations between Israel and Palestine. Every effort must be made to create conditions conducive to the resumption of those talks. We welcome all efforts by regional and global players to restore normalcy. To conclude, let me reaffirm India's firm commitment to achieving a just, peaceful and lasting solution to the Israel-Palestine issue.

Before I end, there was a remark of a habitual nature made by one delegation, referring to the union territories that are an integral and inalienable part of my country. In the interest of time, I will treat those remarks with the contempt that they deserve and will not dignify them with a response.

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

Ms. Brattested (Norway): These are extremely challenging times for Palestinians, Israelis and the entire Middle East. Norway has strongly condemned

Hamas's heinous terrorist attacks, killing more than 1,000 Israeli civilians and taking more than 200 hostages. All hostages in Gaza must be released immediately and unconditionally. Israel has the right to self-defence, but such measures must be necessary and proportionate. All military operations must be in line with international humanitarian law. That includes taking all feasible measures to prevent civilian casualties and reduce damage.

The news we are receiving about the humanitarian conditions inside Gaza is horrifying. This cannot go on. Water, electricity, food and medicine have practically been cut off. We welcome that the first trucks with humanitarian aid have entered Gaza, but far more is needed. Humanitarian access must be dramatically improved and sustained. Norway has joined the call for a humanitarian pause in the fighting to facilitate that. Most urgently, water and electricity supply must be turned back on and fuel allowed in.

International humanitarian law applies to all parties of the conflict. To quote the Secretary-General: "Even war has rules." The taking of hostages, as well as any use of civilians as human shields is absolutely prohibited. The denial of access to food, water and health care for the civilian population cannot be used as a war strategy.

As Chair of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians donor group, we are continuously assessing how we can bring the donor community together to discuss the significant needs faced by the Palestinians, both inside and outside of Gaza. Since the start of this crisis, we have increased our support to Palestine with an additional 130 million Norwegian kroner, including to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) for its indispensable work. Norway encourages all donors to continue and increase their support. This is not the time to cease the support to the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian people.

Norway is deeply concerned about the spread of the conflict. The consequences of a further escalation of violence in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, as well as in the broader Middle East region, would be devastating.

When we move out of the rubble of this terrible crisis, we need to go back to the table to establish a political horizon for solving the conflict between

Israelis and Palestinians. Despite the challenges, a sovereign, independent and contiguous Palestinian State, living side by side with Israel, with borders based on the 1967 lines, remains the best and most sustainable path to a peace that would benefit both peoples. We must look beyond this war and beyond the logic of weapons. In the long run, only a negotiated two-State solution would provide a framework for a wealth of new opportunities for increased cooperation, security, stability and integration in the Middle East.

We are at a critical and dangerous juncture. The civilian population is paying an intolerable price for this conflict. We must do everything we can to avoid further escalation of human suffering.

Today is United Nations Day. Allow me therefore, in conclusion, to pay my respects to the UNRWA personnel who have lost their lives in Gaza and to express our gratitude to the many United Nations personnel who continue to carry out their important work in the most difficult and dangerous of circumstances.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Mr. Pérez Ayestarán (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): For years we have witnessed the systematic and brutal Israeli military aggression against the Palestinian people. For years we have denounced the policies of racial domination, oppression, colonial occupation and apartheid advanced by the occupying Power. For years we have denounced the mass human rights violations and collective punishments, war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by Israel on a daily basis. For years we have denounced the growing policy of settlements and annexation, the evictions, the destruction of homes and the transfer of settlers. For years we have been warning about the need to put an end to the inflammatory discourse that foment fanatical groups and encourage, among others acts, the commission of hate crimes and attacks against religious sites.

For years we have demanded that the Security Council assume its responsibilities under the mandate conferred upon it by the founding Charter of our Organization. For years we have demanded that the Security Council ensure compliance with its resolutions, which are legally binding on all United Nations Member States without exception of any kind. For years we have pointed out that to do otherwise would only embolden Israel to continue its criminal

aggression, its cruel and inhumane practices, and its policies clearly aimed at gaining total control of the occupied Palestinian territory.

Unfortunately, today, without fear of being mistaken, we affirm that the Security Council, as a result of the framework of impunity that has been perpetuated over time by the recurrent veto of the Government of the United States of America in favour of its genocidal partner, has turned this organ into a facilitator of the violence, death and destruction that we are currently witnessing.

We take this opportunity to convey our condolences to the families and loved ones of all those innocent people who have lost their lives during the past 17 days, which will undoubtedly mark a before and after in one of the most painful conflicts that humankind has faced for more than 75 years.

The international community and the peoples of the world are witnessing, today, not a new onslaught, but an unprecedented escalation in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which has the potential to exacerbate the tensions and divisions throughout the Middle East, thereby threatening regional and international peace, security and stability.

The escalation of violence and military aggression beyond the Gaza Strip, including against the Palestinian civilian population in the West Bank, ranging from unjustifiable bombings against civilian infrastructure in the city of Damascus, to the accumulation of destructive power in the region, with aircraft carriers and troops of Powers from outside the region, demonstrates the clear intention of the occupying Power and its main accomplice and protector, the Government of the United States of America, to escalate the conflict and geopolitical tensions, to maintain dominance in the region, including by launching operations on other fronts, with the aim of completely altering the Middle East and taking advantage of this situation not only to annex the Gaza Strip, but also to deploy an operation aimed at the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian civilian population surviving in the so-called world's largest open-air prison.

Against that backdrop, it is clear that the Israeli regime is not only openly, flagrantly, deliberately, systematically and with impunity violating each and every relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolution, but also the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, the

norms of international law, international humanitarian law, international human rights law, international refugee law, as well as the Geneva Conventions and their Protocols, which, among other things, regulate the savagery of war. It is clear therefore that the occupying Power believes it is above the law and is in no way committed to the realization of the two-State solution, with two peoples living side by side in peace and security.

We wonder where is the so-called international community — the Government of the United States of America, its Western partners and satellites — which, in any other case, would be pretending to give us lessons on human rights, calling for the protection of civilians and demanding unimpeded and unhindered access to the humanitarian aid which is needed now on the ground. We wonder whether those are the rules that the United States Government is referring to when it promotes the consolidation of a so-called rules-based world order — the rules of exceptionalism, unilateralism, supremacy, double standards and subjective interpretations of international obligations. We are in no way surprised by the United States' deafening silence, which constitutes a clear example of its complicity in this and so many other painful conflicts around the world. Nevertheless, we call for careful note to be taken of the conduct and positions today of the countries seeking to justify the unjustifiable, including through the submission of draft resolutions that only make a mockery of the world. Despite the fact that it is ethically and morally wrong, history has shown us that their hypocrisy knows no bounds and that tomorrow they will have no shame in putting themselves forward once again as supposed leaders on other important issues.

The situation on the ground is truly tragic. The humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate by the minute, day after day, while this organ continues to be paralysed. That has been demonstrated by the facts and confirmed by reports from bodies and agencies within the United Nations system, the International Committee of the Red Cross and other humanitarian actors on the ground, who have not been exempt from the barbaric violence and in some cases have even lost their lives. We can see that from the images that have gone viral around the world since 7 October. It is a reality that can no longer be minimized or concealed and that will live on in the memory of generations who will never be able to forget the massacres that are still happening right now. In the past two weeks, entire

shelters have been bombed; food warehouses have been destroyed; thousands of innocent civilians — including women and children, as well as United Nations and Red Cross personnel and members of the international press — have been murdered; and air strikes have been carried out on homes and hospitals. We have all watched in shock as those events have unfolded. They are not mere statistics, but facts in the public domain and human lives that have been lost.

Even so, Washington insists that according to its supposed assessments, Israel is not responsible and that the occupying Power is using proportionate force in the exercise of its right to self-defence. Unfortunately for the United States, however, its manipulation of the facts and gaslighting techniques no longer have the effect they once had, because the world we live in today is widely connected, thanks to technology and social networks. The evidence is therefore right before the world's eyes. The responsibility of the Israeli regime is incontrovertible and irrefutable. It is regrettable to see how a number of Governments refuse to categorically condemn indiscriminate violence against innocent civilians and, on the contrary, prefer to encourage the commission of war crimes and crimes against humanity, as well as the prolongation of this conflict. Today they have once again opted for indifference, and what is even worse, for complicity. They are attempting to give carte blanche to the aggressor not only to continue its policy of extermination but also its vendetta against an entire people, who are simply demanding their right to a free homeland. That is exactly what the United States is seeking with its unacceptable draft resolution.

