



Security Council

Seventy-eighth year

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New York

Provisional

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| <i>President:</i> | Mr. Kariuki/Mr. Eckersley | (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) |
| <i>Members:</i> | Albania | Mr. Spasse |
| | Brazil | Mrs. Espeschit Maia |
| | China | Ms. Wang Yingtong |
| | Ecuador | Mr. Egas Benavides |
| | France | Mr. Nely |
| | Gabon | Ms. Oye |
| | Ghana | Ms. Osei |
| | Japan | Mr. Nishiyama |
| | Malta | Mr. Camilleri |
| | Mozambique | Mr. Buanahagi |
| | Russian Federation | Mr. Khloponin |
| | Switzerland | Mr. Carpenter |
| | United Arab Emirates | Ms. Almenhali |
| | United States of America | Ms. Postel |

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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The meeting was resumed at 3.35 p.m.

The President: I would like to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than three 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 three minutes.

I now give the floor to Mr. Camelli.

Mr. Camelli: The European Union (EU) and its member States are deeply concerned about the increasing violence and extremism in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory, which are leading to appalling numbers of civilian casualties. The EU deplores the increase in violence, which has not only resulted in tragic loss of life but also fuels tension and animosity. We call on all sides to genuinely recommit to reaching a two-State solution in order to enhance stability, increase prosperity and strengthen security for Israelis and Palestinians alike. We continue to call on Israeli and Palestinian leaders to de-escalate the situation and to refrain from actions that will increase tension. The status quo of the holy sites must be upheld, in line with previous understandings and with respect for Jordan's special role. Peaceful coexistence between Christians, Jews and Muslims must be maintained.

The EU strongly condemns the indiscriminate launching of rockets into Israel by Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and other terrorist groups. The EU recognizes Israel's right to self-defence and to protect its civilian population, while underlining that this right must be exercised in a proportionate manner and with full respect for international humanitarian law. We firmly condemn the recent terror attacks in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory, as well as all forms of terrorism, and deplore the tragic loss of life. We remain committed to Israel's security and to preventing and fighting terrorism and violent extremism. There must be an immediate end to terror attacks, which everyone should condemn, as well as to the practices that support them.

We reaffirm our commitment to implementing previous Council decisions, including resolution 2334 (2016), as well as the applicability of international human rights and humanitarian law in the occupied Palestinian territory. We reiterate our strong opposition to Israel's settlement policy and activities, including in and around East Jerusalem. Actions such as evictions, forced transfers and the demolition and

confiscation of homes will only exacerbate an already tense environment and threaten the viability of a two-State solution. Israel must stop settlement expansion and legalization, prevent settler violence and ensure that the perpetrators are held accountable. The EU will not recognize changes to the 1967 lines unless they are agreed to by the parties. The humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip requires that restrictions be eased further, while taking Israel's legitimate security concerns into account.

The EU reaffirms its commitment to a just and comprehensive resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, based on a two-State solution, with the State of Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous, sovereign and viable State of Palestine living side by side in peace and security and mutual recognition, with Jerusalem serving as the future capital of both States. It is vital to restore a political horizon towards a two-State solution. Only a negotiated agreement offers a chance of security and peace for all.

There is an urgent need for a new perspective on peace. On 13 February, the EU High Representative and Vice-President, the Saudi Foreign Minister and the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States agreed to explore ways to revive and safeguard the prospect of a two-State solution and to achieve a just, comprehensive and lasting peace. The EU reaffirmed its proposal of an unprecedented package of economic, political and security support in the context of a final status agreement, as endorsed in the Council conclusions of December 2013. In that effort, we look forward to working closely with other Arab and international partners.

The EU will continue to call upon the Palestinian Authority to hold free, transparent and inclusive national elections without further delay. It urges all Palestinian factions to engage in good faith in the reconciliation process, adhere to previous agreements, renounce violence and terrorism, recognize Israel's right to exist and commit to democratic principles, including the rule of law. Democratic Palestinian institutions based on respect for the rule of law and human rights are vital for the Palestinian people and, ultimately, for the two-State solution.

Palestinian civil society must be allowed by all parties to carry out its important task freely, while freedom of expression must be upheld. The EU is proud of its continued support to civil society, which

contributes to peace efforts and confidence-building between Israelis and Palestinians.

In preparation for the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians on the margins of the general debate of the General Assembly in September, the EU calls for the implementation of the commitments made at previous meetings. Until there is a just, fair, agreed and realistic solution to the refugee issue, in accordance with international law, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) remains critical for providing the necessary protection and essential services for Palestine refugees and supporting peace and stability in the region. The EU will continue to support UNRWA in all its fields of operations, including in East Jerusalem. The EU will closely monitor developments and their implications on the ground and remains ready to contribute further to the protection and viability of the two-State solution.

Syria continues to be high on the priority list of the European Union and its member States. At the seventh Brussels Conference on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region, hosted and chaired by the European Union last June, the international community pledged €6.6 billion for 2023 and beyond, including €4.6 billion in 2023, for supporting people inside Syria and the neighbouring countries hosting Syrian refugees. The European Union pledged 70 per cent of the total grants, or €3.8 billion, with €2.1 billion by the European Commission and €1.7 billion by the member States. In addition, international financial institutions and donors have announced €4 billion in loans, in concessional terms, bringing the total of grants and loans to €9.6 billion, an increase of €800 million compared to what was achieved during last year's Conference.

That is a tangible demonstration that the international community stands by the Syrian people and those hosting them. The Conference reiterated the political, humanitarian and financial commitment of the international community to the Syrian people and renewed the continuous and steadfast support of the international community to Syria's neighbours in addressing the immediate and long-term challenges brought upon them by the conflict. The European Union and its member States continue to be the largest donor and have mobilized more than €30 billion to support Syrians in Syria and in the region to meet the needs arising from the Syrian crisis since 2011.

The only path to sustainable peace for Syria is a political solution, in line with resolution 2254 (2015), with the full, equal and meaningful participation of women and in line with the 2012 Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex). In the thirteenth year of the conflict, it remains essential that the international community continue to pursue a sustainable and comprehensive political solution in Syria. The EU stands firm in its commitment to that goal, supporting the continuous efforts of Special Envoy Pedersen to advance on all aspects of resolution 2254 (2015), including his step-for-step approach in furthering the political process and resuming the work of the Constitutional Committee.

The EU has taken note of the sovereign decision of the League of Arab States to readmit Syria. Our position has not changed. We reiterate that no normalization, lifting of sanctions or reconstruction will be possible until the Syrian regime engages in a credible, sustainable and inclusive political process, in the framework of resolution 2254 (2015). The EU notes, however, that, in the light of the recent earthquakes, the Security Council adopted humanitarian exemptions to the United Nations sanctions regimes in resolution 2664 (2022). While EU restrictive measures do not stand in the way of humanitarian relief efforts, food or medical supplies, the EU has decided, in the same spirit, to apply temporary exemptions to its own autonomous sanctions regime for Syria. That will facilitate the speedy delivery of humanitarian assistance and aid, and help to respond to the continuing urgency of the humanitarian crisis in Syria.

Accountability and justice for victims are essential for a stable, peaceful Syria. All parties responsible for breaches of international humanitarian law and violations and abuses of human rights, including sexual and gender-based violence, must be held accountable. We reiterate our call to have the situation in Syria referred to the International Criminal Court.

In the absence of international processes for justice, the prosecution of war crimes and other serious crimes, under national jurisdiction where possible, now well under way in several EU member States, represents a crucial contribution towards securing justice, as does the Dutch-Canadian initiative to hold Syria to account for breaching the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. We will continue to support efforts to gather evidence, with a view to future legal action, including by the International, Impartial and

Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011 and the work of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic.

The European Union commends Syria's neighbouring countries for hosting large numbers of refugees for more than a decade. We recall that the underlying causes of the refugee and displacement crises must be addressed under resolution 2254 (2015). The European Union continues to warn against any further displacement, in any part of Syria, as well as against the potential exploitation of such displacement for the purpose of social and demographic engineering. Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries are still unable to go back home, as the conditions for safe, dignified and voluntary return, in line with the parameters defined by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and in accordance with international law, are not fulfilled. It is the responsibility of the Syrian regime to remove those obstacles, and we will be in a position to support returns only once those conditions are satisfied.

The Syrian regime must fully cooperate with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and its investigations on the use of chemical weapons in the conflict, including the attack in Douma, as well as on the completion of the dismantling of its chemical weapons programme. The European Union, as a member of the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons, will continue to work towards ensuring full accountability.

The European Union deplores the veto the Russian Federation cast, on 11 July, on the renewal of resolution 2672 (2023) regarding the cross-border delivery of humanitarian assistance in north-western Syria. That veto will further exacerbate the already dire humanitarian situation in the region and gravely disrupt the delivery of life-saving humanitarian supplies to millions in need. We call on the Security Council to undertake efforts to find a solution that will enable cross-border assistance to continue.

Civilians must be protected at all times. The European Union echoes the calls made by the Security Council for the implementation of a nationwide ceasefire. Türkiye's security concerns stemming from northern Syria need to be addressed through political and diplomatic means, and in full compliance with international human rights law.

Early-recovery projects are important to support resilience, community capacity-building and self-reliance of the Syrian people and for their future. EU-funded projects in that regard are intended for those in genuine need and designed to strengthen the sustainability and cost-effectiveness of the humanitarian response. The European Union will not, however, fund early-recovery efforts that could support social and demographic engineering.

Syria has one of the highest numbers of detained, abducted and missing persons in the world owing to the ongoing conflict. We therefore welcome the adoption of the General Assembly resolution (resolution 77/301) for the establishment of a new Independent Institution on Missing Persons in the Syrian Arab Republic. The new Institution will address a clear humanitarian imperative. It will not only clarify the fate and whereabouts of missing persons in Syria, but will also provide adequate support to meet the needs of the victims, survivors and families of those missing. The European Union stands ready to support that new Institution.

We also salute the ongoing work of the other actors on the issue, including Syrian civil society, the International Commission on Missing Persons, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and emphasize the need for enhanced cooperation. We look forward to engaging constructively in the upcoming discussions to establish the new mechanism.

