



# Security Council

Seventy-eighth year

*Provisional*

**9489<sup>th</sup>** meeting

Wednesday, 29 November 2023, 9.30 a.m.

New York

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<i>President:</i>	Mr. Wang Yi/Mr. Zhang Jun . . . . .	(China)
<i>Members:</i>	Albania . . . . .	Mr. Hoxha
	Brazil . . . . .	Mr. Vieira
	Ecuador . . . . .	Mr. Montalvo Sosa
	France . . . . .	Mr. De Rivière
	Gabon . . . . .	Mrs. Ngyema Ndong
	Ghana . . . . .	Ms. Nkansah-Boadu
	Japan . . . . .	Mr. Uemura
	Malta . . . . .	Mrs. Frazier
	Mozambique . . . . .	Mr. Fernandes
	Russian Federation . . . . .	Mr. Nebenzia
	Switzerland . . . . .	Mr. Gürber
	United Arab Emirates . . . . .	Mr. Al Marar
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Lord Ahmad
	United States of America . . . . .	Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield

## Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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*The meeting was called to order at 9.35 a.m.*

### **Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

### **The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question**

**The President** (*spoke in Chinese*): I would like to warmly welcome the Secretary-General, ministers and other high-level representatives present in the Security Council Chamber. Their presence today underscores the importance of the subject matter under discussion.

In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Egypt, Indonesia, Israel, Jordan, Malaysia, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Slovenia and Türkiye to participate in this meeting.

I propose that the Council invite the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Observer State of Palestine to participate in the meeting, in accordance with the provisional rules of procedure and the previous practice in this regard.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Riyad Al-Malki.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Tor Wennesland, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, to participate in the meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I also invite His Excellency Mr. Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I give the floor to the Secretary-General.

**The Secretary-General:** I welcome this opportunity to brief the Security Council on the implementation of resolution 2712 (2023). My Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Tor Wennesland, will follow with his regular monthly briefing.

Resolution 2712 (2023) was adopted in a context of widespread death and wholesale destruction unleashed

by the conflict in Gaza and Israel. According to Israeli authorities, more than 1,200 people were killed — including 33 children — and thousands were injured in the abhorrent acts of terror by Hamas on 7 October. Some 250 people were also abducted, including 34 children. There are also numerous accounts of sexual violence during the attacks that must be vigorously investigated and prosecuted. Gender-based violence must be condemned — anytime, anywhere.

According to the de facto authorities, more than 14,000 people have been killed since the start of the Israeli military operations in Gaza. Tens of thousands of Palestinians have also been injured, with many more missing. In Gaza, more than two thirds of those killed are reported to be children and women. In a matter of weeks, a far greater number of children have been killed by Israeli military operations in Gaza than the total number of children killed in any year by any party to a conflict since I have been Secretary-General, as the annual reports on children and armed conflict that I have submitted to the Security Council clearly indicate. In the past few days the people of the occupied Palestinian territory and Israel have finally seen a glimmer of hope and humanity in so much darkness. It is deeply moving to see civilians finally having a respite from the bombardments, families being reunited and life-saving aid increasing.

Paragraph 1 of resolution 2712 (2023) demands

“that all parties comply with their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law, notably with regard to the protection of civilians, especially children”.

It is clear that before the pause we witnessed serious violations. Beyond the many civilians killed and wounded of whom I have already spoken, 80 per cent of the people of Gaza have now been forced from their homes. That growing population is being pushed towards an ever-smaller area of southern Gaza, and of course nowhere is safe in Gaza. Meanwhile, an estimated 45 per cent of all homes in Gaza have been damaged or destroyed. The nature and scale of the death and destruction are characteristic of the use of wide-area explosive weapons in populated areas, with a significant impact on civilians. At the same time, rocket attacks on population centres in Israel by Hamas and other groups have continued, along with allegations of those groups' use of human shields. That

is also inconsistent with obligations under international humanitarian law.

I want to stress the inviolability of United Nations facilities, which today are sheltering more than 1 million civilians seeking protection under the United Nations flag. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has shared the coordinates of all its facilities across the Gaza Strip with all the parties to the conflict. The agency has verified 104 incidents impacting 82 UNRWA installations, 24 of which have happened since the adoption of resolution 2712 (2023). A total of 218 internally displaced people sheltering in UNRWA schools have reportedly been killed and at least 894 injured. In addition, it is with immense sadness and pain that I have to report that since the beginning of the hostilities, 111 members of our United Nations family have been killed in Gaza. That represents the largest loss of personnel in the history of our Organization. Let me put it plainly. Civilians, including United Nations personnel, must be protected. Civilian objects, including hospitals, must be protected. United Nations facilities must not be hit. International humanitarian law must be respected by all parties to the conflict at all times.

Paragraph 2 of resolution 2712 (2023) calls for

“urgent and extended humanitarian pauses and corridors throughout the Gaza Strip [...] to enable [...] full, rapid, safe, and unhindered humanitarian access”.

I welcome the arrangements reached by Israel and Hamas with the assistance of the Governments of Qatar, Egypt and the United States. We are working to maximize the positive potential of that arrangement for the humanitarian situation in Gaza. The pause has enabled us to enhance the delivery of aid into and across Gaza. For example, for the first time since 7 October, an inter-agency convoy has delivered food, water, medical supplies and shelter items to northern Gaza, specifically to four UNRWA shelters in Jabalia camp. Prior to that, minimal or no assistance had reached those locations, even as tens of thousands of people had crowded there for shelter. Also, for the first time, supplies of cooking gas entered Gaza, where people waited in lines that stretched for two kilometres. In the south, where the needs are dire, United Nations agencies and partners have increased both the amount of aid delivered and the number of locations reached. I would like to express

my appreciation to the Government of Egypt for its contribution to making that assistance possible.

However, the level of aid to Palestinians in Gaza remains completely inadequate to meeting the huge needs of more than 2 million people. Although the total volume of fuel allowed into Gaza has also increased, it remains utterly insufficient to sustain basic operations. Civilians in Gaza need a continuing flow of life-saving humanitarian aid and fuel into and across the area. Safe and unimpeded humanitarian access to all in need is critical. Humanitarian partners have carried out several medical evacuations from north to south Gaza, including to transport dozens of premature babies as well as spinal and dialysis patients from Al Shifa Hospital and Al Ahli Anglican Hospital. Several critically ill patients have also been evacuated for treatment in Egypt. Hospitals across Gaza lack the basic supplies, staff and fuel needed to deliver primary health care at the scale required, let alone to safely treat urgent cases. The medical system has broken down under the heavy caseload, acute shortages and the impact of the hostilities.