Today, as we celebrate the anniversary of the entry into force of the Charter of the United Nations, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela reaffirms its historic and principled position in support of the just Palestinian cause. We will not tire of defending the inalienable right of our brother Palestinian people to exist, and not merely survive, in a free, independent and sovereign State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, along the pre-1967 borders. We will continue to decisively support all international efforts that will bring us closer to achieving a just, comprehensive and lasting peace and resolving the question of Palestine.

Now, in the absence of a credible political horizon, it is imperative to advance with a sense of urgency towards the adoption of concrete measures that will enable us to guarantee the welfare of the civilian population and provide international protection to the

Palestinian people. Amid the current international situation and the gravity of the situation on the ground, we also demand that Israel, the occupying Power, return to a path of international legality. Israel must end its siege of the Gaza Strip and the forced displacement of the Palestinian civilian population. It must end its indiscriminate attacks on the population and on essential civilian infrastructure. It must allow the unimpeded entry of humanitarian assistance and the safe evacuation of the civilians who need emergency medical care. It must also allow the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East to fully carry out the mandate entrusted to it.

Finally, we emphasize that the time has come for the promise of peace, justice and freedom enshrined in the Charter to become a reality for the Palestinian people, who are demanding their right to self-determination and the realization of their legitimate national aspirations. Meanwhile, we once again renew our unwavering solidarity with our brother Palestinian people, as well as our firm support for their just cause and that of their martyrs. That cause is synonymous with conscience and dignity for the peoples of the world, who from every corner of the world are demanding the immediate cessation today of the brutal military aggression against the State of Palestine and its continued occupation and subjugation. It is time to invest in peace, justice and freedom in the interests of the welfare of entire peoples, setting aside once and for all any political calculations or ambitions of neocolonial domination.

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

Mr. Larsen (Australia): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this debate, and I thank the Secretary-General and the other United Nations briefers who provided us with information this morning.

Australia would not ordinarily speak in this debate, but the 7 October attacks and their aftermath demand comment. Hamas conducted a heinous terrorist attack on Israel and its people. Israel has an inherent right to defend itself. The Australian Government and Parliament have unequivocally condemned the atrocities committed by Hamas and have called for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages in Gaza. Australia supports the efforts to contain the conflict and seeks to work with those who share the goal of lowering the temperature in the region and avoiding a spillover of the conflict.

Hamas's actions have precipitated a devastating scenario in Israel and in Gaza. Australia's position is that the protection of civilian lives must be the top priority and that the rules of war and international humanitarian law must be observed. The humanitarian situation in Gaza is dire. Australia calls for immediate, safe, unimpeded and ongoing humanitarian access to ensure essential humanitarian relief to civilians in need in Gaza. We have made an initial contribution towards humanitarian assistance through trusted partners such as UNICEF.

Hamas does not represent the Palestinian people or their legitimate needs and aspirations. It stands in the way of a peaceful future for Israelis and Palestinians, who have the right to live within secure and internationally recognized borders. Enduring peace cannot be achieved through military operations. We reiterate our call for peace in the form of a two-State solution.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

Mr. Pary Rodríguez (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, we thank Brazil for convening this meeting to address the critical situation in which Palestinians in Gaza are suffering at this very moment. We also appreciate the important briefings provided by the Secretary-General and by the Special Coordinator and Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process,

I would like to begin my statement by expressing our solidarity and the support of the Bolivian Government and people for the people of Palestine, who are suffering in the atrocious genocide being perpetrated by the occupying Power, Israel. We condemn the attack on the Al-Ahli Hospital in which hundreds of people were killed, as well as the deaths of United Nations personnel and volunteers.

We are facing an exceptional situation in which Israel, the occupying Power, has decided to ignore every development in international law and international humanitarian law, which constitute the basis of international peace and security. As has been repeatedly mentioned in the Chamber, Israel decided to inflict collective punishment on all Palestinians in Gaza — whom here today have been called monsters and savages — in addition to bombing their homes and leaving them without food, fuel, medical treatment or water. It has done all that while using the false

argument of the right to self-defence which, as it said in the Security Council today, has become, according to Israel, a duty in order to defend the West.

It is inconceivable that, despite this catastrophe, the Council was once again blocked from adopting a draft resolution that could have brought a little light at the end of the tunnel for the Palestinians. We call on the Council and the General Assembly to take urgent action. The lives of Palestinians have the same value as the lives of any citizen of the world. There is an urgent need stop the killing of Palestinian civilians and to stop the suffering of that brotherly people.

At this time, it is crucial to address the needs of the Palestinians in Gaza. A ceasefire must be one of the priorities, in order to urgently address the humanitarian needs and the displacement of the civilian population, particularly children, women and the elderly. The international community, through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and other humanitarian agencies, must continue to provide support to those most in need in the region.

Today, on United Nations Day, Bolivia, which respects international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the Member States, will stand on the right side of history — on the side of the rights of the Palestinian people and not on the side of the occupying Power. We therefore reaffirm that the only way to preserve the dignity and freedom of the Palestinian people is for Palestine to be recognized as a full Member State, within the pre-1967 international borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Let me say to our Palestinian sisters and brothers that Bolivia stands with them. The peoples of the world stand with them.

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

Mr. Shatil (Bangladesh): We thank the presidency of Brazil for organizing this important open debate. I also thank all the briefers for their comprehensive briefings.

Today it is both unacceptable and difficult to endure that, while we are here delivering long statements on international humanitarian law, human rights, the protection of civilians and war crimes, people, including children, are dying in Gaza. Over the past two weeks, more than 5,000 people have been killed in Gaza, more than 2,000 of whom were children. Women

and children make up more than 62 per cent of the fatalities. As of today, more than 15,000 people have been injured.

Owing to the indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks by Israel, dead bodies are piling up, houses are being flattened, and unarmed civilians, including children, women and elderly people, are on the run to save their lives. Such horrendous collective punishment perpetrated against a civilian population is unacceptable under all legal and moral doctrines, in sheer violation of international humanitarian and human rights law and tantamount to war crimes.

Allow me to highlight a few points.

First and foremost, we need an immediate ceasefire to save the helpless population in Gaza facing continuous and indiscriminate bombardments. Regretting that the Security Council failed to adopt a draft resolution on a humanitarian ceasefire, we urge the Council once again to take the necessary steps to reach an immediate ceasefire in Gaza.

Secondly, 30 per cent of all housing units in the Gaza Strip have been either destroyed, rendered uninhabitable or moderately damaged since the start of the Israeli military aggression. More than 1 million people remain internally displaced, including nearly 600,000 in 150 facilities of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). They do not have enough food, water and fuel to survive. It is our first duty to ensure necessary, adequate and life-saving humanitarian assistance to save the people who survived the brutal military attack by Israel.

Thirdly, UNRWA has been a lifeline for Palestinians, including those who are living in Gaza. We condemn the killing of United Nations and other aid workers, health personnel and journalists in Gaza. Since 7 October, 35 UNRWA personnel have been killed by Israel, including 6 in the past 24 hours. A total 40 UNRWA installations have been damaged. UNRWA staff and facilities must not be the targets of any attack.

Fourthly — and unsurprisingly — Israel, reflecting its nature, has been launching attacks on hospitals and refugee camps and even demanding that UNRWA evacuate schools. The whole world was shocked by the unimaginable atrocity of the heinous bombing of the Al Ahli Baptist Hospital in Gaza. Even during that unbearable situation, it did not stop its attacks in the

West Bank, including East Jerusalem. A total of 91 Palestinians have been killed in the West Bank and 1,734 injured since 7 October. Moreover, we unequivocally reject Israel's call to forcibly displace the Palestinians from their own homeland, which is an attempt to cause a further deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the entire region. In that regard, we urge the Council to take the necessary action to immediately stop the attacks by Israel and to hold it accountable for its war crimes and blatant disrespect for international humanitarian law.