In conclusion, the EU remains committed to the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Syrian State, and will continue to call on all parties to the conflict, particularly the Syrian regime and its allies, to advance a credible, sustainable and inclusive political solution, based on the full and comprehensive implementation of resolution 2254 (2015). It is the only route to sustainable peace in Syria.

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

Mr. Elshandawily (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on the United Kingdom's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I would also like to thank Mr. Khiari for his briefing.

Egypt aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Bangladesh, on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and the statements

to be made by the representatives of Yemen, on behalf of the Group of Arab States, and Azerbaijan, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

There can be no question that every member of the Security Council is fully aware of the regrettable developments in the occupied Palestinian territories over the past few weeks, particularly the Israeli occupation forces' incursion into the city and refugee camp of Jenin, which resulted in the martyrdom of some Palestinians and injuries to scores of others, despite the efforts that Egypt and many other regional and international actors have been making to contain the escalating violence in the occupied Palestinian territory. Egypt has repeatedly warned that Israel's ongoing unilateral measures would undermine those efforts to improve the conditions on the ground, based on the progress that was made at the Al-Aqaba and Sharm El-Sheikh meetings held in February and March, in which both Palestinian and Israeli representatives participated.

The violence against civilians has been condemned by members at a number of Council meetings in the past few weeks, echoing the position of Egypt and other countries and emphasizing the dangerous consequences of Israel's continued violations through its settlement expansion, demolition of Palestinian homes and facilities, incursions into Palestinian cities and killing of unarmed civilians by Israeli occupation forces and settlers, including children, as well as its violation of the status quo at the holy sites in East Jerusalem under Jordan's custodianship. As for the occupied Syrian Golan, the situation there is no better. Israel's attempts to seize land with a view to installing wind turbines to generate electricity are in violation of the relevant United Nations resolutions and international law requiring the occupying forces to refrain from changing the situation on the ground.

Through its adoption of resolution 77/23, the General Assembly recently commemorated the 1948 Nakba, which remains the crux of the continuing legitimate question as to how much longer the Palestinian people must continue to suffer. How much longer must the non-compliance with United Nations and Security Council resolutions on the Palestinian question and the Arab territory that has been occupied since 1967 in the Syrian Golan and in southern Lebanon continue? How much longer will the Security Council remain unable to provide international protection for the Palestinian people, despite the fact that we are seeing civilians targeted on a daily basis by the occupying forces and

the settlers? Any discussion on meaningful reform of the Council should include the issue that is the most obvious of all, that is, ensuring respect for the Council's resolutions, which represent the will of the international community.

Egypt has made it clear that the Palestinian question is the core issue for the Arab nation and that achieving peace and security in the Middle East will remain impossible if the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and the liberation of the occupied Arab land in the Syrian Golan and southern Lebanon are not achieved. I want to note that Egypt welcomes the decision of our sister nation of Jordan to convene a ministerial conference on 21 September, on the sidelines of the General Assembly at its seventy-eighth session, to garner the political and financial support needed for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, given the unprecedented deficit that the Agency is facing this year, with a view to ensuring that its operational activities can continue and to strengthening regional security and stability.

In conclusion, Egypt reiterates its firm support for the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, especially their right to self-determination and to establish an independent State along the 4 June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in line with the resolutions of international legitimacy, international law and the Arab Peace Initiative.

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

Ms. Juul (Norway): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Khiari for his briefing.

The past few weeks have seen a troubling resurgence of violence in the occupied West Bank. In early July, Israeli military forces carried out one of the most extensive operations in the West Bank in more than 20 years, killing 12 Palestinians, including children, and injuring more than 140 others in the Jenin refugee camp, deep inside Area A. If the current trends continue, 2023 will be the deadliest year for Palestinians in the West Bank since United Nations records began in 2004. Several Israelis have been killed and injured in attacks by Palestinian militants. Both Israelis and Palestinians deserve to live in security. While we recognize Israel's legitimate security concerns, we reiterate that Israeli security forces must exercise the utmost restraint in their use of force. International human rights norms must be respected. Violence against civilians, whether

perpetrated by Israeli security forces, Israeli settlers or Palestinian militants, is unacceptable and cannot be justified.

The Israeli settlements on occupied land are illegal under international law and must stop. Israeli settlements and settler violence are fuelling violence in the West Bank and undermining the prospects for an independent and contiguous Palestinian State. The recent approvals of new housing units in the settlements, as well as administrative changes that simplify the system for planning and establishing new settlements, are unacceptable.

The Oslo Accords were signed 30 years ago. They represented a step towards peace and a two-State solution. Many things were different back then — the situation on the ground, the politics and even the world. But one important factor in particular was present, leading the Israelis and Palestinians to come together around a table for months to negotiate, despite their differences and scepticism about one another. Those Palestinian and Israeli political figures and leaders had one factor in common. They had a vision for peace, a vision for peace for their peoples and a vision for peace for their children, grandchildren and future generations to come. Because of their vision, and the prospect of living next to each other in two States, they were able to navigate a complex and challenging path aimed at peace. Today there is a whole generation of Israelis and Palestinians who were not born at the time of the Oslo agreement. Some of them have not only lost faith in a two-State solution, they never had any such faith in the first place. Many young people are resorting to violence, which is a symptom of the lack of vision for a political solution. At the same time, the violence is leading the parties away from peace and a two-State solution.

We therefore call on Israeli and Palestinian leaders to take on the responsibility of ensuring that the generations to come have a vision of something other than distrust, violence and destruction. The current situation is in no way sustainable. It is in neither party's interest to keep the conflict unresolved. They need to make sure that their peoples have a vision for a political solution.

I fear that our discussions in these meetings are doomed to repeat themselves unless we find a way to address the root causes of the conflict. That primarily requires taking steps to end the Israeli occupation. A strong and unified Palestinian leadership, with

renewed democratic legitimacy, is necessary too. It is also crucial to continue strengthening and supporting the Palestinian Authority and its institutions, and the Palestinian economy. We welcome the fact that the Israeli Government has said that it too wants a strengthened Authority. Norway will continue its efforts to revitalize the peace process. We encourage increased support for Palestinian institution-building and for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. Norway will convene the next ministerial meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians on 20 September in New York. Thirty years after the first Oslo Accord, almost to the day, and in the spirit of those who negotiated it, it will be an opportunity for Ministers to discuss how we can work together to increase our efforts to revive a vision for peace and end the conflict.

Let me reiterate Norway's clear position. Seventy-six years since the partition plan was approved by the United Nations, we believe that the negotiated two-State solution, based on the 1967 lines, United Nations resolutions and international parameters is the best way to achieve a lasting peace.

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

Mr. Ajeeb (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation associates itself with the statements to be delivered on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Group of Arab States. We would like to make the following statement in our national capacity.

The Israeli occupation forces for weeks have continued their barbaric attacks and criminal practices against the fraternal Palestinian people and our people in the occupied Syrian Golan who confront the Israeli war machine with their bare hands and declare their rejection of the continuation of the Israeli occupation of their land, the establishment of settlement projects on it, the displacement from their cities and villages and the destruction of their homes, which undermines every opportunity for achieving peace and stability in the region.

The Syrian Arab Republic strongly condemns those Israeli attacks, which constitute a war crime and a crime against humanity, and affirms that the Israeli policy of escalation is nothing but an expression of the inability of the occupying forces to weaken the

resolve of the Palestinian people and their adherence to their legitimate historical rights represented in the establishment of their independent State with Jerusalem as its capital and the return to their homeland.

The paralysis experienced by the Security Council and its inability to find a just and urgent solution to the long-standing question of the Palestinian people, due to the obstruction of one permanent member in it, harms the Council's reputation and its ability to fulfil its responsibilities at a time when we desperately need urgent action by the Council to stop the crimes of the authorities of the Israeli occupation, hold the perpetrators accountable, ensure that crimes are not repeated, oblige Israel to implement the resolutions of international legitimacy related to the Palestinian question and enable the Palestinian people to enjoy their legitimate and inalienable rights.

It has become clear that the recurring political crises faced by the successive Governments of the Israeli occupation entity compel its leaders, who are unable to solve them, to export their internal crises by launching attacks against our defenceless peoples in Palestine and the occupied Syrian Golan, in a clear demonstration of the law of force and the law of the jungle and with shameless disregard for international law and the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations.

Israel, the occupying Power, has continued its aggressive policies against our people in the occupied Syrian Golan since 1967. Israel continues to commit the most heinous violations of international law and international humanitarian law, including arrest, killing, displacement and the continued closure of the Quneitra crossing since 2014, which is the only lifeline that allows the people of the occupied Golan to communicate with their families in their homeland, Syria, according to the separation of forces agreement of 1974.

The occupation forces also continue their systematic expansionist policy and projects to build thousands of housing units and settlement outposts with the aim of perpetuating their occupation of the Golan, imposing demographic change and increasing the number of settlers therein. In June, Israeli occupation forces stormed the Al-Hafayer area, east of Masada village, in the occupied Syrian Golan to bulldoze its agricultural lands in preparation for the implementation of its settlement plan of establishing wind turbines on those lands. They are also planning to bulldoze the remaining

houses in the village of Ein Fit, which, in 1967, was destroyed by the occupation, causing the displacement of its people, with the aim of obliterating its Arab Syrian identity and turning it into a military site in a new violation of resolution 497 (1981).

The gravity of implementing settlement projects and installing wind turbines lies in the fact that they are suffocating the villages of the occupied Golan, isolating them from each other and undermining their agriculture which is the livelihood of most of the Golan population, in addition to displacing the people of the Golan and replacing them with settlers.

At the same time, the Israeli occupation forces are continuing their attacks against the territories of the Syrian Arab Republic. On 19 July, they launched an aggression with barrages of missiles from the north of the occupied Syrian Golan, targeting some points in the vicinity of Damascus, which resulted in casualties and material losses. They also launched a new aggression just two days ago against some posts of the Internal Security Forces in the town of Al-Qahtaniya in Quneitra, in a new flagrant violation of the 1974 separation of forces agreement.