Paragraph 3 of resolution 2712 (2023) calls for “the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages held by Hamas and other groups”. The arrangement announced on 22 November has so far led to the release, over five days, of 60 hostages — 29 women and 31 children — held by Hamas and other groups since 7 October. Outside the arrangement, another 21 hostages were released during the same period. That is a welcome start, but as I have been saying from day one, all the hostages must be released immediately and unconditionally. Until then, they must be treated humanely, and the International Committee of the Red Cross must be allowed to visit them. The arrangement has also seen the release of 180 Palestinian prisoners and detainees from Israeli jails, mostly women and children.

Paragraph 4 of resolution 2712 (2023) calls on

“all parties to refrain from depriving the civilian population in the Gaza Strip of basic services and humanitarian assistance indispensable to their survival, consistent with international humanitarian law”.

Much more is required to begin to address the human needs in Gaza. Water and electricity services must be fully restored. Food systems have collapsed, and hunger is spreading, particularly in the north. The sanitary

conditions in shelters are appalling, with few toilets, and with sewage flooding posing a serious threat to public health. Children, pregnant women, older people and those with weakened immune systems are at greater risk. Gaza needs an immediate and sustained increase in humanitarian aid including food, water, fuel, blankets, medicines and health-care supplies. It is important to recognize that the Rafah border crossing does not have enough capacity, especially taking into account the slow pace of security procedures. That is why we have been urging for opening other crossings, including Kerem Shalom, and for streamlining inspection mechanisms to allow the necessary increase of life-saving aid. But humanitarian aid alone will not be sufficient. We also need the private sector to bring in critical basic commodities to replenish the completely depleted shops in Gaza.

Lastly, paragraph 5 of resolution 2712 (2023) underscores

“the importance of coordination, humanitarian notification and deconfliction mechanisms, to protect all medical and humanitarian staff, vehicles, including ambulances, humanitarian sites, and critical infrastructure, including United Nations facilities”.

A humanitarian notification system is now in place and is being constantly reviewed and enhanced, including through plans for additional civil-military experts to support coordination.

I welcome the adoption of resolution 2712 (2023), but its implementation by the parties matters most. In accordance with the resolution, I will revert to the President of the Security Council with a set of options on effectively monitoring the implementation of the resolution. I have already established a working group composed of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, the Department of Peace Operations, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Office of Legal Affairs to urgently prepare proposals in that regard. So far, it is clear that implementation has been only partial at best and is woefully insufficient.

Ultimately, we know that the measure of success will not be the number of trucks dispatched or the tons of supplies delivered, as important as those are. Success will be measured in the lives saved, suffering ended and hope and dignity restored. The people of Gaza are

in the midst of an epic humanitarian catastrophe before the eyes of the world. We must not look away.

Intense negotiations are taking place to prolong the truce — which we strongly welcome — but we believe that we need a true humanitarian ceasefire. We must ensure that the people of the region finally have a horizon of hope by moving in a determined and irreversible way towards establishing a two-State solution on the basis of United Nations resolutions and international law, with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security. Failure will condemn Palestinians, Israelis, the region and the world to a never-ending cycle of death and destruction.

**The President** (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Wennesland.

**Mr. Wennesland:** Following the Secretary-General’s statement, I will focus my briefing on dynamics in the occupied West Bank and the region, and on where we go from here in the context of the unfolding conflict between Israel and Palestinian militants in Gaza.

Before doing so, I wish to join the Secretary-General in acknowledging the efforts of Qatar, Egypt and the United States of America in facilitating an agreement that has secured the release of 60 Israeli hostages from Gaza thus far, resulted in a six-day pause in fighting, which has allowed the United Nations to scale up humanitarian aid, and led to the release of 180 Palestinian prisoners and detainees from Israeli custody. Such respite from the weeks of horror is long overdue.

While the world’s attention has been rightly focused on the devastating violence and outbreak of hostilities since 7 October, we are also witnessing heightened tensions, intensive violence and widespread restrictions of movement across the occupied West Bank. The period has been marked by some of the most intensive Israeli operations in the West Bank since the second intifada, involving the use of improvised explosive devices by armed Palestinians and drone strikes by Israeli security forces. Tulkarem and Jenin have seen the largest-scale Israeli operations, including inside the refugee camps.

Settler violence has also continued at high levels, driving mounting tensions and increased violence, as well as Palestinian displacement. In all, 154 Palestinians, including 37 children, have been killed

during the reporting period in the West Bank — nearly all of them in the context of Israeli operations, many involving armed exchanges with Palestinians. Two Palestinians have been killed by Israeli settlers. Three Israelis, including two security forces personnel, were killed by Palestinian attacks.

Amid the surging violence and extensive Israeli restrictions of movement, the Palestinian Authority's long-standing fiscal crisis has worsened significantly, as economic activity in the West Bank has ground to a halt and the economy of Gaza has collapsed. The 2 November decision by the Israeli Security Cabinet to deduct "all funds designated for the Gaza Strip" from the clearance revenues Israel transfers to the Palestinian Authority further weakened revenues, affecting many critical services and the payment of public sector salaries, including to the security forces.

The situation is boiling and getting worse rapidly. In the months before the war, I warned regularly in the Council that more must be done to help to stabilize the situation in the West Bank — that is more the case now than ever before.

I will now say a few words on regional dynamics and my continued concern about the risk of further escalation.

Turning to Israel's north, while tensions along the Blue Line have calmed in recent days, the situation remains volatile, as it was during the reporting period. Approximately 100,000 Israelis remain displaced from communities in the north, and some 50,000 Lebanese are displaced from southern areas near the Blue Line.

On the Golan, firing from the Syrian Arab Republic towards the Israeli-occupied Golan and strikes by Israel against targets in the Syrian Arab Republic took place. From further afield, missiles and drones were also reportedly launched from Yemen towards Israel. Most were intercepted. However, drone strikes claimed by the Houthis hit a school in Eilat on 9 November. A ship affiliated with an Israeli businessman was seized by Houthi forces in the Red Sea on 19 November.

The dizzying pace of events and staggering needs on the ground make it difficult to see beyond the most immediate challenges. Nevertheless, we must begin work on what comes next. Without an effective political and security framework for when the fighting ceases, it will be impossible to sustainably end the violence and shape a new reality. Over the coming weeks and

months, the international community must increase its engagement with Israel, the Palestinian Authority and regional partners on constructive and practical political solutions.