Israel has been continuing its illegal policies and practices to entrench its illegal occupation of the Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, having severely isolated the Gaza Strip under a nearly 16-year blockade. Israel has been disrespecting all the calls of the international community, including the resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly, and ignoring the legitimate calls to implement the two-State solution. That is why we are here today, witnessing an escalation of violence and the death and injury of civilians.

We would like to repeat that the only solution to this crisis and the only way to establish peace in Palestine and the entire region is to establish an independent, viable and sovereign Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, under a two-State solution, based on the pre-1967 borders.

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

Mr. Alrowaiei (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, and the delegation of the friendly Federative Republic of Brazil on your country's presidency of the Security Council this month. I also thank Secretary-General António Guterres; Mr. Tor Wennesland, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process; and Ms. Lynn Hastings, Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for the Occupied Palestinian Territory, for their valuable briefings.

Today, on United Nations Day, and in the light of the grave challenges facing the region, with painful humanitarian dimensions, I would like to reaffirm the priorities of the Kingdom of Bahrain, which include reaching an immediate ceasefire and ending military operations; providing protection for innocent civilians on both the Palestinian and Israeli sides; releasing all

prisoners, hostages and detainees; and facilitating flows of medical aid, food, water, fuel and electricity into the Gaza Strip. This must be done in accordance with international humanitarian law, in order to mitigate the humanitarian catastrophe and its effects on the lives of more than 2 million Palestinians, most of whom are children and women.

The Kingdom of Bahrain reiterates its call for de-escalation, self-restraint and respect for the rules of international humanitarian law, including the Geneva Conventions, in order to protect residential neighbourhoods, as well as health, educational and social facilities, places of worship and infrastructure, and to stop them from being targeted. We also reject any attempt to forcibly displace the Palestinian people from their land and homes in the Gaza Strip. Any practices that could widen the cycle of violence and ongoing war must cease.

Under the leadership of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and upon the directives of the Government, headed by His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa and the Prime Minister, the Kingdom of Bahrain is firmly committed to advancing the process of achieving a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East. We prioritize dialogue and a peaceful approach to put an end to wars and to peacefully settle all regional and international disputes, while providing safety and prosperity to all peoples, without discrimination. His Majesty the King affirmed that at the Cairo peace summit, held in Egypt on Saturday.

In that regard, we commend the sincere efforts of His Excellency Mr. António Guterres, and we echo his call at the Cairo peace summit for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire so as to ensure that sustainable, immediate and unhindered relief assistance reaches civilians besieged in the Gaza Strip. He called for upholding international humanitarian law and protecting civilians and civilian infrastructure, and stressed that the two-State solution is the only realistic solution to achieve genuine peace and stability and to build the future that the children of Palestine, Israel and the world at large dream of.

The Kingdom of Bahrain stresses its firm position in support of the legitimate rights of the brotherly Palestinian people to freedom and self-determination and the establishment of their independent and sovereign State along the borders of 4 June 1967, with

East Jerusalem as its capital, on the basis of the two-State solution and in accordance with international law, the Arab Peace Initiative and the resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly, as the main guarantors of coexistence between the Palestinian and Israeli peoples, living side by side in peace, security and harmony.

In conclusion, we call on the Security Council to shoulder its historic responsibilities of ensuring the implementation of the relevant international resolutions; providing international protection to civilians; ensuring respect for the historical and legal status quo in Jerusalem; stopping measures that lead to the displacement of Palestinians, the confiscation of their lands and the establishment of illegal settlements; facilitating the work of humanitarian and relief organizations, without obstacles; and reviving peace negotiations leading to the two-State solution as a strategic choice for achieving a just and comprehensive peace, while ensuring the rights of all peoples to security, peace, prosperity and human dignity.

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

Mr. Mc Bean (Ireland): The death and destruction that we have witnessed in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory since the attack by Hamas on 7 October is appalling. Ireland is seriously concerned about the possibility of escalation and further regional violence. The current humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip must be addressed through an immediate humanitarian ceasefire.

Ireland unreservedly condemns the terror attack by Hamas. These were barbaric actions that targeted innocent civilians. Such acts can never be justified. The taking of hostages is an appalling crime. All hostages taken to the Gaza Strip must be released now and without any preconditions.

Faced with such brutality, Israel has a right to defend itself and its people in line with humanitarian law, including international humanitarian law. Fundamental to the concept of the United Nations is that States must comply with international law, that States have obligations and that even wars have rules. It is necessary to distinguish between the Palestinian people and Hamas. Ireland is deeply concerned about the killing of civilians in the Gaza Strip. Thousands of people have been killed in Gaza in the past two weeks. The protection of civilians must be the immediate priority of the international community. International

humanitarian law prohibits the targeting of civilians, as well as the use of indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks. It also prohibits the use of human shields.

Parties to conflict must take all feasible precautions to protect the civilian population and civilian objects under their control against the effects of attacks. The scale of devastation is immense, and the humanitarian crisis we are now witnessing is on a vast scale.

I welcome that there has been an initial supply of critically needed aid in recent days, but that is a small fraction of what is necessary for the people of Gaza. Essential supplies, including food, water, medical supplies and energy, must urgently be restored.

It is prohibited under international humanitarian law to attack, destroy, remove or render useless objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population. Israel must comply with its obligations under international humanitarian law.

Water, food and medicine are running out in Gaza. It is necessary that the volume of aid permitted to enter the Gaza Strip is increased now, and civilians must not be subjected to collective punishment. Fuel, which is necessary to ensure that hospitals and relief organizations can function, must be allowed to reach Gaza so that the sick and injured can be treated and the people of Gaza can have water, food and other essentials of life. This issue needs to be addressed immediately to alleviate the suffering of civilians.

Ireland echoes the call made by Secretary-General Guterres for a humanitarian ceasefire. It is absolutely necessary that aid is able to reach people safely.

In response to the crisis, Ireland has announced an additional package of €13 million, including €10 million in core funding. Member States should ensure that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East has sufficient funding to carry out its vital work.

The situation in the West Bank is deeply concerning. There has been an increase in settler violence and in communities being evicted from their homes. The seriousness of the situation there must not be forgotten as our attention is focused on the crisis in Gaza.

Ireland is committed to the goal of a lasting peace in the Middle East, based on a two-State solution and the relevant Security Council resolutions. It is clear that the international community must step up to revitalize a peace process that would make this a reality. There

can be no security and stability in the region without a settlement that allows all people, including those in Gaza, to live in freedom and dignity.

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

Mr. Voionmaa (Finland): Finland aligns itself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union.

We condemn the cowardly terrorist attack by Hamas against civilians in Israel in the strongest terms. Thousands of people in Israel and the Palestinian territory have already lost their lives in the attack and the escalation that followed. International humanitarian law must always be respected by all parties to a conflict, and all civilians must be protected in all situations. Security belongs to all.

Finland recognizes the right of Israel to protect its civilian population. We underline that military operations must be proportionate and in line with international humanitarian law.

We call for the immediate and unconditional release of the hostages held in Gaza and commend the role that Egypt, Qatar and other countries of the region have once again taken upon themselves.

The humanitarian situation in Gaza is catastrophic. More aid needs to reach the civilians urgently. Continuously operating humanitarian corridors are paramount. We thank Brazil for its efforts on Council action on humanitarian access and join the call for a humanitarian pause. In addition to the European Union tripling its humanitarian aid to Gaza and launching a humanitarian air bridge operation, Finland is examining options to increase its humanitarian aid to Gaza.

Avoiding escalation is crucial — this a joint international effort. We greatly appreciate the diplomatic role that countries in the region and the United States have played on the ground. We commend Egypt for taking the important initiative to host the Cairo peace summit. We would also like to highlight the constructive role the Palestinian Authority has played and continues to play as the partner for the entire international community.

The situation again highlights that the only sustainable way to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a negotiated two-State solution. Its parameters are well known. Gaza and the West Bank must be considered

together in order to create a viable Palestinian State. We, as the international community, must bear our responsibility by making the strongest possible push for negotiations as soon as it becomes possible.