The Syrian Arab Republic condemns all Israeli violations and aggressions against the Syrian lands and our people in the occupied Syrian Golan. We warn of the dangers of Israel's aggressive policies and its extremist Governments, which are greatly escalating tensions in the region and pushing the region towards a new phase of insecurity and instability. Syria calls upon the Security Council to break its silence and urgently assume its responsibilities to end the Israeli occupation of Arab lands, including the Syrian Golan, and to implement the relevant United Nations resolutions, especially resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), as well as resolution 497 (1981), which considers Israel's decision to annex the Golan null and void and without legal effect.

Before I conclude, my delegation will not respond to what was mentioned in the statement of the European Union, especially the baseless allegations and accusations against my country as they are not related to the discussion undertaken today. We must focus on the cause of the Palestinian people and our people in the occupied Syrian Golan, which is worth our time, instead of wasting our time and that of the Council by responding to those false allegations and accusations.

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

Ms. Bakytbekkyzy (Kazakhstan): We commend the presidency of the United Kingdom for hosting this debate on the Middle East, and we thank Assistant-Secretary-General Khiari for his briefing.

We echo the warnings of Secretary-General António Guterres and other key players of the international community that the cycle of conflicts currently in the Middle East region, especially the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, is a cause for serious concern. That is because the conflict has the potential to escalate into further tensions at all levels, resulting in the destabilization of the entire region and beyond; and therefore demands our urgent attention.

Kazakhstan joins the general concern about the continued settlement expansion across the occupied Palestinian territory. We are concerned by the recent escalation of violence in Jenin in the West Bank.

Kazakhstan calls on Israelis and Palestinians to refrain from all actions that could undermine the advancement of a two-State solution. We hence appeal to all political, community and religious leaders to spare no efforts in ending the intensifying hostilities.

In view of the above, Kazakhstan suggests a revival of dialogue among all parties to the conflict, accompanied by new measures for improving the humanitarian situation of the population of Gaza with a view to building confidence and reducing further threats. That is essential because Gaza remains an integral part of the two-State solution, in keeping with relevant and key United Nations resolutions.

Kazakhstan reiterates the urgent need to support the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East in its critical role in mitigating the deteriorating situation in Gaza and promoting long-term development of the area. The current situation, which we are witnessing today, is one of deepening poverty, unemployment and, consequently, chronic economic regression which will fuel further conflict. The deterioration of the security and socioeconomic situation across the occupied Palestinian territory must be reversed.

We thus again call on both sides to refrain from violence and to work towards a political settlement on the principle of two-States for two peoples. Such a concept should guarantee the inalienable right of Palestinians to statehood, together with Israel's right to security.

Kazakhstan's long-standing policy is to fully support the creation of an independent State of Palestine, which coexists peacefully with Israel within the 1967 borders and obtains full-fledged membership in the United Nations. We join others in emphasizing that the two-State solution is the only viable option for a durable peace; it is to be reached by dialogue, in keeping with the United Nations Charter and relevant Security Council resolutions. Other mechanisms and initiatives, both bilateral and multilateral, such as the road map for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative and a revived Middle East Quartet or a version of the Quartet adapted to the current context, should be availed of in order to resolve the situation today.

Kazakhstan stands ready to join every collective mediation effort, especially that of calling on all Israeli and Palestinian leaders to demonstrate political goodwill so that both sides can live in peace, security, progress and prosperity, which are the long-cherished goals of both peoples.

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

Mr. Abdelaziz (spoke in Arabic): I would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Khaled Khiari for his comprehensive briefing today, and I align myself with the statement to be delivered by the representative of Yemen on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

We gather today to discuss a very complex and sensitive regional situation in the Middle East that has resulted from the challenges that Israel, the occupying Power, is continuing to pose to the will of the international community and the United Nations. It continues to violate international law, international humanitarian law and international human rights law in the occupied Palestinian territory, without being held internationally or criminally accountable. It is no secret that one of the most important and malicious goals of the extremist right-wing Israeli Government is to do away with the two-State solution and any chance to build an independent Palestinian State with Jerusalem as its capital. It is doing that by continuing its expansionist settlements and construction policies that violate resolution 2334 (2016), including displacement, confiscation and demolition measures and support for Israeli settlers while intensifying its attacks in order to change historical reality on the Palestinian territory, particularly in East Jerusalem, the capital of the independent Palestinian State.

The Israeli Government intends to deploy special security forces in support of settlers who are illegitimately attacking the defenceless Palestinian people, all of which is in violation to all Israel's obligations as the occupying Power. The current situation is exacerbated by the absence of any prospects for a settlement by the Middle East Quartet or the Security Council itself. The Council has not convened a meeting of the Quartet in a very long time. The well-known reasons stem from the ongoing confrontations and tensions in the Security Council relating to other issues that are strongly preoccupying its members and the international community. Despite the apparent similarity among those issues, particularly those involving to the occupation of lands of others by force, the Council has chosen to apply a double standard in dealing with the Ukrainian issue, providing it with all kinds of support — institutional, logistical and financial — while minimizing the international community's support for Palestine amid the current deteriorating conditions. Nevertheless, it remains the responsibility of the Council to provide protection to the Palestinian people in the Palestinian occupied territories. The League of Arab States asserts that it is the duty of the Council not to wait for a third Palestinian intifada or for Israeli forces and hordes of settlers to commit another massacre like the Hebron massacre in 1994 before it adopts a new resolution that echoes its own resolution 904 (1994).

Despite false accusations and continuous attacks by the Permanent Representative of Israel against the United Nations and the Security Council, the Arab League emphasizes that it is the responsibility of the Security Council and the Secretary-General to implement the proposals set forth in his 2018 report on the protection of the Palestinian civilian population (A/ES-10/794), prevent any further deterioration of the Palestinian people's security and set up a mechanism for ensuring international protection for this defenceless people and their holy sites, in particular Al-Aqsa Mosque, but also other Muslim and Christian holy sites. Israel must respect the Hashemite Jordanian custodianship of those holy sites. To ensure that the Council is capable of doing that, the principles of international accountability that are applied in other countries need to be upheld, especially with regard to any Israeli who commits violations on the Palestinian occupied territories.

This week, many countries and organizations submitted their legal views to the International Court of Justice on the illegitimacy of the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories. The Arab League was one of the organizations to express its views. We are looking forward to the advisory opinion of the Court requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 77/247, which will lay a new solid legal foundation in support of international legitimacy.

The thirty-second Arab summit, which was held in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, took a pivotal decision to reinstate Syria's suspended membership in the Arab League and to give further attention to the Syrian issue in order to reach a peaceful comprehensive settlement that helps Syria regain its standing. That can be achieved by respecting Syria's sovereignty over its territories and eliminating any unauthorized foreign presence therein, including by ending the Israeli occupation of the Arab Syrian Golan. The increased activities by terrorist organizations on Syrian territory must also end. The Arab League appreciates the support of the international community to those ends, despite some having reservations.

The League of Arab States expresses its concern that the Security Council does not have sufficient unity with regard to cross-line and cross-border mechanism for delivery of humanitarian assistance in Syria, despite the Security Council co-penholders' constructive solutions and Syria's unilateral sovereign decision to open the Bab Al-Hawa crossing for the United Nations humanitarian support to reach north-west Syria for six months. The Arab League calls on the Council to intensify its joint work with the Syrian Government to overcome the acute humanitarian crisis faced by the Syrian people. All parties should come together on this matter, while ensuring the independence and objectivity of the delivery of humanitarian aid, respecting the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Syria and providing adequate funding.

The Arab League welcomes the recent exchange of prisoners in Yemen. Furthermore, we would also like to express our appreciation for the constructive role played by the United Nations in offloading the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker so as to avoid any environmental or security disaster in the Red Sea. We support all efforts made to provide the necessary funding for a comprehensive political settlement in Yemen as well as the intensive political efforts made to reach such a settlement.

Despite the serious humanitarian implications of the military confrontations in the fraternal Sudan and despite the Arab League's efforts to bring about an immediate ceasefire between the Rapid Support Forces and the Sudanese Armed Forces and reach an internal consensus among all military and civilian Sudanese stakeholders on a political settlement for re-establishing civil rule in the country, the Arab League reiterates the position expressed by the Group of Arab States in New York in a letter sent to the President of the Security Council and the Secretary-General dated 3 February, in support of the Sudanese Government's request for the sanctions imposed by resolution 1591 (2005) and other relevant resolutions to be lifted without any preconditions, as the Council did in relation to lifting the arms embargo on Eritrea in resolution 2444 (2018). Lifting the sanctions will enable the Sudanese Government to regain control over its territories and maintain peace and stability, as well as the unity and sovereignty of its lands. The Arab League calls on donor countries and organizations to provide the Sudan with the support it needs to face its acute humanitarian and economic crises.

In conclusion, as an active partner of the United Nations, the Arab League looks forward to continuing to cooperate and coordinate with the Security Council to effectively address the foregoing and other important Arab issues inscribed on the Council's agenda.

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

Mr. Kim Sangjin (Republic of Korea): I would first like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Khiari for his briefing today.

The Republic Korea is deeply concerned about the security situation in Israel and Palestine, which has been deteriorating since early this year. It is particularly alarming that the recent clashes in the West Bank city of Jenin led to numerous casualties, followed by the terror attack on 20 June that killed 4 Israelis and rampages against Palestinians on the same day.

My delegation strongly condemns all violence against civilians and reaffirms that there can be no justification for terror attacks. Continued violence in the region will only exacerbate mistrust and further undermine a peaceful resolution to the conflict. We call upon all parties to exert the utmost restraint in the light of the current volatile situation on the ground.

My delegation strongly urges all parties to take concrete steps to lower tensions and create an environment conducive to dialogue to advance the peace process. We hope to see the continued engagement pledged in the joint communiqués in Aqaba and Sharm El-Sheikh last spring.

In that connection, my Government expresses its deep concern about the Israeli Government's recent plan to expand settlement homes in the West Bank and to amend settlement approval procedures, which could expedite their expansion. We urge the Israeli Government to reverse its policies of settlement activities, demolitions and evictions since these constitute clear violations of international laws and the relevant Security Council resolutions.