While much is unknown about how the war will end, some absolutes are clear. Acts of terror like those Hamas and others committed against Israel on 7 October must never be allowed to happen again, and Palestinians in Gaza must never, ever again experience the horrors they are now enduring. Gaza is and must remain an integral part of a future Palestinian State, with both Gaza and the West Bank under the Palestinian Authority. The only viable path is one that leads to the end of the occupation and the realization of a two-State solution, in line with United Nations resolutions, previous agreements and international law.

Our past efforts have certainly not been enough. A message that resonates in particular today, as we mark the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, is that there must be a new and different approach. Otherwise, we are doomed to return to the path of managing a conflict that clearly cannot be managed.

**The President** (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Mr. Wennesland for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Observer State of Palestine.

**Mr. Al-Malki** (Palestine): I thank you, Mr. President, for your decision to hold this meeting at the ministerial level and for presiding over it. I thank all the ministers who decided to attend — notably the Arab and Organization of Islamic Cooperation ministers, who have been touring the world to advocate for an end to the Israeli aggression. I also wish to thank the Secretary-General for his briefing and his efforts and the United Nations for its vital role on the ground.

Khaled, a grandfather, held his 3-year-old granddaughter Reem, smiling at her, kissing her, saying comforting words to her, opening her eyes repeatedly and calling her "the soul of my soul" just before laying her and her 5-year-old brother, Tarek, to rest. So many lives have been turned into names on plastic bags, leaving this Earth way too early and in the most brutal way. So many shattered lives and bodies have yet to be given a chance to mourn and heal to the extent possible after such tragedies and pain. Anyone who is still not sure if they are against what is happening or if it should



end should check their humanity. Life in Gaza must prevail over those who aim to destroy or uproot it. We thank Qatar and Egypt for their efforts that led to the truce, but the truce must become a permanent ceasefire. The massacres cannot be allowed to resume. This is not a war. It is carnage that nothing and no one can justify. It must be brought to an end.

We said early on that the humanitarian catastrophe cannot be prevented, the people held captive cannot be released and regional escalation cannot be avoided without putting a stop to the Israeli assault on the Palestinian people in Gaza. What we see now confirms what we said then. Thousands of lives could have been spared. The momentum that we are finally witnessing now must be sustained. Families must be reunited in life, not death. The dire needs of our people in Gaza must be addressed throughout the Gaza Strip without further delay or constraints. People must be allowed to return to their homes and start rebuilding their lives. The siege imposed by Israel must be lifted.

More than 15,000 Palestinians have been killed by Israel. More than 10,000 of them are women and children. They were killed by Israel. They did not lose their lives. Their lives were taken away. No one is safe in Gaza, not the children, not the doctors, not the humanitarian personnel, not the journalists or the United Nations staff. They were killed at a rate that is unprecedented in modern history. Nowhere is safe in Gaza, not the north, not the south, not the United Nations shelters, not the schools, not the hospitals, not the ambulances, not the homes, not the streets, not the mosques or the churches. People were being killed everywhere. International humanitarian law was enacted to protect such people and such places, and instead of being spared they were targeted. Israel keeps giving examples from the Second World War to justify its crimes, ignoring the fact that it is the very horrors that occurred then that led humankind to enact the fundamental rules that Israel is breaching now. How many times can the world afford to fail the test of humanity in Gaza, in Palestine? How many times can it afford to fail the test of legality?

We are at a historic crossroads, and we are out of time. A solvable political conflict is being turned into a never-ending religious confrontation. Our people are faced with an existential threat. Make no mistake about it, with all the talk about the destruction of Israel, it is Palestine that is facing a plan to destroy it, implemented in broad daylight, enacted in laws and policies and

carried out with brutality by soldiers and settlers. We are being erased from the map — literally. From the rostrum of the General Assembly Hall Netanyahu announced a new Middle East from which Palestine had vanished (see A/78/PV.10). It is no coincidence that on the map he raised on that occasion, both the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip were considered part of Israel, together with the Syrian Golan. We are being pushed out of history and geography. Israel calls it “voluntary resettlement”. They are just suggesting it for our own sake, with sieges and bombs that have led to the displacement of 1.7 million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, and with incursions and attacks by occupation forces and settlers. They have turned Gaza into a hell on Earth, and the lives of Palestinian communities in the West Bank into a living hell. On the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Nakba — the Palestinian catastrophe — they are trying to finish the job.

Seventy-five years on, Israel should rather be convinced that no force on Earth can uproot Palestinians from Palestine, or Palestine from the hearts of Palestinians, wherever they are. The Palestinian people are here to stay. They are from and of this land, and it is their destiny to live in freedom and dignity on this land. Is it not time that we found a way to live side by side? We do not even need to search very hard to find that way. It has been enshrined in international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions — the fulfilment of the Palestinian people’s inalienable rights and the concept of two States living side by side in peace and security on the pre-1967 borders.

There have been calls for avoiding escalation in the West Bank. But the escalation is there. Since 7 October, more than 230 Palestinians have been killed in the West Bank, 3,200 have been injured, 1,250 have been displaced, including 500 children, and thousands have been arrested, maimed, humiliated or harassed. Escalation is therefore already there — or does it become an escalation only if Israelis are harmed? We know that the entire world rejects Israel’s colonial policies and violence and has been calling for accountability, but that accountability cannot come from a Government whose agenda is the settlers’ agenda — led by settlers, funding settlements and arming settlers. The protection of our people cannot be ensured by the occupying forces that are complicit in those crimes. We need international protection and action to end impunity so as to prevent a recurrence of the crimes that are occurring daily and

in broad daylight. What our people are enduring now is a result of the international community's failure to provide such protection and accountability.

Israel is killing our children, one generation after another. Today in Jenin, Israel killed two Palestinian children, gunned down by Israeli snipers. Adam, eight years old, was shot in the head, and Basel, 15 years old, was shot in the chest. Israel is maiming our children, one generation after another. Israel is arbitrarily arresting our children, one generation after another. Anyone who feels relief seeing those held captive in Gaza reunited with their loved ones should not feel ashamed of having the same feeling when they see a Palestinian mother reunited with her released son. They should feel ashamed if they do not. Israel calls our children terrorists in order to justify killing, arresting and torturing them. They arrest them in their homes and beds, before dawn, traumatizing them and their families, every day of every year. That must stop.