Lastly, our great appreciation goes to the brave personnel of the United Nations and other humanitarian actors for their selfless work in conditions in which they put their own lives at risk.

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

Mr. Kridelka (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this open debate, and I hope it will make a valuable contribution to finding solutions. I also commend the efforts of the Brazilian presidency of the Security Council on the issue.

Belgium condemns in the clearest terms the atrocious terrorist attacks perpetrated in Israel by Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad. Terrorism must be combated under all circumstances. Belgium also calls for the immediate and unconditional release of the hostages. Belgium unequivocally recognizes the right of Israel to defend itself. It is an inalienable right under international law, but it must be exercised in compliance with international humanitarian law.

Belgium aligns itself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union and, in my national capacity, I would like to underscore three points.

First, in the light of the complexity of the matter and the emotion triggered by the situation on the ground, our action must be based on compliance with international law, including international humanitarian law. As rightly pointed out by Secretary-General, even wars have rules. The protection of civilians — of all civilians — must be our primary concern and the subject of increased efforts on the part of the international community, even though the protection of civilians is the primary responsibility of the parties to the conflict. To that end, I would like to recall that Belgium does not endorse the attempts at a total blockade, the forced displacements or the use of civilians as human shields — in this context or in any other. International law and the relevant Council resolutions must be respected by all parties. Belgium supports the implementation as soon as possible of a humanitarian truce, which should lead to a humanitarian ceasefire in response to the appeals of the United Nations. Humanitarian access must be guaranteed, and any obstacles lifted. In that context, Belgium recently increased by €2 million its own financing of United Nations humanitarian operations in the region.

Secondly, diplomatic efforts must now focus on rapid de-escalation so as to prevent further human suffering. A spillover of the conflict would benefit only enemies of peace and, in that regard, we commend the efforts undertaken recently, especially by Egypt.

Thirdly, the current situation once again demonstrates the absolute need to define a political horizon aimed at a sustainable and lasting solution to the conflict. The security of Israel and the legitimate claims of the Palestinian people are not mutually exclusive — quite the contrary. Belgium supports the two-State solution, on the basis of international law. However, that solution will only be possible if the good-faith actors are supported in their efforts. Belgium also agrees with Special Coordinator Wennesland's perspective that perpetual management of the conflict without addressing its root causes is not a sustainable solution. The contributing factors are well known and have been the subject of many Council resolutions.

Our responsibility is collective. We must redouble our efforts accordingly, facilitate exchanges, lay the groundwork for the resumption of negotiations and firmly reject all hate speech and other unhelpful conflations. That is the goal of the "Peace Day effort" presented by the European Union, Saudi Arabia and the League of Arab States in New York on 18 September with the support of Jordan and Egypt. It is crucial to work together constructively, with the Palestinians and with the Israelis, to find solutions to end the crisis and build a lasting peace.

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

Mr. Mohamed Laghdaf (Mauritania): I have the honour to deliver my statement on behalf of the member States of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in my capacity as Chair of the OIC Group.

Today's meeting is convened as we witness the deadliest Israeli onslaught against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip, which has surpassed all levels of brutality, terrorizing the entire civilian population and resulting in thousands of victims. So far, more than 5,000 Palestinians have been killed and more than 14,000 have been injured, including an overwhelming number of women and children. Moreover, hundreds of thousands of Palestinian families are being forcibly displaced, with the United Nations estimating that over 1 million people have already been displaced. They are fleeing in fear as their homes and neighbourhoods, schools, hospitals and civilian infrastructure are

being indiscriminately and deliberately destroyed by Israeli air strikes, all in grave breach of international humanitarian law.

In response to Israel's heinous aggression, the OIC held an extraordinary open-ended Executive Committee meeting at the level of ministers for foreign affairs on 18 October. It adopted a joint communiqué calling for the immediate cessation of Israel's barbaric aggression against the Palestinian people and rejecting the targeting of civilians under any pretext, their forced displacement from their homes, their starvation and the denial of their safe access to humanitarian aid. All such actions are being perpetrated by Israel, the occupying Power, in contravention of international norms and laws, including the Charter of the United Nations, international humanitarian law and human rights law, in addition to the most basic shared human principles and values. Such actions are reprehensible and must be firmly rejected and condemned.

The OIC calls for an immediate halt to this unlawful aggression against the Palestinian people. There must be a ceasefire, and there must be protection for the civilian population in the Gaza Strip and the rest of the occupied Palestinian territory. Israel must be ordered to cease all of its crimes and brutality against the Palestinian people, including through an end to its inhumane siege of Gaza.

The OIC underlines, in that regard, the necessity to urgently provide to the Gaza Strip humanitarian, medical and relief aid, including food, water, fuel, electricity and non-food emergency items, including through the United Nations institutions and particularly the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. That aid is urgently needed, especially by the more than 1 million people who have already been forcibly displaced from their homes and who have lost everything as a result of the aggression. The OIC recognizes that those developments have come against the backdrop of the steep and continuous rise in Israel's systematic exercise of violence, human rights violations, provocations, incitement and acts of terror against the Palestinian civilian population in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Since the beginning of the month, both Israeli occupying forces and extremist settlers have escalated their rampages through Palestinian cities, villages and refugees camps, killing more than 79 Palestinians, including 20 children, demolishing homes, desecrating Islamic and Christian holy sites, torching properties and automobiles, destroying crops, uprooting trees,

terrorizing civilians and displacing dozens of families, in flagrant violation of international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

The OIC reiterates its categorical rejection of any attempts to violently and forcibly displace the Palestinian population, the majority of whom are already refugees from the Gaza Strip, or to transfer the crisis created by the Israeli occupation to neighbouring countries. It categorically rejects and opposes any attempts at the perpetration of another Nakba on the Palestinian people. That cannot be allowed to happen on our watch. The Security Council cannot let that happen on its watch, and it must act immediately to uphold its responsibility under the Charter for the maintenance of international peace and security, which is being threatened by the ongoing injustice and the grave crises that it continues to provoke. It is clear that the absence of any moral, legal or political deterrent on the global stage has emboldened Israel, the occupying Power, to blatantly pursue its illegal policies of colonial settlements and annexation, forced displacement of Palestinian civilians, systematic ethnic cleansing, organized acts of terrorism and desecration of holy places, especially the Al-Aqsa Mosque, and to persist in its denial and violation of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination and independence.

The OIC expresses its deep regret at the continued failure of this organ so far to adopt a decisive decision to halt the war crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip and throughout the Palestinian territory. The Security Council has failed in its historic obligations with respect to the question of Palestine — obligations that remain unfulfilled despite the passage of more than 75 years — thereby severely undermining its key role in maintaining international peace and security and protecting unarmed defenceless civilians. Immediate action must be taken by the Security Council and the international community as a whole to halt the brutal Israeli aggression; end impunity and ensure accountability for Israel, the occupying Power, for its war crimes and crimes against humanity, including this aggression and its more than 16-year illegal blockade of the Gaza Strip; provide international protection for the Palestinian people; and open humanitarian corridors in order to allow vital supplies of medicines, food and other basic life necessities to reach the civilian population in the Gaza Strip.

In conclusion, I reiterate the support of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation for the realization of the legitimate inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to return, to self-determination and to the achievement of the sovereignty and independence of the State of Palestine over all the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, based on the vision of two States, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Dandy (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I deliver this statement on behalf of Mr. Fayssal Mekdad, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates.

This October has seen an escalation of Israeli criminal acts and brutal acts of aggression beyond all imagining, with heartbreaking impacts on the Palestinian people, which constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity. The Israeli occupation is shelling populated residential buildings in Gaza, using internationally banned weapons, cutting off the delivery of the water, fuel, food, medicine and electricity, which are essential to sustaining the life of the people of Gaza, and threatening to forcibly displace them.

Israel has added a new and bloodier chapter to its long list of crimes, with its brutal shelling of the Al-Maamadani Hospital and the Orthodox Church, the third-oldest church in the world. In addition, it has targeted schools run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, which Palestinians believed were a safe refuge from Israeli bombing. Those massacres would not have occurred had it not been for the insistence of a number of Western countries to give Israel carte blanche, which they falsely call the right to self-defence, while shielding Israel with impunity and providing it with protection.