The Republic of Korea reiterates its firm commitment to contributing to international efforts to establish permanent peace in the region. My delegation firmly believes that there is no alternative to a two-State solution in which Israelis and Palestinians live side by side in peace within secure and recognized borders consistent with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

I would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm my Government's unwavering commitment to supporting international initiatives to address the humanitarian and development needs of the Palestinian people. The ongoing financial hardship facing the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is worrisome. In that regard, my Government decided to increase our support to the Agency's programme budget this year and will continue its support going forward.

In addition, my Government has recently decided to provide additional humanitarian assistance this year to those vulnerable in Palestine and Palestinian refugees in the region through UNRWA, as well as the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Korea hopes that this support can help improve the humanitarian conditions in the region and alleviate the suffering of the Palestine refugees and vulnerable population.

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

Mr. Novicio (Philippines): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, and the United Kingdom for convening today's Security Council quarterly open debate on

the Middle East, including the question of Palestine. I would also like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Mohamed Khaled Khiari for his briefing this morning.

The Philippines follows with serious concern the recent developments surrounding Israel and Palestine, including the growing tensions on the ground. We join the international community in urging all the parties concerned to exercise maximum restraint and act responsibly, in accordance with international law. We also urge them to recognize the need to protect civilians, in accordance with international humanitarian law. We support all efforts to prevent all forms of violence, terrorism and violent extremism.

The Philippines recognizes the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a key to the region's peace and stability. The conflict can never be resolved by violence, but only through meaningful dialogue and negotiations in accordance with international law.

Diplomacy must continue to be the driving force in achieving a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. Indeed, we all want a comprehensive, just and sustainable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in order to achieve peace and stability in the Middle East region. Diplomatic efforts, therefore, must continue to bring the concerned parties to the negotiating table, foster communication and bridge the gaps in their positions. The goal should be to reach a mutually acceptable agreement that addresses the legitimate aspirations and concerns of both Israelis and Palestinians. Both sides, therefore, should actively take positive steps to allow for negotiations to gain traction and work together towards the resumption of negotiations to achieve an enduring peace.

On the two-State solution, the Philippines has always expressed support for the creation of a State of Palestine living in peace and security with its neighbours. The Philippines reaffirms its support for a two-State solution, which envisions Israel and a viable Palestinian State living side by side in peace and security and mutual recognition. All parties, therefore, must refrain from unilateral actions that undermine the prospects for a two-State solution.

On the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), we commend the Agency's ongoing efforts, under extraordinary circumstances, to immediately respond to the humanitarian needs of affected populations, including refugees and non-refugees.

We should therefore continue to support UNRWA's work to protect the delivery of vital services to Palestine refugees. The Philippines has supported UNRWA's work.

On the way forward, the Philippines encourages the parties concerned to increase their focus on building trust and confidence. We welcome the recent establishment of diplomatic relations between Israel and a number of Arab countries, with a view to enhancing the prospects to reach a comprehensive settlement in the Middle East peace process. We also welcome the recent meetings between Jordan, Egypt, the United States, Israel and the Palestinian Authority in Aqaba, Jordan and Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, aimed at de-escalating tensions, and we hope the commitments in the resulting joint communiqués will be fulfilled in good faith.

Finally, the Philippines reiterates the importance of supporting steps that can expand the space for meaningful dialogue and negotiation, building trust and mutual understanding and cooperation for peace.

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

Mr. Al-dobhany (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on the successful United Kingdom presidency of the Security Council this month. I would also like to thank Mr. Khaled Khiari, Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific, for his briefing.

I would like to make a statement on behalf of the member States of the Group of Arab States in New York.

The occupying Power has ignored the repeated calls of the members of the Council for calm in the occupied Palestinian territory and continues its brutal aggression against Christian and Muslim Palestinians, in violation of all international laws, conventions and Council resolutions.

In that context, the Arab Group condemns in the strongest terms the brutal aggression of the Israeli occupation forces since the beginning of the month against the city and refugee camp of Jenin and other cities in the occupied West Bank. Such actions have killed scores of people and left hundreds injured, including women and children, and has caused the displacement of refugees and the demolition of hundreds of homes. This aggression is a continuation of the cycle of bloody violence systematically perpetrated against the Palestinian people, particularly since the beginning

of this year and last year. The Arab Group condemns the systematic forced displacement of Palestinians, especially in occupied East Jerusalem, carried out by the Israeli occupation forces and settlers, as well as the attacks on worshippers and the arrest of hundreds of them. Those irresponsible acts of aggression add to the daily crimes committed against the Palestinian people by Israel, the occupying Power, since the Nakba to the present day.

In that regard, the Arab Group stresses the need for Israel, the occupying Power, to respect the legal and historical status quo of the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram Al-Sharif, including its area of 144 dunums, as a place of worship exclusively for Muslims. It must also respect the role of the Jordanian Jerusalem Waqf and Al-Aqsa Mosque Affairs Administration as the only body authorized to manage the affairs of the entirety of Haram Al-Sharif and regulate access to it.

The Arab Group also stresses that the State of Palestine has the right to exercise its sovereignty over the occupied city of East Jerusalem — the capital of the State of Palestine — and its holy sites. Israel, the occupying Power, has no rights or sovereignty over the occupied city of Jerusalem and its Islamic and Christian holy sites.

The Arab Group values the positions of the countries that rejected and condemned the provocative aggression by Israel against Palestinian cities and refugee camps, most recently the Jenin refugee camp, and the expulsion of Palestinians from their homes in occupied Jerusalem. It also values the positions rejecting any altering of the historic and legal status quo. The Group also reiterates the need for continued efforts and initiatives to protect and defend the occupied city of Jerusalem and its holy sites while rejecting any condemned attempts to alter its demographic character, its Arab, Islamic and Christian identity, and its legal and historic status — including the Israeli policy of colonialism and annexation in the occupied city and territory.

The Arab Group condemns the extremist views of the Government of Israel, in flagrant violation of all its commitments to international law and Security Council resolutions, which have led to a state of great tension in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Reassured by the fact that the international community's stance is nothing but words on paper, Israel has let loose, targeting Palestinian civilians, killing children, young people, women and the elderly

in cities, villages and streets, storming homes, schools and workplaces, and carrying out deliberate attacks on medical and press teams. In addition, extremist settlers carry out attacks while the Israeli Government persists in its colonial expansion along with inciting and racist rhetoric. There is neither accountability nor punishment for Israel's flagrant violation of the international position regarding its violations in and occupation of Palestinian territory.

The Arab Group therefore calls upon the Security Council to assume its responsibilities and ensure the implementation of its resolutions in order to put an end to the brutal aggression and to all of Israel's unilateral, illegal, provocative and escalatory measures, as well as the unabated violations that it continues to commit in order to build and expand its illegal settlements. Israel continues to kill innocent people, storm Palestinian cities and villages, confiscate Palestinian land and property, demolish Palestinian houses and structures and displace the original inhabitants, including in Jerusalem, in addition to flagrant violations of the sanctity of the Al-Aqsa Mosque/Haram Al-Sharif that are committed by Israel's occupying army and extremist settlement groups.

The Arab Group calls urgently for the protection of the Palestinian people by the international community in line with the proposals made by the Secretary-General, which the General Assembly welcomed in view of the increase in Israel's aggressions against the Palestinian people.

The Arab Group condemns Israel's policy of arbitrary detention, denial of medical care for prisoners and deliberate medical neglect leading to detainee deaths. We support the prisoners in their struggle to achieve their release. We must ensure that the occupation Government complies with international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Pressure must be put on Israel to immediately release all prisoners and detainees, as well as the bodies of martyrs. Israel must end its policies on deportation and house arrest, among other things. We call on the international community and Council members to condemn all forms of violence against Palestinian civilians by occupation forces and radical settler groups, and demand that the perpetrators of such practices be held accountable, in line with the rules governing accountability and transparency, which are upheld for all except Israel.

Time and again, we have reiterated that it will not be possible to achieve a comprehensive and just peace in the Middle East, along with security and stability, until the Palestinian people are granted their inalienable legitimate rights, including their right to self-determination, and until we see the end of Israel's illegal and colonial occupation and the establishment of an independent and sovereign State of Palestine within the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. We therefore call on the countries of the world to show their solidarity with the Palestinian people in their struggle, to ensure that the just Palestinian question emerges victorious and to acknowledge the State of Palestine and its right to be granted full membership of the United Nations.

The Arab Group welcomed the General Assembly's adoption of resolution 77/247, which decides to request the International Court of Justice to render an advisory opinion on Israel's colonial occupation of the land of the State of Palestine and its repercussions, given that it violates the Charter of the United Nations, international law and international humanitarian law. The Arab Group greatly appreciates the positions taken by those countries that supported that endeavour, including those that provided written legal submissions to the Court in defence of international law and Palestinian rights. We call on the International Criminal Court to complete its investigation and hold to account the perpetrators of the war crimes and crimes against humanity being committed by Israel against the defenceless Palestinian people, including the crimes of settlement, annexation, aggression, the continued blockade against Gaza, deliberate summary executions of civilians, journalists and medics, forced displacement, arbitrary detention and prisoner abuse.

The Arab Group appreciates Jordan's role in safeguarding and maintaining Islamic and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem within the framework of the custodianship of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, under the leadership of King Abdullah II. We appreciate the role of the Al-Quds Committee and its affiliated Beit Mal Al-Quds Agency under the chairmanship of King Mohammed VI of Morocco. We also appreciate the efforts in support of the Palestinian question by Algeria, under the leadership of President Abdelmadjid Tebboune, through Algeria's historic stances and continued financial aid to the budget of the State of Palestine. We express our appreciation to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, under the leadership of King Salman

Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, for its support of the Islamic holy sites in Jerusalem. We also appreciate the historic role played by Egypt, under the leadership of President Abdel Fattah Al Sisi, in support of the Palestinian question. We also want to express our appreciation for all Arab efforts aimed at preserving the city of Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Palestine, along with its Arab, Islamic and Christian identity, holy sites and cultural and humanitarian heritage, and supporting its institutions while addressing Israel's settlement policy, Judaization efforts and systematic Israeli forgery. We also appreciate those countries hosting Palestinian refugees.