The dehumanization and demonization of Palestinians have reached such depths that some could still wonder if there might not be some explanation for flattening entire neighbourhoods, leaving thousands under the rubble — children, women, the elderly and men killed indiscriminately and with total disregard for every legal rule and every human value. That dehumanization has consequences far beyond our borders, including here. It led to the stabbing of a 6-year-old and the shooting of three university students in the United States.

Israel targets our children and then says we teach them hatred. The problem is not that our children are fed falsehoods, but that they are fed bombs and bullets, occupation and oppression, blockade and walls. We will confront those who try to justify the killing of our children and all those promoting double standards in the physical world or the virtual one, trying to silence those who convey their truth from under the bombs and those who stand in solidarity with Palestine.

Israel believes that there is an international law specific to it, designed to be compatible with their crimes — an international law that allows war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide, an international law that applies to it not based on its actions but on the identity of the perpetrator and the identity of the victim.

Our stance remains unchanged. Vengeance is never the answer. Justice is. Our people should not be denied justice any further. The lives of Palestinians are no

less sacred than the lives of any other people on earth. Justice will help us chart a path to where no Palestinians and no Israelis are killed.

Israel is trying to intimidate those criticizing it and defending the rule of international law across the globe, including Governments that consider themselves allies of Israel, the Secretary-General and United Nations agencies, and human rights and humanitarian organizations. It also has not stopped its undermining of the Palestinian National Authority on the political, financial and security levels or its attacks against the Palestinian people as a whole.

Israel is never to blame. Everybody else is, starting with the Palestinians, of course. We are responsible for our own dispossession, for our forcible displacement, for the occupation of our land, for the killing and maiming of our people, for the oppression and subjugation we are victims of. None of it is Israel's fault. Even as its leaders confess to their crimes, deny the very existence of our people and pledge to spare no effort to prevent the independence of our State, they tell the world that the obstacle to peace is not them. They are more than willing to make peace — once we are dead or displaced, of course.

We are a nation, and we have earned respect as a nation — the respect and solidarity of peoples around the world that are being manifested yet again these days, including on this International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. We are human beings, and we are owed respect for our inherent dignity as human beings. No one should dare to justify the killing of Palestinian civilians. Israel has no right to self-defence against the people that it occupies and that it is obligated to protect under international law. Israel does not have a right to security that trumps our right to life, freedom and self-determination.

Israel is not seeking security. If it were, it would choose peace. Israel — and this Israeli Government more than any other — consider that the strategic threat with which it is confronted is Palestinian statehood. Netanyahu's selling point to keep his post is that he is best positioned to obstruct Palestinian statehood in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and he has repeated that in the past two days. The man in charge of the assault against our people is one whose very political survival depends on prolonging the massacres and continuing to deny Palestinian rights. His interests conflict not only

with our inalienable rights but with all those who seek peace and security for all.

Gaza has a very special place in our national history. Today its name is how many people around the world spell Palestine. It cannot be erased. Our people cannot be uprooted from it. Its Palestinianness cannot be altered. There is no Palestine without Gaza. Gaza bleeds, Gaza suffers, Gaza aches, but Gaza lives, and Palestine lives.

Free Palestine. That is the only path to peace.

**The President** (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of Israel.

**Mr. Erdan** (Israel): On 29 November 1947, the United Nations voted to adopt the partition plan and the establishment of the Jewish State. However, while Israel joyfully accepted that resolution, the Arab States rejected it and, instead, tried to annihilate Israel. Today, exactly 76 years later, history is repeating itself somewhat. The foreign ministers of some Arab countries have arrived here today in order to support a terror organization that seeks to annihilate Israel. Thankfully, the plan to eliminate Israel was unsuccessful then, just as it will be unsuccessful today.

Despite Arab opposition, Israel was born, and not only did Israel survive their attack, but we thrived, becoming a powerhouse of impact that has benefited all of humanity, including our neighbours who live with us in peace. That deep-seated hatred of Israel and Jews — even from before Israel's establishment until this very day — stems from the very same genocidal ideology that drives Hamas.

This is not a political conflict, nor is it about partitioning land — it is solely about the destruction of Israel and the murder of Jews. Please look at this picture. This picture tells the Council everything it needs to know about this conflict. In it is Hajj Amin Al-Husseini, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem and one of the founding fathers of Palestinian nationalism. Al-Husseini dedicated his life to ensuring that there would be no Jewish presence in Israel or in any Arab land. The Mufti's hate spread across the Levant, and tragically, he was partially successful in creating a Judenrein — a Jew-free Middle East. His followers led the 1929 and 1936 massacres in Israel. They were at the helm of the Farhud massacre in Baghdad in 1941 and other massacres against Jews in the Arab world, and it

was the Mufti's ideology that sparked the expulsion of Jews from Arab countries and Iran.

A century ago, more than 1 million Jews lived in Arab countries, yet today there are only a couple of thousands. Where did all the Jews disappear to — the Jews of Lebanon, the Jews of Syria, Yemen, Iraq and Iran? They were expelled, so enough with the hypocrisy. The word genocide, or the word carnage, is often thrown around here in a libellous context, as if it is something that happens every day, or at all. But we the Jewish people know exactly what genocide looks like. We have experienced genocidal attempts and attacks more than once, from Hitler and the Mufti to the terror organizations that follow in their footsteps. And their name is not even mentioned here.

Sadly, the Mufti's genocidal ideology continues to poison many Arab Muslim minds to this very day. It is the same ideology that Israel is currently defending itself against — an ideology that does not accept a Jewish State in any borders or the existence of Jews anywhere. The Palestinian Mufti is no different than Yayha Sinwar or Ismail Haniyeh. Their names are not mentioned here; they are not connected to these discussions. He is not different than Hassan Nasrallah, the Houthis or the Ayatollahs in Iran. They are all the same, driven by the same goal of Israel's annihilation and the mass murder of Jews. It is time for the Security Council to address this evil before another atrocity is committed.