Syria reiterates that the main reason for the current escalation in the occupied Palestinian territories is the injustice suffered by the Palestinian people over decades of occupation. In waging this brutal war, Israel seeks to liquidate the Palestinian question through its massacres and genocide of the Palestinian people and pursues a scorched-earth policy. Israel once again reminds us of its dark past. The number of casualties caused by its aggression in recent days exceeds 5,000 martyrs, most of them women and children, which undeniably demonstrates that, through its extremist ideology and terror strategy, Israel is the other face of the terrorist organization Da'esh.

The Syrian Arab Republic condemns the conduct of the United States and its allies in the Security Council, which has led to the Council's inability to fulfil its responsibility to halt the Israeli aggression. The United States has not only impeded the Council, but it has also supported the Israeli war machine by sending its aircraft carriers to the region and providing Israel with advanced military equipment. It has also provided billions of dollars in support for Israel, in addition to using its media outlets to distort the struggle of the Palestinian people.

In that context, my country stresses that the Security Council must uphold its responsibility to end the Israeli massacres and crimes and to hold the perpetrators accountable, without political hypocrisy or double standards. We categorically reject the attempts to equate the killer with the victim and the occupation Power with the people who are under the yoke of occupation and have been denied their basic rights for 75 years. My country reiterates its support for the Palestinian question, and we will spare no effort in supporting the brotherly Palestinian people in their legitimate struggle to restore their stolen rights, including their inalienable rights to self-defence, resist the occupation, liberate their land and establish an independent State, with Jerusalem as its capital.

The Syrian Arab Republic calls upon the Security Council to shoulder its responsibility to end Israel's barbaric attacks against the Palestinian people through the immediate cessation of the Israeli aggression, while providing urgent humanitarian aid to the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip and rejecting any plans or attempts to displace them. We underscore that the region will never enjoy stability as long as the Palestinian people remain deprived of their rights, the occupation of Arab territories continues and disregard for the relevant resolutions of international legitimacy persists.

Israel's crimes in Palestine cannot be separated from its practices in the occupied Syrian Golan since 1967, which are reflected in its continued policy of aggression against our people in the Golan and in its heinous violations of international law and international humanitarian law, which include detentions, killings and displacement; an ongoing expansionist settlement policy aimed at entrenching occupation, increasing settlers and imposing demographic change; and looting of the Golan's natural resources, confiscations of agricultural land and the construction of large wind turbines on territory that does not belong to Israel, in addition to other projects that are having disastrous consequences.

Simultaneously, alongside its aggression against the Palestinian people in Gaza, Israel has continued its repeated aggressions against the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic. On 22 October, for the third time in a row in a week, Israel carried out an air strike targeting the two international airports of Damascus and Aleppo, resulting in the martyrdom of a civilian worker at Damascus airport, threatening the safety of civil aviation, impeding United Nations humanitarian operations and physically damaging the runways of the two airports, leading to another suspension of the two airports' operations after they had been repaired following the previous attack. That is proof that Israel has no regard for civilian life, as it continues perpetrating the crimes that are the main feature of its conduct in the region.

In conclusion, my country condemns Israel's violations and repeated attacks on Syrian territory and on our people in the occupied Syrian Golan. We want to warn Israel against those continued violations, which will lead to increased violence in the region that it will not be possible to contain.

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

Ms. Hussain (Maldives): My delegation would like to express its gratitude to Brazil for organizing today's highly pertinent open debate concerning the situation in the Middle East, and for its ongoing dedication to resolving the current crisis in the region. Additionally, we want to thank the Secretary-General and the briefers for their invaluable insights.

The Maldives comes before the Council today with a heavy heart. We are bearing witness to an ongoing tragedy that has gripped the world, one that should shake the very core of our humanity. We have reached a point where we cannot simply present dry facts and statistics. We must implore each and every one of the members of the Council to recognize the immense pain and suffering unfolding in Gaza and across Palestine. The Israeli military aggression against innocent civilians, particularly children, has unleashed a level of devastation that words cannot describe. The loss of life, the destruction of homes and the continued bombing of Gaza defy all principles of international law and basic humanity. It is a deeply shameful moment when we are compelled to debate such a grave issue. We, as members of the United Nations, have a responsibility to protect innocent lives through diplomacy and resolve

conflict through peaceful means. The urgency of the situation demands not just our attention but our swift and resolute action. The time to fulfil our duty is now.

Today we are witnessing the culmination of seven decades of repression, which has now escalated into pain and devastation that are beyond our imagination. The inability of the Security Council to hold countries accountable and find a definitive solution is exacerbating the crisis. We must remember that international cooperation and diplomacy have always been the cornerstone of our efforts to address such human tragedies, and that must continue. On 18 October, the Council failed to condemn acts of terrorism, violence and hostilities against innocent civilians (see S/PV.9442). It failed to call for the immediate and unconditional release of hostages and the protection of medical personnel, humanitarian workers, hospitals and facilities. Its inability to agree on a humanitarian ceasefire underscores the pressing need to involve a broader representation of Member States in addressing these critical security issues. We are not just dismayed but deeply disappointed at the Council's failure to act swiftly and decisively to end this harrowing situation. The horrendous attack on the Al Ahli Hospital in Gaza claimed hundreds of innocent lives, including children. That attack was cruel, devoid of any semblance of human decency and a blatant violation of international humanitarian law. This tragedy could have been avoided, just like so many other attacks that have been made on other hospitals, schools, places of worship and civilian infrastructure.

Let me take a moment to remind the Council of the importance of upholding resolutions 476 (1980) and 478 (1980), which nullified actions altering Jerusalem's status, and resolution 2334 (2016), which distinguished the status of Israel's territories post-1967. In the face of the enduring, prolonged occupation of Palestine despite the international outcry, it is not only the Council's credibility that is at stake. It is the moral imperative that it has to enforce its own resolutions for the maintenance of global peace and security. Furthermore, the Maldives firmly believes that a lasting solution to the conflict can be achieved only through the internationally accepted concept of a two-State solution, with the establishment of an independent, sovereign Palestinian State, based on the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

In this challenging time, the Government and the people of the Maldives stand in complete solidarity with the people of Palestine. As a demonstration of our solidarity with the Palestinian people, President

Ibrahim Mohamed Solih has decided today to send 2 million cans of tuna to Palestine. We hope that our small donation will remind our brothers and sisters in Palestine that we in the Maldives stand with them. We echo the impassioned calls for an immediate ceasefire, the establishment of a humanitarian corridor, an end to mass forced displacement in Gaza and the protection of the civilian population. The Maldives reaffirms its unwavering support for the Palestinian people in their legitimate quest for their inalienable rights, including self-determination. We implore the Council to take swift action, not as a matter of political convenience but as a moral duty that transcends borders and politics for a more peaceful world.

In conclusion, the Maldives calls on the Council to act with compassion and courage. The lives of innocent children and families in Gaza hang in the balance. We must put an end to the suffering and ensure a brighter, more peaceful future for all and for future generations. The time for action is now.

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

Mr. Kulháněk (Czechia): Czechia aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union, and I would like to add some remarks in my national capacity.

Czechia reiterates its clear condemnation of the brutal terrorist attacks by Hamas and other terrorist groups on Israel that resulted in the unprecedented loss of innocent lives and human suffering. More than 200 people, including children and the elderly, are still being held hostage by Hamas. We call on Hamas to immediately release all its hostages, without any preconditions. We strongly emphasize Israel's right to defend itself and its population against this terror, in accordance with international law.

This war is not Israel's choice. It is a choice by Hamas and other terrorist organizations, with no regard for the consequences for the Palestinian population. Civilian casualties, both Israeli and Palestinian, are reported daily. Homes, hospitals and schools are being damaged. Hamas has embedded itself in civilian communities and is using innocent Palestinian civilians as human shields. That is not acceptable — all civilians must be protected at all times, in line with international humanitarian law.

The humanitarian situation in Gaza has grown dire. We welcome the entry of aid convoys into Gaza in recent days, and we support the calls to step up the delivery of

urgent humanitarian aid, while ensuring that such aid is not abused by terrorists. We commend all regional and international efforts to de-escalate the situation and prevent the Hamas-Israel conflict from spiralling into a regional war. To that end, actions that incite violence and escalate the conflict, as well as support for terrorist groups such as Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, must be rejected.