In conclusion, the Arab Group stresses that the Palestinian question is the central Arab issue. It has been an important item on the Council's agenda since 1948, attesting to the injustice that has been inflicted on the Palestinian people, for whom the time has come to exercise their right to self-determination and to an independent State, while further demonstrating the international community's inability to date to establish an effective mechanism for the implementation of United Nations resolutions.

The Arab Group stresses the need to continue to provide political and financial support to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) until a just and lasting solution to the plight of Palestine refugees is achieved in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III). The Arab Group once again emphasizes that peace in the Middle East can be achieved only through a just and comprehensive solution based on international legitimacy and the implementation of the relevant United Nations resolutions, including, most recently, resolution 2334 (2016). Furthermore, there is a need to implement the Arab Peace Initiative and ensure the establishment of an independent Palestinian State within the borders of 4 June 1967 with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The President: I would like to remind all speakers to keep their statements within the limit of three minutes if possible, to allow us to get through the rest of the speakers' list in good time this afternoon.

I now give the floor to the representative of Chile.

Mrs. Narváez Ojeda (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): We appreciate the opportunity to participate in this open debate and to reiterate the importance we attach to this issue. We also thank the Assistant Secretary-

General for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific in the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations for his presentation.

We reiterate that it is essential to relaunch, with the support of the international community, the process of direct negotiations in good faith between Palestine and Israel in order to achieve a just, full and definitive peace agreement, which allows for two free, autonomous, sovereign and independent States, with internationally secure, definitive and recognized borders based on the 1967 borders and the decisions and agreements of the United Nations, which include resolutions adopted by this body. We call for respect for international law, international humanitarian law, human rights and the Charter of the United Nations, as well as for refraining from any unilateral acts of force.

We condemn violence in all its forms. In that regard, Chile expresses its deep consternation and concern about recent actions that have increased tensions. We condemn the violent actions of Hamas and of any armed group that uses violence to achieve any objective, as well as the latest large-scale Israeli military operation carried out in the refugee camp in the city of Jenin, in Palestine's West Bank. The attack included the demolition of homes, the destruction of public infrastructure and aerial bombardment, leaving some Palestinians dead, many injured and thousands more displaced from their homes.

We therefore call on Israel to refrain from settlement construction and expansion and from encouraging the legalization of settlements. That means that it must comply with resolution 2334 (2016) on the illegality of establishing settlements. However, it is frustrating that ever since the Security Council's adoption of the resolution (see S/PV.7853), the demolitions of Palestinian homes have continued to increase in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, while legislation regularizing the establishment of new settlements continues to be enacted. That is demonstrated by the fact that while there were 441,600 settlers in the West Bank in 2019, that number had risen last year to 700,000 in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The humanitarian crisis, which has a particular impact on women and children refugees, must come to an end. In that regard, we acknowledge the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

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

Mr. Al-Maawda (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me to begin by thanking the United Kingdom presidency for convening this quarterly open debate. I would also like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Mr. Khiari for his valuable briefing this morning.

We align ourselves with the statement delivered by the representative of Yemen on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

It is clear from the briefing we heard this morning that the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory has now become even more dangerous as the violence has escalated. The Security Council issued a presidential statement on the subject on 20 February (see S/PRST/2023/1), but the dangerous trend has not changed. The situation therefore calls for concrete measures to prevent the situation from deteriorating further, and for the Council to fulfil its responsibilities with regard to the Palestinian question, which has been central to the issue of peace in the Middle East for decades.

Serious violations by the occupying Power have continued unabated since the beginning of the year. The most recent incursion was directed at the city of Jenin and its refugee camp in June and July, in addition to the aggression in the Gaza Strip, which remains under a blockade, and the brutal attacks by Israeli settlers on Palestinian villages. We reiterate Qatar's firm condemnation of those attacks, which have claimed the lives of many civilians, including women and children. Such recurring acts are essentially part of a series of crimes perpetrated by the occupying Power against the defenceless Palestinian people, jeopardizing the prospects for peace and risking exacerbating the violence.

The cycles of violence we are witnessing come as no surprise. They are a result of the dangerous and provocative approach taken towards the Palestinian people, their territories and their Muslim and Christian holy sites. We watched as Israeli Government officials, parliamentarians and settlers recently stormed the Al-Aqsa Mosque and were protected by occupation forces. That was a gross violation of international law and an aggression not just against Palestinians but against Muslims around the world. We once again reject all measures aimed at altering the historical and religious status quo of the holy sites and restricting the right of Muslims and Christians to free and safe access to their places of worship. We condemn the policies of

Judaization in the occupied city of Jerusalem, as well as those aimed at changing its Arab, Muslim and Christian identity. In that respect, we emphasize the role of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan's guardianship over the holy places of Jerusalem.

The recent Israeli trends are dangerous. In that connection, the Israeli army's decision to repeal the disengagement law for northern West Bank settlements is aimed at entrenching the occupation and the illegitimate settlements in the occupied territories. That is a gross violation of international law and United Nations resolutions. In order to draw attention to those facts, the State of Qatar has submitted a written note to the International Court of Justice, which in response to a request by the General Assembly will shortly be issuing a legal opinion on the legal implications of the Israeli occupation. In the note we point to Israel's obligations under international law to put an immediate end to its illegitimate occupation and to provide compensation for the damage and suffering that have been endured.

Qatar calls on the international community to urgently fulfil its moral and legal responsibility to condemn the Israeli aggressions and violations, provide the necessary protection to our brother Palestinian people and compel Israel to cease its flagrant violations of international law and resolutions of international legitimacy. The occupation and blockade imposed on the Gaza Strip must be brought to an end, as must the collective punishment of the Palestinian people, including arbitrary and administrative detentions — particularly of children — and measures aimed at repressing activists and defenders of Palestinian rights as well as Palestinian civil-society organizations. The perpetrators of the heinous crimes committed on the Palestinian occupied territories must be made accountable if justice is to be served.

The State of Qatar remains steadfast in its principled position of solidarity with our brother people of Palestine until they regain their legitimate rights, including the right to establish an independent, contiguous and viable State along the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in compliance with the relevant Security Council resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative. We believe that resolving the Middle East question and reaching lasting peace cannot be achieved through de facto measures. There is no alternative to a two-State solution. The occupation of Arab territories, including in the Syrian Golan and

Lebanon, must end immediately and completely. There must also be an immediate cessation of all settlement and annexation activities.

My country is committed to fulfilling its duty to the Palestinian people and to improving their humanitarian situation in order to come up with solutions conducive to lasting peace. In cooperation with the United Nations, particularly in the Gaza Strip, Qatar has made great efforts to promote reconstruction and provide electricity, as well as offering cash assistance and meeting other urgent basic needs and development requirements. We are also continuing our support for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), to which we have pledged \$16 million for the period 2023–2024. We stress once again the importance of providing financial and political support to UNRWA, for which there can be no substitute until a just settlement of the issue of Palestinian refugees is reached.

In conclusion, the State of Qatar reaffirms its support for all sincere efforts to bring about peace, security and safety in the Middle East, especially those aimed at achieving a just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the Palestinian question.

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

Mrs. Kuzee (Namibia): Namibia aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Malaysia on behalf of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

My delegation also appreciates the comprehensive briefing by the Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific, Mr. Khaled Khiari, highlighting the deterioration of the security situation since the previous briefing (see S/PV.9361).

The recent developments in the occupied Palestinian territory reveal a continuing trend of flagrant violations of human rights and the denial of dignity to the people of Palestine. Namibia remains concerned about the fact that the increasingly dire situation facing Palestinians is continuing to take us ever further from an international consensus on achieving a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. The Israeli military raids in Jenin last month, as well as previous raids in other parts of the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, are exacerbating an already precarious

situation, leaving unarmed civilians dead and injured. No reasonable argument can justify the magnitude of bloodshed and continued escalation of violence.

The protracted illegal occupation and repetitive attacks are perpetuated by the disproportionate use of force being meted out by Israel and have led to a lack of access to essential health-care services and education. Namibia deplors the fact that those rights are constantly being violated. In particular, while education is considered a basic right for all, children all over the occupied Palestinian territory continue to be exposed to fear, trauma and grave injuries, limiting their capacity to attend or reach schools.

My delegation reiterates that Israeli settlements in the occupied areas violate the rights of Palestinian refugees under international law, particularly resolution 2334 (2016). The socioeconomic impact of the prolonged, unlawful occupation exacerbates despair, heightening tensions in the region.

Namibia strongly condemns the recent two-day Israeli military operation in June in the Jenin refugee camp that destroyed the health centre of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East — critical infrastructure that is unprotected and, therefore, vulnerable to attacks. Despite those challenges, Namibia recognizes the concerted efforts of the Agency and its partners to ensure that vital services are provided to millions of vulnerable Palestinian refugees adversely affected by displacement and its consequences for more than 70 years.

In conclusion, Namibia reaffirms its resolute support for the legitimate struggle of the Palestinian people against Israeli occupation. We further reiterate our commitment to the realization of the two-State solution, which sees Israel and Palestine living side by side, within secure and recognized borders, with Jerusalem as their capital. It is our belief that it is only through legally established statehood that social normalcy, legal equality, economic opportunity and sustainable development can be realized.

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

Ms. Squeff (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Argentina supports a peaceful, definitive and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian issue and reiterates its unwavering commitment to the two-

State solution, respecting the legitimate aspirations of Israelis and Palestinians to live side by side, in peace and security. In that regard, Argentina reaffirms its support for the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to establish an independent and viable State, recognized by all nations, as well as the right of the State of Israel to live in peace with its neighbours, within secure and internationally recognized borders.

With that in mind, on several occasions, my country has spoken about the alarming escalation of violence this year and has repeatedly called on the parties to avoid increased confrontation and conflict. The Argentine Republic is deeply concerned about the ongoing violence and loss of life in Israel, Gaza and the West Bank. The gravity of the situation related to Israeli settlements has been recognized by the General Assembly and by the Security Council in resolution 2334 (2016), the terms of which we fully reaffirm. The resolution underscores that the settlements established by Israel in the West Bank and East Jerusalem have no legal validity, are at variance with international law and an obstacle to peace and undermine prospects for the two-State solution.