On 7 October, Hamas unleashed an unprovoked act of pure evil upon Israel, massacring the most Jews in one day since the Holocaust. Yet shockingly, here we are nearly two months later, and Hamas's savage crimes still have not been condemned by this body or any other United Nations body. How does the Council expect me to react to this? How would Council members react if a terror organization massacred thousands of their citizens and abducted hundreds of them, and the Security Council refused to condemn the terrorists? Hamas has publicly stated — Council members all saw it — that it will repeat 7 October over and over again until Israel is no more. How would Council members respond and defend their citizens from such a clear threat? Would they respond with a ceasefire? How can one call for a ceasefire and at the same time claim to seek a solution to the conflict? After all, anyone who supports a ceasefire basically supports Hamas's continued reign of terror in Gaza. Hamas is a genocidal terror organization. They do not hide it. They are not



a reliable partner for peace. Does the Council not see the contradiction here? Calling for both a ceasefire and peace is a paradox.

Humanitarian aid is very important. But more food, water and medical supplies will not bring us closer to a solution. Hamas does not care about the people in Gaza. All they are interested in is implementing Hitler's "final solution", and nothing can change a genocidal ideology; it must be uprooted and eradicated. Every call for a ceasefire means that Hamas gets to live to see another day, terrorizing Israelis and impoverishing Gazans. Every discussion focused only on humanitarian aid, which is extremely important, ignores Hamas, the root of all the suffering in Gaza. Israel, as Council members know, fully withdrew from Gaza 18 years ago. Not a single Israeli community or soldier was left. Did Hamas cultivate Gaza after Israel's disengagement, or did they invest every possible resource in terror or death? Look at their subterranean city of terror and their hundreds of kilometres of terror tunnels. Billions and billions of dollars. How many schools, hospitals and power plants could have been built in Gaza if all funds — United Nations funds — were not diverted to terror?

The Council must also not remain silent about the Shiite elephant in the room. Iran armed, funded and trained Hamas, but the Ayatollah's regime's central role in the ruin of the region has not even been addressed here. It is not as if Hamas is fighting Israel alone. Hizbullah missiles have been raining down on northern Israeli towns, and Iran does not hide its aim of Israel's destruction. Iran publicly supports the 7 October massacre, which started everything. Does Iran's central role in destabilizing the security of the Middle East not deserve to even be raised here? It is clear that the United Nations has been co-opted by those who have no real interest in a solution. Every United Nations body has been weaponized against Israel.

Today we will be hearing from some Foreign Ministers of countries that have not even condemned Hamas's massacre. Can we honestly expect them to provide a productive option? The only input that can be valued here is from parties that have condemned Hamas's massacre. That is the basic thing. That should be the bare minimum. Just look at what has been taking place at the United Nations over the past week. United Nations briefers from UNICEF did not even bother to mention Hamas's indoctrination of Gazan children to terror. UN-Women did not brief the Council on the savage rape and sexual violence perpetrated by Hamas

against Israeli women. And this entire week has been dedicated only to Palestinian solidarity, despite the fact that all of this started only because Hamas carried out a deliberate and unprovoked massacre of Israelis.

On Monday the Council held a private meeting focused on the humanitarian situation in Gaza only (see S/PV.9486). Yesterday the General Assembly discussed the Palestinian question (see A/78/PV.39 and A/78/PV.40). Not once in the past eight weeks have any of United Nations bodies held Hamas accountable for their war crimes. This only proves that advancing a real solution, sadly, is not the goal.

From the day of Israel's establishment, we have shown that we are a willing partner for peace. Seventy-six years ago, we accepted General Assembly resolution 181 (II), while the Palestinians rejected it, just as they rejected every other peace plan ever presented, be it by Clinton, Obama or any other President. Israel was delighted to sign the peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan, the Abraham Accords. That is because Israel strives for peace, while the Palestinians strive for war and terror. For them, the only accepted solution is one that prevents the existence of a Jewish State.

Israel's value of preserving life can also be seen on the ground now in Gaza. Israel has upheld and even gone beyond the quotas of humanitarian aid entering Gaza. Israel has shown deep willingness to work with any international body to improve the situation. Israel has facilitated the entry of equipment to establish field hospitals. We have opened safe humanitarian corridors and approved the entry of fuel.

Hamas has separated mothers from their children during the hostage release, in a clear breach of the agreed-upon outline, all while threatening Gazans and preventing them from evacuating an active warzone. Hamas wants more violence. They want to raise Gazan casualties. Why? They want to exploit and falsify death tolls just so the Council will ignore their crimes, focused on condemning Israel, and tie our hands. This is their script. Hamas knows that the international community is their only hope for survival.

The only way to dramatically improve the situation is to support Israel's mission to eradicate Hamas's terror capabilities. I reiterate again: this war can end tomorrow — even today — if Hamas returns all of the hostages and turns in all the terrorists who took part in the massacre. A real ceasefire can be achieved that will last decades. Demand this of Hamas. This is the

solution. The time has come for the Council to fully and truly focus on its mandate: security.

**The President** (*spoke in Chinese*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as Minister for Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China.

I would like to thank Secretary-General António Guterres and Special Coordinator Tor Wennesland for their briefings.

Since the outbreak of the latest Palestinian-Israeli conflict, China has worked tirelessly to bring about peace and save lives. On a number of occasions, President Xi Jinping has stated China's principled position on the current situation. He has called for an immediate ceasefire and for ending the fighting, preventing the expansion of the conflict and ensuring that the humanitarian corridors are safe and unimpeded. He stressed that the fundamental way out lies in the two-State solution and in working towards a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Palestinian question at an early date. As President of the Security Council this month, China has prioritized the Palestinian-Israeli conflict as the most urgent agenda item.

This month, the Security Council adopted resolution 2712 (2023), beginning initial steps towards a ceasefire. Soon after the adoption of the resolution, under the mediation of such countries as Qatar and Egypt, the relevant parties agreed to and carried out the release of a number of captives and the observance of several days of pause. Although we would have like to see such steps taken sooner, they bear important significance. They also show that dialogue and negotiation are the best way to save lives and the fundamental way to settle disagreements. The ongoing Palestinian-Israeli conflict has led to an enormous loss of innocent lives and an unprecedented humanitarian disaster. Its spillover effects are still emerging. War tests humankind's conscience and justice, and peace appeals to our rationality and wisdom. Standing at the crossroads of war and peace, the international community must take more active steps to save lives and restore peace.

First, we should work for a comprehensive and lasting ceasefire with the greatest urgency. There is no safe area under gunfire, and letting the fighting drag on would bring only more death and damage. There is no firewall in Gaza either, and resumed fighting would most likely turn into a calamity that devours the whole region. What has happened between Palestine and Israel over the decades shows, time and again, that

resorting to military means is definitely not a way out and that addressing violence with violence will only exacerbate hatred and confrontation and lead to an endless vicious cycle.