Czechia is firmly committed to a lasting and sustainable peace based on the two-State solution, which remains the only realistic foundation for ensuring Israel's security and fulfilling the Palestinian desire for statehood. In the wider context, we hope that the positive dynamics that the region has been working on can be re-established. Last but not least, let me mention that Czechia welcomes the most recent efforts of the United States of America to address this complex situation by proposing a draft resolution. We hope that the Council will be able to take unified action.

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

Ms. Jimenez de la Hoz (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this debate.

Spain associates itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union.

Following the Hamas terrorist attacks against Israel on 7 October, the situation in the Middle East is degenerating into a new escalation of violence, with unforeseeable consequences for the region and the rest of the world. The Government of Spain has reiterated its condemnation of terrorism and violence and its solidarity with the victims. Spain has recognized Israel's right to defend itself against those terrorist attacks. Such defence must be in full compliance with international law and international humanitarian law.

We support the Secretary-General's call for a humanitarian pause. The humanitarian situation in Gaza is worsening by the day. Israel and the rest of the international community have a duty to protect the civilian population of Palestine and to allow access for the delivery of humanitarian aid and supplies to the people of Gaza, especially drinking water, food, medicine and fuel for desalination plants. The Spanish Government will double Spain's aid to Palestine this year to meet the needs arising from the conflict.

We have expressed our concern about the situation of more than 200 hostages, one of whom is a Spanish citizen. All the hostages must be released immediately and unconditionally. The use of hostages constitutes a war crime.

The risk of regional spillover of the conflict — both to the West Bank and to southern Lebanon and other countries in the region — is high. An escalation of the conflict and a regional crisis must be avoided at all costs. To that end, we must avoid the political weaponization of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. It is essential to support the work of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, which has been contributing to reducing tensions among regional actors. Spain is firmly committed to doing so.

Without a doubt, those issues are urgent. However, we must also focus on what is important. Starting now, we must establish credible prospects for peace for the day after the cessation of the current hostilities. That can be done only by bringing to fruition a two-State solution whereby the two States, Israel and Palestine, will coexist in peace and security, in accordance with the parameters that the Security Council has repeatedly validated.

Spain has always been convinced that the two-State solution is the only possible response to the national aspirations of Palestinians and Israelis. To that end, we affirm the need to convene an international peace conference involving the parties and the international community, within a short period of time after the current hostilities have ceased. We must recover the spirit that guided the 1991 Madrid Peace Conference and the Oslo Accords. The objective must be to guide a process that began more than three decades ago to a successful conclusion. That is the only way to prevent new cycles of violence.

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

Mr. Ladeb (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Tor Wennesland and Ms. Lynn Hastings for their briefings.

Despite the successive meetings held by the Security Council over the past two weeks and the related consultations and draft resolutions (S/2023/772 and S/2023/773), Council members have been unable to adopt any of them. Meanwhile, the occupation forces continue their massacres against the Palestinian population, with nearly 5,800 martyrs, more than 2,000 of whom were children, as well as more than 16,000 people injured and 1.1 million people forcibly displaced to unsafe locations, leaving the population of Gaza completely besieged and cut off from and deprived of the most basic means of survival.

It is ironic that today, on United Nations Day, the Organization commemorates the anniversary of the adoption of the Charter of the United Nations against the backdrop of the shocking failure of the international community and the Security Council to reach consensus on a ceasefire and on preventing aggression and ensuring security and a humanitarian response, which are the Council's basic mandate for maintaining peace and security under Article 24 of the Charter.

The killing, destruction, displacement and siege to which the Palestinian people are being subjected constitute the natural outcome of the long silence of the international community in the face of the violations, policies of aggression and disregard for international humanitarian conventions exercised by the occupying Power.

We stress that it is unacceptable by any standard for this state of affairs to persist; for the Security Council and United Nations organs to be held hostage to diversions and political calculations; for the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations to be subverted at the expense of the lives, security and rights of millions of Palestinians; and for the occupying Power to exploit that as cover and a justification for continuing to perpetrate and intensify its crimes with total impunity, under the pretext of the right to self-defence and a policy of *fait accompli*.

The international community's handling of the dangerous situation in the region and the genocide of the Palestinian people are in total contravention of the universal values, purposes and principles that underpin the Charter of the United Nations, international humanitarian law and the human rights system, which has undermined people's trust in the international system, its institutions and ethical values.

Do international human rights law and international humanitarian law not apply to all people under the Charter? Do they cease to apply at the border of the occupied Palestinian territories? Do Palestinian lives and security have no value? Do they not deserve to be defended?

How long will we maintain an approach that consists of managing the conflict without resolving it, and without addressing the repercussions of the repeated cycles of violence and aggression, with thousands more dead and an ever-deeper humanitarian tragedy each time? How long will we wait until we address the root causes of all the crises and ills in the region, namely, the occupation, the failure to implement the more than 1,000 United Nations resolutions on the Palestinian question, the disregard for international law and the lack of accountability?

Therefore, while underscoring the need to halt the aggression, provide relief to the Palestinian people and prevent their displacement, Tunisia stresses that the situation cannot be handled as it has been in the past. There must be genuine political will based on foresight and a belief in the universal values of justice, peace, equality and human rights. There must be genuine international efforts that are free of bias and double standards so as to bring the occupation to an end and empower the Palestinian people to enjoy all their legitimate rights which are internationally recognized. That will end their suffering, achieve peace and restore security and stability in the region and the world.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Sri Lanka.

Mr. Pieris (Sri Lanka): Sri Lanka is gravely concerned about the ongoing escalation of violence and military action in Gaza, which has resulted in deaths and injuries to many innocent civilians and children and is causing a grave humanitarian situation. Sri Lanka calls for the free movement of essential items and humanitarian aid, including food, fuel, medicine and electricity and the water supply to Gaza. We call on all sides to immediately halt violence and take steps to prevent further civilian casualties.

We also call upon the international community to redouble its support to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, which is playing a commendable and courageous role in helping vulnerable populations under extremely challenging circumstances.

Sri Lanka wishes to reiterate its call to all parties to the conflict to keep open a humanitarian corridor to provide urgent humanitarian assistance to the civilians in Gaza. We are committed to supporting the efforts and activities of the Secretary-General in his endeavour to mitigate the suffering of the people, the loss and damage to life and property and to bring about a ceasefire.

Sri Lanka is no stranger to the scourge of terrorism. We condemn terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, including by all who resort to violence to achieve their goals, whether political or otherwise. Sri Lanka strongly condemns the violent terror attacks targeting civilians and calls for the immediate release of all hostages taken into Gaza.

While recognizing the legitimate and sensitive security concerns of both the Israeli and the Palestinian peoples, we observe that indiscriminate actions that

cause civilian casualties will only make the realization of an enduring peace a distant reality. We support diplomatic efforts to find a lasting solution to the conflict and request both parties to engage in a dialogue to achieve durable peace.

Sri Lanka remains committed to supporting a just and comprehensive negotiated political settlement to the Palestine issue in line with relevant United Nations resolutions, leading to two States — Palestine and Israel — living side by side based on the 1967 borders.

Amid all the death and the destruction that we witness today, is it not it worthwhile to ask the question: Where will all this action lead us to? Are we propelling the whole world into a greater calamity than the ones we are already faced with? Are not our actions making collective decision-making more untenable? It is time that all actors take a step back and reflect on the gravity of their actions. Endless cycles of recrimination with threats to annihilate the other can only hurt.

The well-being of humankind — its peace and security — are unattainable unless and until its unity is firmly established. It is said that peace is a by-product of trust, and trust is created when we focus on who our neighbour is and who we are to him. Let us transpose that ethos to the present environment, as it is only then that our work in the United Nations can be structured to accommodate one another as members of one human family, in a spirit of true humanity. Is not that the missing link in the resolution of the conflict at hand?

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

Mr. García Toma (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): I begin my statement at a critical time for those who believe in peace by thanking you, Mr. President, for convening of this quarterly debate and underscoring the efficient and thoughtful way in which Brazil has led the Security Council, encouraging the search for a solution to the serious situation that has emerged around the Gaza Strip.