In that context, my country has expressed its concern about the decision of the Government of Israel to legalize outposts and construct new housing in existing settlements. In the light of the decisions taken by the Government of Israel in June to approve more than 5,700 new settlements and the changes to the approval process that facilitate swifter approval of their construction, the Argentine Republic reiterates its concern and calls for an end to settlement expansion. Similarly, we condemn the reprehensible violence perpetrated by some extremist settlers against Palestinians.

Argentina recognizes the right of Israel to legitimate self-defence, stressing that it is important that measures taken respect international humanitarian law, in particular with regard to the principles of distinction and proportionality.

We reiterate our firm condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and believe that the indiscriminate firing of rockets from the Gaza Strip and the south of Lebanon towards Israel is unacceptable. In recent months, we have reiterated our condemnation of attacks perpetrated against Israeli citizens, and we again extend our condolences to the families of the victims.

With regard to the situation in East Jerusalem, Argentina believes that it is an issue for which the final status should be determined by the parties in bilateral negotiations, in line with the relevant United Nations resolutions. We call on all parties, in particular the Israeli authorities, to respect the legal, historical and religious status of the holy sites. Argentina again calls on the parties to return to the path of negotiations in order to achieve just and final peace, in accordance with international law and the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council.

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

Mr. Prabowo (Indonesia): Indonesia appreciates the United Kingdom for holding this open debate. We also thank the Assistant Secretary-General for his insight.

Unfortunately, for the Palestinian people, the story of sorrow and injustice remains. Illegal settlement expansions, worsening settler violence, demolitions, confiscations and the deteriorating humanitarian situation are endured on a daily basis. We have been warned that 2023 could be bloodier. Yet even with the numerous diplomatic tools available, we have failed to heed the call thus far. Halfway through the year, we are witnessing continued civilian casualties, including children. Do we really want to wait until another record is broken? The Security Council should not consider it business as usual. Instead, meaningful attention and immediate action should be given.

Against that backdrop, allow me to underline three points.

First, violations by the occupying Power must stop. Despite clear international law and United Nations resolutions, the encroachment of annexation towards the occupied Palestinian territory, apartheid policies and disproportionate use of force have regrettably become normalcy. On top of that, continuing provocation towards the holy sites contributes further to the escalation of conflict. That is unacceptable.

We cannot allow the unceasing culture of impunity to prevail, as each flagrant violation by the occupying Power will only drive us further away from a just and lasting peace. We call upon the international community to demand accountability and reiterate our call on the Council to ensure implementation of its own resolutions. The principles of international law

and international humanitarian law must be upheld to prevent further security deterioration and escalation of violence.

In that spirit, Indonesia has submitted its written submission to the International Court of Justice, with regard to its advisory opinion on the legal consequences of Israel's occupation of Palestine. Moreover, we also call for the establishment of an international presence in Al-Quds to monitor and ensure the safety of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories, as well as to protect the status of the Haram Al-Sharif compound, the holy place for three religions.

Secondly, we must work hand in hand to ease the humanitarian situation. It has been 75 years since the Nakba, yet the catastrophe is still ongoing. The recent escalation of aggression by the occupying Power, including on Gaza and the refugee camps, has caused widespread destruction of civilian infrastructure, worsening the living conditions of the Palestinian people and refugees, particularly women and children. The international community should extend the much-needed assistance and protection, especially when the occupying Power deliberately chooses not to fulfil its legal obligations.

On the other hand, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) continues to work on the front lines of the crisis, providing education, health and social services. However, the Agency continues to face a dire financial crisis, and relying on donor and voluntary contributions does not suffice. Therefore, Indonesia is of the view that UNRWA should be granted greater sustainable funding from the United Nations regular budget to ensure the reliable delivery of its mandate, which we — the Member States — have entrusted to it.

Thirdly, collective efforts to forge a path for the peace process are needed. Indonesia appreciates each “delicate diplomacy” approach currently in place to broaden the political horizon. Nevertheless, all those efforts and initiatives should be directed towards ensuring the implementation of the two-State solution. There is no plan B for a two-State solution. It is the only way to bring sustainable peace to the region. It is important to ensure that the international community remains committed not only to a credible multilateral process but also to protecting the internationally agreed parameters. We remain hopeful that the continued intra-Palestinian reconciliation will create a inclusive

environment conducive to the peace process. Indonesia stands ready to lend assistance to the Palestinians in achieving their aspirations for effective governance and full independence.

In conclusion, let me to reaffirm Indonesia's unequivocal support for and solidarity with the Palestinian people. We will remain steadfast until they are no longer denied their legal and inalienable right to attain independence. Furthermore, we will support Palestine's full membership in the United Nations to pave the way for Palestinians' manifestation of their independence and contribution to the peace process.

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

Ms. Ahangari (Azerbaijan): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the 120 member States of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (NAM). At the outset, I would like to congratulate the United Kingdom on its successful presidency of the Security Council for this month and to express our appreciation for the opportunity given to the Movement to present its position on the question of Palestine.

The Ministerial Committee of the Non-Aligned Countries on Palestine recently met on the sidelines of the Ministerial Meeting of the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement Countries, held on 5 July, and adopted a political declaration reiterating that achieving a just solution to the question of Palestine must remain a priority on the Movement's agenda, as well as a permanent responsibility of the United Nations, until it is satisfactorily resolved in accordance with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

In that regard, the member States of the Movement once again reaffirm that at its core, the decades-long ongoing historic injustice of the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territory and other Arab territories continues to pose a serious threat to regional and international peace and security. As the Palestinian people continue to be deprived of their inalienable rights, including to self-determination and independence, the prolonged international paralysis on the issue is inexcusable. The international consensus on a just solution is firm and clear, and there is an abundance of multilateral political and diplomatic tools for promoting the achievement of a just and peaceful settlement. We must use them

responsibly. We in NAM are ready to do so, and we urge the Council to act forthwith to shoulder its responsibilities in that regard.

The Security Council must uphold its duty under the Charter of the United Nations to maintain international peace and security and must act to implement its own resolutions. The question of Palestine cannot be an exception to international law or the authority of the Council. The members of the Movement call on the Security Council to overcome its paralysis on the Palestinian question to justly resolve the protracted conflict and tragic injustice. That will not only open a new era for the people of the occupied territories and the region, it will also restore credibility to the Council and to our international system as a whole.

NAM believes that resolution 2334 (2016) provides a viable path to peace, setting forth the essential requirements and parameters for the realization of a just outcome on the basis of a two-State solution along the 4 June 1967 borders, while ensuring the fulfilment of the Palestinian people's inalienable rights, including to self-determination and to an independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, as well as a just solution to the plight of Palestine refugees, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III). NAM therefore reiterates its call for full respect for resolution 2334 (2016) and for the effective implementation of its provisions and obligations, particularly by the occupying Power, including in terms of States' obligations with regard to distinction, which is central to ensuring accountability. The Movement also underscores the need for intensifying international and regional diplomatic efforts, including by the Council, aimed at ending the Israeli occupation that began in 1967 and achieving a just, lasting and comprehensive solution.

Similarly, the member States of the Movement continue to call for full respect for and the implementation of the provisions of resolution 2334 (2016) and all other relevant resolutions regarding Israel's settlement activities and the status of occupied East Jerusalem. In that regard, NAM is gravely concerned about the deteriorating situation on the ground, which has been marked by an escalation of Israeli settlement activities in grave breach of international law and by rising violence, provocation and incitement, particularly settler violence and terror. That in turn has led to further tragic loss of life among civilians, including children,

the detention of thousands of Palestinian civilians and countless other human rights abuses and violations of international law.

Action must be taken immediately to help de-escalate the volatile situation. It must include a halt to all unilateral and unlawful measures by Israel, the occupying Power, in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. Actions that violate the relevant Security Council resolutions, including regarding the historic and legal status quo of Jerusalem and its holy sites, are provocative and dangerous and destroy the prospects for peace. We reiterate our call for full respect for the historic and legal status quo, the Hashemite custodianship over the Christian and Muslim holy sites in the city, the protection of the sanctity of the holy sites and all the relevant provisions of international law and Security Council resolutions.

NAM commends the efforts of His Majesty King Mohammed VI of Morocco, in his capacity as Chair of the Al-Quds Committee of the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation. We welcomed the call signed in Rabat on 30 March 2019 by King Mohammed and His Holiness Pope Francis, stressing the important role that Al-Quds/Jerusalem plays as a city of tolerance and mutual respect among the people of the three monotheistic religions and the need to preserve its specificities and features as a city of peaceful coexistence. In that regard, NAM reiterates its rejection of Israel's purported annexation of occupied East Jerusalem and underscores that the continuing measures and threats regarding annexation by Israeli officials, as well as the ongoing settlement activities and forced displacement of Palestinian families from their homes and lands, must be unequivocally condemned. Any such measures should be rejected forthwith as null and void, without any legal effect, and should be met with firm measures of accountability for such grave breaches, including lawful countermeasures.

The situation in the Gaza Strip continues to be of great concern to the Movement, particularly the grave humanitarian crisis. NAM reiterates its call for the complete lifting of the illegal Israeli blockade, which continues to inflict dire humanitarian, social and economic suffering on more than 2 million Palestinian children, women and men in Gaza. The crisis must be comprehensively addressed in accordance with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions, including resolution 1860 (2009). In the absence of a just solution, NAM member States also

reiterate their call for the continued provision of essential humanitarian and socioeconomic assistance to the Palestinian people, including refugees. The Movement reaffirms the continued indispensability of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), together with other United Nations agencies and international organizations, for alleviating the refugees' plight. The Movement also urges the international community to provide the Agency with sufficient and predictable funding. Ensuring the continuity of UNRWA and its significant contribution to regional stability must be a priority for the Council.