China ardently hopes that these days of pause will not be a hiatus before a new round of an offensive, but rather the beginning of further diplomatic efforts for a comprehensive and lasting ceasefire. China appeals to the international community to make a comprehensive and lasting ceasefire an overriding priority, and we appeal to all parties to pool all efforts to achieve the common goal of ending the fighting in Gaza.

Secondly, we should take more practical and robust action to protect civilians. In armed conflict, the protection of civilians is a red line in international law that cannot be crossed. Any violence or attack against civilians is unacceptable, and any action that violates international law or international humanitarian law, in particular, should be condemned. China reiterates our opposition to the collective punishment of people in Gaza and to the forced transfer of Palestinian civilians. In the same vein, all those held captive should be released.

Easing the humanitarian crisis in Gaza is urgent. It is imperative to fully deliver on resolution 2712 (2023), clear the obstacles blocking access to sufficient humanitarian supplies and create conditions for humanitarian agencies to carry out their work safely. Relying only on the Rafah crossing to transport humanitarian supplies to Gaza is far from enough. More assistance corridors to Gaza should be opened, and the United Nations should play a greater role in monitoring and coordinating humanitarian efforts in Gaza.

Since the conflict broke out, China has provided cash assistance to the Palestinian National Authority and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, and we have provided Gaza food, medicine and other emergency humanitarian supplies. I would like to announce that the Chinese Government will provide Gaza another batch of emergency humanitarian supplies.

Thirdly, we should revitalize the political prospects of the two-State solution, with stronger determination. Israel has long established an independent State, and the Jews are no longer without a home. But the right of the Palestinian people to statehood, their right to existence and their right of return have long been ignored. That is the crux of the repeated turbulence in

the Palestinian Israeli situation. Fairness and justice on the Palestinian question lies in the two-State solution, which is irreplaceable. Only a true and comprehensive implementation of the two-State solution can restore peace to the Middle East, realize peaceful coexistence between the two States of Palestine and Israel, and achieve the common development of the Arabs and Jews.

China calls for ramping up international and regional diplomatic efforts, reshaping credible multilateral processes, revitalizing the political prospects of the two-State solution and restarting direct negotiations between Palestine and Israel. We advocate holding a more broad-based, large-scale and effective international peace conference, and we support Palestine in its efforts to become a full member of the United Nations. No solution to the current crisis should go against the two-State solution or violate norms of international law or relevant United Nations resolutions. Any arrangement concerning the future of Palestine should fully reflect the will of the Palestinian people and accommodate the legitimate concerns of the countries of the region.

Fourthly, we should work towards responsible and meaningful Security Council action. The Charter of the United Nations confers on the Security Council primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. The Council must shoulder its responsibility on major issues of war and peace and life and death. It must heed the cause of Arab and Islamic countries and the international community and, in the light of the developments on the ground, take further action promptly.

China has submitted our position paper on resolving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, laying out the principles and positions of the international community in five areas — namely, implementing a comprehensive ceasefire and ending the fighting, protecting civilians effectively, ensuring humanitarian assistance, enhancing diplomatic mediation and seeking political settlement through the implementation of the two-State solution. China will continue to strengthen coordination and garner consensus with relevant parties to see that the Security Council assumes its due responsibilities of performing duties for peace and speaking up for justice.

Today we are joined by many high-level representatives from Arab and Islamic countries who recently visited multiple countries as a delegation of foreign ministers. I met with them in Beijing for an

in-depth exchange of views. Their mediation efforts demonstrate a strong desire to end the fighting in Gaza and achieve peace in the Middle East. Today's meeting carries the keen expectation of Arab and Islamic countries for the United Nations and its Security Council. We call on one and all to share their insight, answer this common question and do their part to achieve a ceasefire and end the fighting at an early date, ease the humanitarian crisis, ensure peaceful coexistence between Palestine and Israel and realize lasting stability and security in the Middle East.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federative Republic of Brazil.

**Mr. Vieira (Brazil):** I thank the Chinese presidency for elevating this meeting on the situation in the Middle East to a high-level event.

The matter is of the utmost importance and urgency to Brazil, as evidenced by the current official visit of President Lula da Silva to Saudi Arabia and Qatar, where he is exchanging views with the main stakeholders on the situation in the region.

As we convene today on the International Day for Solidarity with the Palestine People, we are compelled to acknowledge that this is not a time for commemoration. After hearing Secretary-General Guterres and Special Coordinator Tor Wennesland speak on the unprecedented horror taking place in Gaza after the terror attack of 7 October and the 48 consecutive days of unrelenting bombardment that followed, solidarity is certainly not the first word that comes to anyone's mind. Solidarity implies unity, and in the Security Council, we too have to stand in unity and solidarity with all those in need.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, however, is one of the most vetoed matters of the Security Council. Such a record is an unfortunate testament to the fact that, more often than not, disagreements triumph over common interests in the Council. Yet the conflict in the Middle East has not disappeared, as we have been failing to see eye to eye in the Security Council. Much to the contrary, we have continuously heard reports of actions that have been undermining the viability of a Palestinian State and the fulfilment of General Assembly resolution 181 (II), of 1947, on the establishment of the two States living side

by side in peace and security within mutually accepted and internationally recognized borders. The worsening situation in the past years between Israel and Palestine has not compelled us to unite and take action towards the shared goal of achieving peace for the Palestinians, the Israelis and the people in the Middle East at large. As we are now appalled by the spiral of violence and intolerable loss of innocent lives, both in Israel and Palestine, and as we worry about the very concrete possibility of regional spillover, we have to hold the Council accountable to its main obligation to uphold international peace and security.

What is worse, we did not unite in the past, and we do not seem to be ready to unite now. The Gaza Strip is grappling with unacceptable levels of violence. More than 5,000 children have perished. We have heard Catherine Russell, the Executive Director of UNICEF, state unequivocally that the Gaza Strip is the most dangerous place in the world to be a child. The number of civilian lives lost exceeds 14,000. The plight of women in Gaza, especially pregnant women, is deeply disturbing. The displacement figures are staggering, reaching nearly 1.7 million people, or 80 per cent of Gaza's population. An estimated 41,000 houses have been destroyed or severely damaged. A total of 18 hospitals have been shut down. The number of trucks of humanitarian assistance is utterly insufficient to attend to the basic needs of the population, such as food, water, medicine and fuel. Alleged violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law continue as civilian infrastructure is destroyed. The alarming death toll of more than 100 United Nations staff members is a tragic record in history. In that context, the Council and the international community must join forces to ensure an end to the violence and to grant unhindered, sustainable and predictable humanitarian aid to Gaza.