Peru adds its voice to the international concerns expressed about the escalation of extreme violence unleashed as a result of the terrorist acts against Israel, carried out by Hamas on 7 October. Peru, in accordance with its own experience in the past and with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations which bring us together, categorically rejects terrorism in all its manifestations, regardless of where it comes from.

At the same time, I recall that the right to self-defence must be exercised within the framework of respect for international law, including international humanitarian law, taking into consideration the principles of distinction and proportionality. That is in order to ensure that the civilian population is not affected in any way. Therefore, we make an urgent call on the parties involved to reach a comprehensive and immediate ceasefire.

Peru strongly condemns the launching of rockets into Israel from the Gaza Strip and the indiscriminate air and land bombardments by Israel in response. Similarly, it expresses its deepest indignation, rejection and condemnation about the attack carried out against the Al Ahli Arab Hospital, on 17 October, which caused hundreds of deaths and injuries.

Any act that encourages radicalization and leads to an escalation of violence cannot and should not be encouraged by the international community. Such conduct would be unacceptable in the case of the Member States of this Organization. In that regard, we must comply with our commitments under the Charter of the United Nations.

In view of that, Peru joins the Secretary-General's call for Hamas to immediately and without conditions release the hostages under its control and for Israel to facilitate rapid and unimpeded access for humanitarian aid, based on the establishment of a corridor that provides all guarantees to the affected civilian population.

Peru deeply regrets that the valuable efforts made by the Brazilian presidency to adopt draft resolution S/2023/773, calling for the cessation of hostilities, did not have the expected results because of the use of the veto by one permanent members. We believe that the text of that draft resolution reflected a strong message of multilateral political will to reaffirm the principles and commitments undertaken for the promotion and maintenance of international peace and security and the call to the parties to respect and comply with the resolutions adopted by the Security Council on the question of Palestine.

In 1947, Peru was a member and Vice-Chair of the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine, which proposed the creation of two States: Palestine and Israel. Unconditionally consistent with that historic position, Peru once again supports the full implementation of resolution 2334 (2016), which demands that all settlement activity be halted and the elements for a just and lasting solution be established so that the two

States can coexist, within secure borders, on the basis of the 1967 border lines, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions.

I conclude by expressing the heartfelt condolences and the solidarity of the people of Peru to the families of those affected in this unfortunate conflict, regardless of their nationality or faith. Let it be understood that, for Peruvians, the victims of violence are also our victims.

The President: I now give the floor to the observer of the Observer State of the Holy See.

Archbishop Caccia (Holy See): There has been a distressing escalation of violence in Israel and Palestine in recent weeks, resulting in deplorable levels of suffering. Considering the fact that war is always a defeat for humankind because it hinders the human family's innate vocation to fraternity, my delegation would like to make three points.

First, the Holy See condemns, unequivocally and in the most absolute terms, the terrorist attack carried out by Hamas and other armed groups on 7 October against the population of Israel. Thousands were barbarically killed or wounded, and others were taken hostage. As Pope Francis has clearly stated, terrorism and extremism fuel hatred, violence and revenge and cause only mutual suffering. Those crimes demonstrate utter contempt for human life and are unjustifiable. My delegation reiterates Pope Francis's call for the immediate release of all hostages held in Gaza.

Secondly, the Holy See would like to remind the Council that the criminal responsibility for terrorist acts is always personal and can never be attributed to an entire nation or people. In exercising its right to self-defence in any conflict, every country must always comply with international humanitarian law, including the principle of proportionality.

Thirdly, the Holy See is gravely concerned about the humanitarian disaster unfolding in Gaza, which has claimed thousands of lives and displaced hundreds of thousands of people. The total siege imposed on Gaza has caused indiscriminate suffering among the population, including as a result of shortages of food, fuel and medical supplies. The Holy See appeals for facilitating and continuing humanitarian corridors urgently so that aid can reach the entire population.

Amid the escalating violence, it is imperative for the authorities of the State of Israel and the State of Palestine to boldly renew their commitment to a peace based on justice and respect for the legitimate

aspirations of both sides. While the path of dialogue appears narrow at this moment, it is the only viable option for a lasting end to the cycle of violence that has engulfed the land so dear to Christians, Jews and Muslims. The Holy See believes firmly that a two-State solution still offers hope for such a peace.

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

Mr. Oskarsson (Iceland): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important debate. Our thanks also go to the briefers for their contributions.

Iceland is appalled by the recent hostilities in Israel and Palestine and deeply concerned about the risk of further escalation. Yet another great tragedy is unfolding for millions of Israelis and Palestinians. We deplore the immense suffering of innocent civilians and the fact that thousands, including children, have been killed. We are alarmed by the impact of the mass evacuations of civilians in Gaza. Sadly, the atrocities are fuelling the flames of hate, antisemitism, Islamophobia and racism across the world. Iceland has condemned the barbaric acts committed by Hamas in the strongest terms. Let us be clear. Terrorism can never be justified. The hostages should be released immediately and unconditionally.

We also reiterate that while Israel has a clear right to defend itself, it must do so within the bounds of international law, which provides States with rights and obligations, both of them sacred. International humanitarian law must be respected and upheld at all times. Any alleged breaches of it must be carefully investigated. Safe and unimpeded humanitarian access must be ensured and civilians and civilian objects, medical personnel and humanitarian workers and assets must be protected. Iceland has responded to United Nations emergency appeals with an additional contribution of 70 million Icelandic króna to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), a long-standing humanitarian partner and the lead United Nations Agency mandated to support Palestinian refugees. We urge other donors to step up their support to UNRWA's critical front-line delivery of aid to the people of Gaza.

We call on all the parties to break out of the ongoing cycle of violence and work for a sustainable political solution based on international law, the relevant Security Council resolutions and the agreed parameters. The international parameters for a sustainable solution to the conflict are clear. The end destination is well known, but the road itself is in serious need of

reconstruction. We need a credible process towards a two-State solution based on international law, with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security and mutual recognition. That will not be achieved while Israel continues its settlement policies in the West Bank and its blockade of Gaza. Nor will it be achieved while Hamas continues to use its position in Gaza to fan the flames of radicalism and inflict terror on innocent civilians.

This month's tragic events in Israel and Palestine remind us once again of the urgent need to put the peace process back on track. Otherwise we run the risk of the violence continuing and conditions deteriorating even further.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Beresford-Hill.

Mr. Beresford-Hill: The Sovereign Order of Malta would like to express its appreciation to the Brazilian presidency for the opportunity to speak as a neutral and non-partisan witness to the pain and suffering that has bedevilled the land in which the Order was founded 900 years ago.

Our love of the Holy Land, sacred as it is to Jews and to Muslims, has been severely tested by the calculated violence that has recently been unleashed on so many innocent people, whose only desire is to live in communities that are peaceful and prosperous, where the young can live lives of opportunity and brotherhood, not poverty, hatred or mistrust. We all know the statistics, which we have heard so often — the numbers of innocent Jewish children, mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters and elders. We have seen the devastating bombing of cities and towns, the million people displaced, heard the cries of Palestinian children and their parents and witnessed the sheer hopelessness of it all. We are very much aware of the level of carnage and destruction, a level that we have not seen since the Second World War but have been starkly reminded of as we have watched the conflict unfold in Ukraine.

The health-care system in Gaza is under immense strain, as 30 per cent of hospitals cannot function and the rest are at breaking point. Since 7 October, there have been 143 attacks on health-care facilities, 81 of them in the West Bank, affecting ambulances and compounded by physical violence against health and emergency personnel. In Gaza, 62 attacks on medical facilities have resulted in more than 500 fatalities and another 500 health-care workers injured and unable to accomplish their mission. That is alongside the

thousands of civilians killed and the tens of thousands injured. The numbers go on and on, with one single question in the mind of all who hear a bomb explode or are anticipating their own death or injury — when will all of this end?