As the occupying Power, Israel has clearly abdicated from its obligations, as prescribed by the Fourth Geneva Convention, to protect the Palestinian civilian population, as was recently attested to by the Israeli occupying forces' attacks on the Jenin refugee camp, which led to deaths and injuries among Palestinian civilians, including children, as well as widespread destruction to homes and vital civilian infrastructure, and forced thousands of Palestinian families to flee the onslaught. The Movement therefore also reiterates its long-standing call for international protection for the Palestinian people so as to deter violations, promote the human security of the population in the occupied territory and prevent any further loss of innocent life.

In that connection, the Movement reiterates its grave concern about the lack of accountability for all violations committed by Israel in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, many of which may amount to war crimes. Israel must comply with international law and be held to account for its blatant contempt of the Council and its international legal obligations. The absence of justice only leads to greater impunity and a recurrence of crimes and destabilizes the situation on the ground, diminishing the prospects for peace. The NAM member States will therefore continue to call for international action to ensure an end to the violations being systematically committed by Israel against the Palestinian people and accountability for them.

With regard to the situation in the occupied Syrian Golan, the Movement reaffirms that all measures and actions that may be taken by Israel, the occupying Power, such as its illegal decision of 14 December 1981, which purported to alter the area's legal, physical, demographic status and institutional structure, as well as measures to apply its jurisdiction and administration

there, are null and void and have no legal effect. In that regard, and in line with NAM's principled position, the Movement once again demands that Israel abide by resolution 497 (1981) and fully withdraw from the occupied Syrian Golan to its 4 June 1967 borders, in implementation of resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

Moreover, NAM member States emphasize that Israel must withdraw from all Lebanese territories, including Sheba'a Farms, Kfar Shouba hills and the northern part of the village of Ghajar and an adjacent area north of the Blue Line, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions, in particular Security Council resolution 1559 (2004) and 1701 (2006).

To conclude, the Movement seizes this opportunity to reiterate its call for collective international efforts to uphold international law in order to bring an end to this historic and grave injustice. NAM member States reaffirm their commitment to promoting a just, lasting, comprehensive and peaceful solution to the question of Palestine in all its aspects, including for the plight of the Palestine refugees, and reaffirm their support for the Palestinian people in their struggle to achieve justice and fulfil their inalienable rights and legitimate national aspirations, including to self-determination, freedom and independence in their sovereign and independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital. They stand ready to cooperate with and support the Security Council in the fulfilment of its responsibilities in that regard.

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

Mrs. Özgür (Türkiye): The situation in Gaza and the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem, continues to be a cause for great concern and calls for greater attention and engagement of the international community. Intensified unlawful settlement activity, demolitions and forcible evacuations are eroding the contiguity of the Palestinian territory and undermining the viability of a two-State solution.

Since the beginning of this year, the number of illegal settlements has exceeded 13,000 units, which represents a record number of settlements allowed in a year. The violence in the occupied Palestinian territory has reached an alarming level. In 2022, 224 Palestinians were killed, which was sadly recorded as the deadliest year since 2005. And since the beginning of this year, more than 200 Palestinians have lost their lives. The

incidence of provocation by extremists against the status and sanctity of Al-Haram Al-Sharif are on the rise. The recent storming of a mosque in Urif in the West Bank and the desecration of the Holy Qur'an was a blatant hate crime. Its perpetrators must be held accountable. Those provocations generate resentment among the 2 billion Muslims around the world.

We also strongly condemn the provocative storming of the Al-Aqsa Mosque by the Israeli Minister of National Security, together with extremist settlers and under the protection of the Israeli security forces. We call on the Israeli authorities to take the necessary measures in a serious manner to restrain those provocations. We strongly emphasize once again that the status quo of the holy sites in Jerusalem must be upheld.

This week we hosted President Abbas in Türkiye. On that occasion, President Erdoğan reiterated Türkiye's solidarity with the Palestinian people and emphasized the importance of Palestinian unity.

We will continue to extend our full support to alleviate the plight of the Palestinian people while maintaining contact with both sides of the conflict to help de-escalate the situation on the ground and contribute to international efforts to find a viable solution to the Palestinian question.

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 thank the delegation of the United Kingdom for convening this meeting on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, at a time when the region is facing several challenges impeding the realization of lasting peace and stability. I would also like to thank Mr. Khaled Khiari, Assistant Secretary-General in the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations, for his briefing.

Conflicts have long ravaged many countries in the Middle East and have led to negative repercussions for the region's peoples, hindering their development, security and stability. Efforts to settle conflicts peacefully must be strengthened and the United Nations good offices must be supported in that regard.

The Kingdom of Bahrain reaffirms the centrality of the Palestinian question in the region and stresses the need to settle the Palestinian-Israeli conflict by reviving the comprehensive and just peace process

aimed at establishing an independent Palestinian State along the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, pursuant to the two-State solution and in accordance with the principles of international law and the Arab Peace Initiative.

The Kingdom of Bahrain reiterates the importance of ending all settlement activities in the West Bank. The continued escalation will lead to dire results which the situation in region cannot afford.

Moreover, my country condemns the repeated violations against Al-Aqsa Mosque by repeatedly storming it, as that is a violation of international law which causes emotional distress to Muslims everywhere. The Kingdom of Bahrain reaffirms the need to respect the role of the sisterly Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan as the custodian of the holy sites and Awqaf, in accordance with international law and the current historic status quo. We call for refraining from any actions that could increase tension and hatred and undermine international efforts to advance the peace process.

The Kingdom of Bahrain supports the outcomes of the summit held by the countries neighbouring the Sudan in the sisterly Arab Republic of Egypt on 13 July. We appreciate the diplomatic efforts undertaken by Egypt in hosting that important summit and its call on the parties to the conflict in the sisterly Republic of the Sudan to immediately abide by a permanent ceasefire and end the war to protect lives and properties and facilitate access to and the delivery of humanitarian aid, ensuring full respect for the sovereignty of the Sudan's unity and territorial integrity. That should be an important step in the context of international efforts towards achieving a comprehensive, sustainable and peaceful solution to the current crisis by engaging all the Sudanese parties in an inclusive national dialogue that fulfils the aspirations of the fraternal Sudanese people to achieve security, stability and prosperity while preserving their State institutions and resources and completing the path of democracy.

In conclusion, the Kingdom of Bahrain reiterates the importance of continued international cooperation to support all efforts to achieve peaceful and political solutions to conflicts and to lay the foundation for peace and stability in the Middle East in order to fulfil the aspirations of its peoples to realize security and prosperity.

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

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett (Guyana): I thank the United Kingdom for convening this open debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question.

Guyana remains seriously concerned about the volatile situation and escalating violence in Palestine which has resulted in the loss of precious lives, devastating injuries and the destruction of infrastructure. Those events deepen the stalemate in the protracted Israeli-Palestinian conflict and make a permanent solution appear even more elusive.

The deterioration of the situation in the occupied territories and increased displacement of persons are of great concern to Guyana. Those incidents further compound the economic difficulties faced by the Palestinian people and increase their risk of being left further behind in the global thrust for sustainable development.

Guyana is particularly disturbed by the recent killing of Palestinian civilians, including women and children, by air strikes in Gaza. It is intolerable that children continue to be victims of violence. They must never be the target of violence or put in harm's way. The latest act of aggression and massive onslaught against Palestinians should not continue. We call on the parties to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law and United Nations resolutions.

As a member of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People since 1975, Guyana will continue to recognize Palestine as a free, independent and sovereign State, based on its pre-1967 borders, and also will continue to contribute to concrete efforts to advance the Middle East peace process. In this regard, we are pleased to have joined colleagues in submitting statement to the International Court of Justice in support of an advisory opinion on the legal consequences arising from the policies and practices of Israeli in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem.

Guyana calls on the international community to accelerate efforts to secure a comprehensive, just and peaceful solution to the question of Palestine. We call on the concerned parties to desist from action that is contrary to the United Nations Charter, international law and relevant Security Council resolutions. We call

for respect for the fundamental rights and freedoms of the Palestinian people, including their right to return to their country, their right to a standard of living adequate for their health and well-being, and their right to live in peace and security within secure and settled borders.

We also call for a return to dialogue aimed at arriving at a full and final settlement of all pending issues, with the ultimate objective of two independent States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace. In this regard, Guyana urges the Security Council to contribute to resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by fulfilling its relevant obligations under international law. Guyana remains irrevocably committed to these objectives and stands in full solidarity with the Palestinian people in their just struggle for freedom and peace.

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

Ms. Joyini (South Africa): We thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's open debate on the Middle East, including the question of Palestine. We also thank Assistant Secretary-General Khaled Khiari for his briefing. We align ourselves with the statement delivered by the representative of Malaysia on behalf of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

South Africa remains concerned about the deteriorating security and humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territories in the light of Israel's continued acts of aggression against the Palestinian people. We condemn Israel's military operation in Jenin earlier this month, considered one of the deadliest raids in the occupied West Bank in recent years. The brutality of these attacks, coupled with the loss of human life and damage to civilian infrastructure is in serious contravention of international humanitarian law and international human rights law and aggravates an already tense situation. As the international community, we cannot sit idle and watch as the occupying Power fails to abide by its obligations under the Geneva Conventions and its Additional Protocols.

The Secretary-General has outlined his vision of multilateral efforts for peace and security in his New Agenda for Peace. Key to this vision is a rules-based system premised on international law. Accordingly, as the international community, we cannot allow the selective application of international law in some cases and its total disregard in others. Israel's prolonged

illegal occupation of and its increasing expansion of settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories is unjust, perpetuates impunity and is in breach of international law. Israel must therefore be held accountable for its actions in the occupied Palestinian territories and against the Palestinian people.

We wish to re-emphasize that, as the body entrusted to maintain international peace and security, the Security Council must strengthen and uphold its responsibility to ensure accountability when international law has been violated. It therefore remains pivotal that the decisions and resolutions of this body be enforced.

South Africa further wishes to underscore our unwavering support for the freedom of the Palestinian people as they pursue their right to peace, sovereignty, freedom and justice. In this regard, we support the initiative aimed at refocusing the international agenda on the Palestine and Middle East peace processes with a view to achieving a two-State solution and the establishment of a viable Palestinian State, existing side by side with Israel within internationally recognized borders based on those existing on 4 June 1967, prior to the outbreak of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in line with all relevant United Nations resolutions, international law and internationally agreed parameters.