We also stand unequivocally in solidarity with the Israeli families who had innocent family members taken hostage. In that regard, Brazil welcomes the release of 74 hostages in the past days; however, 167 individuals are still being held in captivity. We share the pain and unbearable suffering of their families. We cannot bear the idea of children taken from their families under no circumstances and without any justification. That is why we reiterate our call for the safe and unconditional liberation of all innocent people.

Brazil welcomes the recent truce deal between the parties, achieved through the mediation of Qatar

and supported by Egypt and the United States. The contingent and temporary halt in hostilities and facilitating the release of numerous captives is a sign that agreement is possible even when it seems unreachable and unattainable. While acknowledging the efforts of the mediators of this encouraging diplomatic development, Brazil also welcomes the news of the extension of the truce for another two days. Violence, terror and the forceful measures only breed hatred and fuel a never-ending cycle of hostilities. We therefore urge all the parties to cling to this spark of hope, and we encourage them to uphold that vital agreement.

The truce is a first step towards a de-escalation of violence. It should encourage us to overcome differences and cooperate ambitiously. While recognizing the relevance of resolution 2712 (2023) and its call for humanitarian pauses and corridors in Gaza, Brazil is of the view that the Council must do more. It must unite to adopt a more decisive and comprehensive course of action that can consolidate gains, sustainably and predictably address the dire situation on the ground and foster a safer and more hopeful future. Echoing President Lula da Silva's recent remarks on the matter, we very much hope that this agreement on a short humanitarian truce, a modest sign of hope amid an appalling human tragedy, can open a way to peace and lay the groundwork for the resumption of the peace process between Israel and Palestine. In that endeavour, we must not lose sight of the need to address the root causes of the Palestinian issue through dialogue, political will and good diplomacy. That process needs to be fully inclusive, while considering the perspective of all relevant stakeholders. Every country and partner with influence over the parties must be called to shoulder its responsibility to reach a lasting solution for this central issue. And of course, the Council should also live up to its responsibilities.

Burying the two-State solution means burying any prospect for peace. A viable Palestinian State, living side by side in peace and security with Israel within mutually accepted internationally recognized borders is both the fulfilment of the Palestinian's self-determination and the most crucial interest of all peace-loving countries that belong to the United Nations. Any initiative in the form of an international conference, as some members Member States have proposed, with a view to implementing the two-State solution, would receive Brazil's unequivocal support.



The legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian and Israelis for peace and security in their own countries cannot be overlooked or neglected any longer. As I have tried to convey here today, solidarity is not only a moral obligation; it is the Security Council's duty. In order to discharge its responsibilities in the maintenance of international peace and security, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, the Council must unite around the common good and rise above any individual interests of its members.

**The President** (*spoke in Chinese*): I now call on the Minister of State for Middle East, North Africa, South Asia, United Nations and the Commonwealth in the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

**Lord Ahmad** (United Kingdom): May I begin by thanking Secretary-General Guterres and Special Coordinator Tor Wennesland for their detailed briefings.

As we look towards the Middle East, a tragedy is unfolding in front of our very eyes. Israel has suffered the worst terror attack in its history, and Palestinians are experiencing a devastating and growing humanitarian crisis as a result of the ensuing Israeli military action.

Every life matters — Israeli or Palestinian. Every innocent civilian life lost — Palestinian or Israeli — is a tragedy. Indeed, we also collectively mourn the loss of all innocent lives lost, including those of United Nations personnel delivering vital life-saving aid in Gaza.

Yet the past week has provided a much-needed respite in the hostilities. The agreement was an important opportunity for providing hope and relief to the families of the hostages and for allowing vital humanitarian assistance into Gaza. But that should not be a one-off. We must collectively build from it and create the opportunity for more, including follow-up and ensuring more humanitarian grounds for such cessation. Hostages must be released. Aid must get in. And civilians must be protected.

I had the opportunity to visit Qatar recently to discuss this very conflict. I take this opportunity to recognize its pivotal role in this agreement, together with that of Egypt and the United States.

Just last week, the United Kingdom Foreign Secretary Lord Cameron visited Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories where he met with Israeli and Palestinian leaders. During their meetings, they discussed the importance of securing the release of

hostages; addressing the humanitarian crisis, which included the British Foreign Secretary announcing a further \$38 million in United Kingdom humanitarian aid; and also emphasizing the need to find a long-term political solution to the conflict based on the two-State solution.

In Israel, he discussed the need to immediately de-escalate in the West Bank where tragically more than 200 Palestinians have been killed and to prevent further escalation, which disrupts regional peace and security — concerns we all share. And while we welcome statements condemning settler violence, the United Kingdom is clear: there must be justice, and Israel must hold those responsible to account. Equally, the United Kingdom's position on Israeli settlements is also clear and long-standing. They are illegal under international law and contrary to the cause of peace.

The United Kingdom is also clear that Iran poses an unacceptable threat to the region through its destabilizing activity and long-term support for its proxies and partners in the region, including Hamas, Hizbullah and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad. We condemn the unlawful seizure of the MV Galaxy Leader and call for the immediate and unconditional release of the ship and its crew.

For our part, across the region, the United Kingdom is working intensively with all partners on this particular issue, on the importance of humanitarian relief, on the importance of hostage relief and on the importance of preventing further escalation. The United Kingdom also further echoes the call of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon for a cessation of hostilities across the Blue Line and for a renewed commitment to implementing resolution 1701 (2006).

The United Kingdom, from the start of the events through the Hamas attack on Israel on 7 October, has been clear that Israel has a right to defend itself against terrorism, but in doing so Israel must act in accordance with international law of which safeguarding civilian life is key and pivotal. Frankly, tragically, too many innocent civilians, including many children, have lost their lives, and we must work collectively to find solutions to this long-standing conflict.

Ultimately, we must find that pathway to peace and ensure, yes, events such as 7 October never happen again. And therefore, equally, let us commit ourselves to ensure we deliver sustainable peace.

The United Kingdom believes in a negotiated settlement, in line with Security Council resolutions, leading to a safe and secure Israel living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian State. We must now all work together to turn that vision into a reality — a reality of ensuring security, a reality of ensuring justice and a reality of ensuring peace for Israelis and Palestinians alike. That must be our shared, long-term, deliverable objective.