Regardless of which faction was responsible for the attack on Al Ahli Hospital or who the missiles that landed in its grounds belonged to, one thing is clear. It is the innocent who ultimately bear the heaviest burden. Whether that burden was created by wars and invasions long ago; whether it is the consequence of great Powers intent on creating their spheres of influence; or whether it is an expression of the struggle between the haves and the have-nots, whatever the origin, Al Ahli Hospital is symbolic of what that once Holy Land has become — a self-fulfilling prophecy of death, destruction and hatred.

The Security Council has been debating Palestine for many decades, and some of the best and most astute brains in the world have failed to achieve much more than piecemeal and half-won compromises. Yes, there have been promises — a lot of promises. Perhaps this moment of global introspection, with its fear of the potential that it could escalate into another Balkan crisis reminiscent of the First World War, will result in something more than safe corridors or 20 trucks a day bringing critical aid to 2 million people or the staggered release of innocent hostages, all of them victims. All those things are necessary and needed — but are they enough?

On behalf of the world's forgotten, the sick and the poor, the Sovereign Order of Malta appeals to everyone in this Chamber to find a path to peace in the Holy Land that is rooted in justice and humanitarian law and that will finally turn swords into ploughshares and end the suffering and privation of the innocent, a solution that we hope will hold fast to the revealed truth of Allah, of Yahweh and of our Heavenly Father — the one God of the three Abrahamic faiths — who is at one and the same time a God of mercy, a God of love, a God of compassion and above all a God of forgiveness.

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

Ms. Benn (Guyana): Guyana aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representative of Mauritania, on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and by the Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

The delegation of Guyana expresses its grave concern about the escalating violence between Palestine and Israel following the attack on Israel by Hamas on 7 October. The ongoing violations of international law, including international humanitarian law, are taking an increasing and unacceptable human toll, with innocent civilians, especially women, children and the elderly, bearing the brunt of the unfolding tragedy.

We unequivocally condemn the 7 October attack on Israel and the violence that has ensued, which is now being perpetrated by both sides. The continuing bloodshed has created a veritable human cauldron that faces a very present risk of boiling over beyond the immediate parties concerned. We call for an immediate end to the hostilities and for prompt relief for the victims, who are suffering immensely as a result of those events. We strongly urge the parties to lay down their arms and ensure the protection of civilians, in accordance with international law and international humanitarian law.

The debilitating humanitarian crisis in Gaza risks becoming deeper and more protracted, involving mass displacements, severe medical emergencies, acute food insecurity and aggravated socioeconomic complications. The overwhelming human costs of the current hostilities require the most urgent efforts to de-escalate the situation. We are therefore concerned about the rhetoric that suggests that de-escalation may yet be a long way off, and we call on those with influence on the parties to spare no effort in working for an urgent and comprehensive ceasefire.

Guyana acknowledges the unstinting efforts of United Nations agencies and other actors on behalf of the population in the Gaza Strip under extremely difficult circumstances. The entrance of the first aid convoy into Gaza last Saturday was an important fruit of those efforts. We appeal to the parties to ensure that aid can reach the people of Gaza, without conditions, in a safe, dependable and unimpeded manner. Guyana stresses the importance in that regard of achieving a comprehensive ceasefire.

My delegation remains conscious of the long-standing suffering of the Palestinian people under the illegal occupation and blockade of their territory. That decades-long indignity must be brought to an end. The United Nations, and indeed the Security Council, must do more to ensure that it moves beyond a business-as-usual approach to the issue. We must be deliberate in and committed to reinvigorating the peace process with a view to the crucial realization of a two-State solution.

We must work for a just and lasting resolution to the question of Palestine. That is our duty, and the stability of the entire region rests on it.

Guyana notes with regret that the Council has so far failed to fulfil its obligations under the Charter of the United Nations to provide a definitive response to the current situation, despite the commendable efforts that have been engaged to that end. Silence cannot be an option for this organ, which holds the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. In our assessment, the draft resolutions that have been submitted so far (S/2023/772 and S/2023/773), while not fully addressing all the crucial elements requiring attention at this stage, nonetheless contain critical humanitarian elements that must be immediately addressed to bring relief to the civilian populations who are suffering due to the hostilities.

My delegation's appeal to the Council is to unite and send a clear message to the people of Israel and Palestine that it stands with them and recognizes the suffering that they have endured and continue to endure, and that it has collectively decided to respond on the side of international law. The lives of men, women and children — I repeat, children — depend on that, and I urge for that responsibility not to be taken lightly.

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

Mrs. Eat (Cambodia): I would first like to express my appreciation to you, Mr. President, for convening today's open debate.

The recent escalation of conflict and violence in the region is of great concern. My delegation joins others in mourning the loss of so many innocent lives, including that of a Cambodian citizen. We convey our deepest sympathies and condolences to the families of those killed on both sides in the ongoing conflict.

Cambodia condemns all acts of violence and condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. We urge in all circumstances for peace to be prioritized to enable both nations to exercise their rights to development rather than suffering a protracted war. It is of the utmost importance to address the root causes of the Palestine-Israel conflict if both nations are to coexist in harmony. Allow me to put forth three points on the recent developments in the Middle East.

First, it is heartbreaking to see the increasing number of civilian casualties and the pain that the people are enduring. My delegation urges all parties

to exercise the utmost restraint, abide by international humanitarian law and engage constructively in dialogue in order to de-escalate the situation and achieve a ceasefire or a humanitarian pause.

Secondly, the lives and safety of civilians must be protected from harm in conflicts. My delegation therefore urges all sides not to target civilians and civilian infrastructure and to allow humanitarian access for the delivery of essential aid such as food, water and medicine to those in need, in accordance with international humanitarian law.

Thirdly, we call on the Security Council and the international community to unite in a spirit of solidarity and sincerity in order to foster meaningful dialogue and negotiations leading to a just and lasting peace.

In conclusion, my delegation welcomes the fact that on Thursday of this week the President of the General Assembly will convene a resumption of the Assembly's tenth emergency special session, on this important topic. We hope it will result in a positive outcome. Lastly, I would like to salute the dedication and sacrifice of the members of the United Nations staff as they work to bring relief and help to the people in need.

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

Mr. Massari (Italy): Let me first thank Mr. Vieira for presiding over this open debate. I would also like to convey to him the deep appreciation of Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani of Italy, following their direct contacts, for Brazil's wise stewardship of the Council and constant efforts to de-escalate this crisis.

We align ourselves with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union and would like to add some remarks in our national capacity.

We are meeting today at an unprecedentedly tragic juncture, almost 20 days after the heinous terrorist attacks by Hamas, which have left the world in shock at the brutal murders of innocent people, the extermination of entire families and the annihilation of the dreams of

a young generation dancing at a music festival. In the wake of that senseless rampage, I would like to remind us all that terrorism is never justifiable. That is why we denounce Hamas's atrocious, cowardly attacks and the continued indiscriminate firing of rockets from the Gaza Strip. That is why we firmly condemn the taking of hostages and demand the immediate, unconditional release of all hostages without any preconditions. That is why Italy stands firmly in solidarity with Israel, recognizing its right to self-defence in compliance with international law, international human rights law and international humanitarian law.

At the same time, we cannot ignore the fact that Hamas does not represent the Palestinian people and that the Palestinian people in Gaza have suffered terribly in the past few days. It is therefore urgent to address the gravity of the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip and to enable the safe and unimpeded passage of aid in order to deliver food, water, fuel, electricity, medical care, medicines and safe shelter. The Middle East is becoming a powder keg, and the risk of a spillover of the conflict at the regional level is just around the corner. In efforts to avert that scenario, Italy is continuing its constructive engagement with partners in the region. Prime Minister Meloni was in Cairo last Saturday for the summit convened by President Al Sisi. She also recently met with Prime Minister Netanyahu, President Abbas and King Abdullah II of Jordan, among other leaders. Our Foreign Minister, Mr. Tajani, has been in contact with all international and regional partners, travelling to Israel, Jordan, Egypt and Tunisia. It is important that all parties take immediate steps to de-escalate and avoid any provocation or miscalculation.

Lastly, I would like to recall the pressing need for a political solution on the basis of internationally agreed parameters, leading to a two-State solution. Even at this dark hour, it is essential to be forward-looking, with the aim of relaunching a political horizon and getting back to work on a solution based on the concept of two peoples and two States.

The meeting rose at 9.25 p.m.