We remain determined both to contribute to reconciliation and the peaceful settlement of the Palestinian situation and to assist the parties to this conflict in their genuine pursuit of peace and coexistence.

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

Mr. Alajmi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's meeting. I also thank Mr. Khaled Khiari, Assistant Secretary-General for Middle East, Asia and the Pacific, for his briefing.

We meet in the Security Council Chamber again amid the escalation of tensions and violations of international law, international humanitarian law and international human rights law by the occupation authorities in the occupied Palestinian territory. Israel continues to disregard international calls to stop its escalation and cease its use of violence against the

defenceless Palestinian people. Israel's use of violence makes no distinction between human beings and rocks, or between men, women and children.

We reiterate our strongest condemnation and denunciation of all those violations, the latest of which was the armed aggression of the occupying forces against the city of Jenin in the West Bank, which led to many Palestinian martyrs and wounded people, including the heinous crime of targeting a civilian vehicle by shooting at it, resulting in the martyrdom of its three passengers. We also note the storming of Al-Aqsa Mosque this morning by the so-called Minister of National Security of the occupation Government, Itamar Ben-Gvir, supported by a group of officials and settlers in blatant disregard of the feelings of hundreds of millions of Muslims around the world. We therefore reiterate our categorical rejection of all of those acts of escalation and violations by the occupying forces, which require the international community and the Security Council to assume their political, legal and human responsibilities and intervene immediately to stop these violations and hold their perpetrators accountable.

Although statements of condemnation and denunciation seem to be futile in terms of the occupation Governments, especially when it comes to the current Israeli Government, which is considered to be the most extremist in the country's history, they nevertheless constitute solid ground for promoting international positions that favour peaceful solutions, provide international protection for the fraternal Palestinian people and support the State of Palestine's efforts to obtain full membership in the United Nations, in line with the fact that it is an active member in many regional and international organizations, including the League of Arab States, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Non-Aligned Movement and many others.

The State of Kuwait affirms our constructive engagement with the just Palestinian cause, as it is considered a central and pivotal issue for the Arab and Muslim world. We support General Assembly resolution 77/247, which requested the International Court of Justice to issue an advisory opinion on the Israeli colonial occupation of territories of the State of Palestine and the legal consequences arising from it. When we submitted our written statement to the Court, we also expressed our trust that it would take our written statement and those submitted by many other fraternal and friendly countries into account when issuing its advisory opinion. In that regard, we urge the

International Criminal Court once again to complete its criminal investigation and to hold accountable the perpetrators of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by the Israeli occupation authorities against the defenceless Palestinian people. Those crimes include settlement; annexation; aggression; the continuous blockade on the Gaza Strip; extrajudicial killings; deliberate targeting of civilians, journalists and paramedics; forced evictions; arbitrary detentions; and maltreatment of prisoners.

We reiterate that a just and comprehensive peace, security and stability in the Middle East can be achieved only after the Palestinian people attain their legitimate and inalienable rights, including their right to self-determination, an end to the illegal colonial Israeli occupation and the full independence of the sovereign State of Palestine on the Palestinian territory occupied in 1967, with Jerusalem as its capital. International promises to end the occupation and establish a Palestinian State should not be mere words.

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

Mr. Alwasil (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate the United Kingdom for presiding over the Security Council this month. We express our deep appreciation to the United Kingdom for convening this important meeting, which requires the attention of the entire international community. I would like to thank Mr. Khaled Khiari, Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific, for his valuable briefing. We value his role and constructive efforts in that regard.

This meeting is being held against the backdrop of critical circumstances for the fraternal Palestinian people and the whole region as a result of the ongoing Israeli violations against the defenceless Palestinian people, who have been suffering for decades from the consequences of Israel's occupation of their lands and control over their fate.

It is extremely unfortunate that the Israeli Government continues its daily aggression against the Palestinian people, their holy sites and properties, the latest of which was the raid, carried out by the Israeli Minister of National Security and a group of settlers, on the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound. My Country's Government condemns and denounces that flagrant incursion and those systemic practices, which constitute a flagrant violation of international norms

and conventions and provoke the outrage of Muslims worldwide. We strongly condemn the repeated aggression against the city of Jenin recently and deplore the extremist settler attacks against certain Palestinian villages in the West Bank. There is no doubt that those practices contravene international norms and principles and undermine peace efforts. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reiterates its unwavering position in support of all efforts to end the occupation and reach a comprehensive and just solution to the Palestinian question.

A just and comprehensive peace cannot be achieved amid the ongoing acts of aggression and intimidation by Israeli extremists, the confiscation of lands and the displacement of the Palestinian people. Peace, security and justice can be achieved only through a two-State solution establishing an independent Palestinian sovereign State along 4 June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital — pursuant to resolutions of international legitimacy, Security Council resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative launched by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 2002.

We again call on the Security Council to shoulder its responsibilities and implement its resolutions to put an end to all illegal unilateral, provocative and escalatory actions; the violations that Israel continues to commit unabated in order to build and expand its illegal settlements; the targeting of Palestinian presence in Jerusalem; attempts to change the legal nature and demographic composition of the city; and attempts to modify the special arrangements for Islamic holy sites and to impose Israeli sovereignty over them. We call for the urgent provision of international protection to the Palestinian people, pursuant to the proposals of the Secretary-General that were welcomed in the General Assembly.

In conclusion, we call on the Israeli Government once again to respond to the calls for peace and to work seriously towards settling the conflict with the Palestinians. There is no doubt that resolving the conflict will help the entire region, including Israel, on which we call to engage in serious negotiations in good faith in order to achieve peace on the basis of the two-State solution in a way that guarantees stability in the Middle East. Reaching a just solution expeditiously will ensure the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. We assert that it is important to revive the efforts of the international community in order to resolve the longest conflict in the history of the United Nations, thereby preserving all the legitimate rights of the fraternal Palestinian people, in accordance with the purposes and principles upon which the United Nations was founded.

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*): At the outset, we express our gratitude for the convening of this quarterly open debate.

My delegation also endorses the recent statement delivered by the representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela reaffirms its historic principled position in support of the just Palestinian cause. We will not tire of defending the right of the brotherly Palestinian people to exist in their free, independent and sovereign State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital and along the pre-1967 borders; nor will we tire of supporting each and every international effort that will bring us closer to achieving a just, comprehensive and lasting peace on the question of Palestine.

We agree that the situation on the ground continues only to deteriorate, which is a matter of great concern, especially in the absence of a clear political horizon and the continuation of policies of racial domination, oppression, colonial occupation and apartheid that are being systematically and deliberately pursued by the occupying Power — not only to prolong the conflict, but, even worse, to destroy the viability of a two-State solution.

It is clear that the occupying Power has no intention whatsoever of ending either the occupation or its criminal aggression and that its policies are, in fact, aimed at seizing total control of the occupied Palestinian territory, even insisting on altering its demographic status, as evidenced by the recent announcement by the Israeli regime of the construction of thousands of new settlements, which will undoubtedly result, in turn, in further evictions, destruction of homes and transfer of settlers, a matter that was condemned on 12 July by at least six independent experts of the United Nations, as well as by Assistant Secretary-General Khiari.

We categorically reject that conduct, which flouts international law, on the part of the occupying Power. This is nothing more than the result of the framework of impunity with which the United States of America, its main partner within the Security Council, protects it.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is one of the most painful conflicts facing humankind for more than 75 years, when the Palestinian catastrophe, or Nakba, began. We cannot continue to procrastinate in taking concrete steps to put an end to the prolonged suffering of an entire people who cannot and will not tire of demanding what is rightfully theirs — the inalienable right to exist; the inalienable right to return to their homes and the inalienable right to live in a free, independent and sovereign State of Palestine.

The panorama is certainly not encouraging and, although there are those who prefer not to denounce it publicly, this is a reality based on probable facts and constitutes a flagrant, systematic and grotesque violation of the precepts contained in the Charter of the United Nations and all norms of international law.

Perhaps this is the best example that we need to dismantle the so-called rules-based order that the United States and its satellite countries so ardently tout and pretend to impose — an order based on presumed exceptionalism, unilateralism, supremacy, double standards and interpretations that accommodate their international obligations. None of those notions has any place in the United Nations, which operates according to the rules accepted by the entire international community in its actions and relations.

From this podium, we call for an end to the prevailing cycle of impunity that, for years, has only emboldened Israel to continue its war crimes and crimes against humanity. We ask that those responsible for so much pain and suffering be brought to justice and that the noble Palestinian people be provided with international protection. That is particularly necessary in view of the cruelty of the most recent episodes of violence against the Palestinian civilian population by the occupying Power, and of attempts to minimize the consequences of that violence, as happened recently

in Jenin, despite the fact that the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs confirmed that it was the most lethal operation, with the highest number of Palestinians killed in the West Bank, of the last 20 years or so.

We also demand that the Charter of the United Nations be respected and that all resolutions adopted by the Security Council be implemented fully. We call for the cessation of any unilateral measures or actions that could escalate tensions, destroy a political horizon and further prolong the conflict, and for progress, without further delay, particularly in the Security Council, towards changing the status of the State of Palestine, so that it becomes a full-fledged member of our United Nations once and for all.

The time has come for the promise of peace, justice and freedom contained in the Charter of the United Nations to become a reality for the heroic Palestinian people, who demand their inalienable right to self-determination and the realization of their legitimate national aspirations. Once again, we renew our unwavering solidarity to the brotherly Palestinian people and our firm support for their just cause, which is synonymous with conscience and dignity worldwide.

Finally, we conclude by acknowledging the most recent developments in some of the dynamics of the Middle East since our last open debate (S/PV.9309), particularly the return of the Syrian Arab Republic to the League of Arab States. We hope that those positive developments will extend to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, confident that that will lead to the fulfilment of the yearnings for peace and justice of all the peoples of the Middle East, including those of the noble Palestinian people, and to Israel's withdrawal from all Arab territories that remain illegally occupied, including the Syrian Golan.

The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.