Peace may seem difficult, but peace is achievable. Peace is attainable. And we must work together to deliver that noble goal.

**The President** (*spoke in Chinese*): I now call on the Permanent Representative of the United States and member of President Biden's Cabinet.

**Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield** (United States of America): I thank Secretary-General Guterres and Special Coordinator Wennesland for their briefings. I also join in welcoming the many Ministers with us here today.

We are now on the sixth day of the humanitarian pause in Gaza — a pause that amid the darkness of a conflict that Hamas set into motion has been a glimmer of hope; a pause that, quite frankly, would not have been possible without the leadership of Qatar, Egypt and the United States.

From day one, the United States approach to this conflict has been driven by direct, personal, presidential diplomacy.

Diplomacy is hard. A lot of it takes place behind the scenes. And while the work we do in this Chamber is tremendously important, often times progress happens outside these walls.

Take the humanitarian pause we helped to broker. Water, food, fuel and other essentials are now reaching Palestinian civilians in the south and, crucially, the north. And this week, the United States is airlifting United Nations medical items, food aid and winter necessities to the region. Just yesterday, we delivered over 54,000 pounds of assistance to the humanitarian logistics hub. During the first five days of the humanitarian pause, we saw approximately 1,000 trucks enter Gaza, and there are more regular shipments of fuel going to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

But more humanitarian assistance is needed, much more. Therefore, we must do everything possible to scale up aid, and all parties must do everything possible to protect civilians, including UNRWA staff and journalists.

The United States has urged Israel to take every possible measure to prevent civilian casualties as it exercises its right to safeguard its people from acts of terror. We know Hamas continues to use civilians as human shields, purposefully, cruelly putting Palestinian civilians in harm's way. But that does not lessen Israel's responsibility to protect civilians consistent with international humanitarian law.

During this pause, we have welcomed the release of hostages who were pried away from their families by Hamas. We have seen emotional reunions — children running to embrace their parents and families back together, finally able to breathe a sigh of relief after weeks of agony. I simply cannot imagine what the hostages and families have been through. None of us can.

I think about Abigail Edan, a 4-year-old girl who was freed this week but whose parents were killed by Hamas right in front of her eyes, and Yaffa Adar, an elderly woman, bravely showing her face steelily, now free, now able to smile once again. That is Hamas. Clearly there is no one too young or too old for its terror. Those are horrors it celebrates, and those are horrors some Member States still refuse to condemn. It is unacceptable, and it is outrageous.

Even as we welcome the release of those hostages, so many others are not yet free, and their families are still living in hell, unsure when or if they will see their loved ones again. I think of Hersh Goldberg-Polin and his parents, with whom I met. To those families, I want to say this: We will not rest until all hostages held by Hamas and other groups are released — every single one.

Towards that end, we want to see this humanitarian pause extended. Israel has been very clear that it is prepared to continue the pause in fighting for every day that Hamas releases an additional 10 hostages. The ball is now in Hamas's court. And if Hamas decides not to extend the deal, the responsibility will rest squarely on its shoulders.

While the past week has been a source of hope, I want to raise three deeply troubling developments.

First, we continue to be concerned by the possibility of further spillover of the conflict. In particular, the United States does not want to see conflict in Lebanon, where escalation would have grave implications for regional peace and security and for the well-being of the Lebanese people. Restoring calm along the Israel-Lebanon border is of the utmost importance, and fully implementing resolution 1701 (2006) is a key component of that effort. The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon plays a vital role along the Blue Line, and we expect that all parties will ensure the safety of peacekeepers. We also call on the Council to condemn in the strongest terms the recent Houthi attacks in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, which pose a significant risk to the maritime security of vessels. Such attacks must cease, and the *MV Galaxy Leader* and its crew must be immediately released.

Secondly, we are deeply troubled by the sharp rise in violence by extremist Israeli settlers against Palestinians in the West Bank. Extremists who attack civilians in the West Bank must be held accountable, and this violence must stop. President Biden has made clear that the United States is prepared to take action, including by issuing visa bans against those extremists. We strongly oppose the advancement of settlements in the West Bank, which undermines the possibility of a contiguous Palestinian State.

Thirdly, we call on all parties in the region and people around the world to refrain from inflammatory rhetoric that exacerbates tension and hate. That includes dehumanizing language. Over the past two months, we have seen a spike in antisemitism and Islamophobia. We see it playing out online across social media, and we also see it in our communities, where hate begets violence. The violent attack on three students of Palestinian descent in Vermont was horrific. We all have a responsibility to condemn all of those attacks.

Even as we focus on the immediate tasks before us, we must look forward to a better future so that the next generation of children will never know the horrors of terror and conflict, so that we can stamp out the distrust and the trauma that continue to plague the region and so that Israelis and Palestinians can secure a future free of Hamas and free of terror. Because let us be clear — an outcome that leaves Hamas in control of Gaza would deny Palestinian civilians the chance to build something better for themselves. It would also expose Israel to the possibility of future attacks.

We need the two-State solution, in which Gaza and the West Bank are reunited under a single governance structure — ultimately, under a revitalized Palestinian Authority. This is the only guarantor of a secure and democratic Israel. This is the only guarantor of Palestinians realizing their legitimate aspirations to a State of their own. This is the only way to end this cycle of violence once and for all.

Progress will not come overnight. Peace is never easily won, and diplomacy requires hard work. But that must not deter us. Let us work together. We must commit to diplomacy. Let us do everything possible and, at long last, deliver on the promise of peace and the hope for a brighter future.

**The President** (*spoke in Chinese*): I now call on the Minister of State of the United Arab Emirates.

**Mr. Al Marar** (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Secretary-General António Guterres and Special Envoy Tor Wennesland for their important briefings. We greatly appreciate the efforts of the United Nations and the sacrifices made by its staff to provide assistance to the Gaza Strip during this difficult time.

In an area that does not exceed 365 square kilometres, more than 2 million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip are enduring an Israeli attack that does not respect human values or adhere to international law and norms. More than 15,000 targets were bombed in that confined space, killing at least 14,000 Palestinians, predominantly women and children. According to the United Nations, medical teams, journalists and humanitarian workers have not been spared. That has profoundly shaken global conscience in an unprecedented manner.

Scenes of complete destruction in Gaza are horrific and reveal an unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe. Entire neighbourhoods have been razed to the ground, along with their residents. Sixty per cent of housing units and more than 300 education facilities were destroyed. People stand in long lines hoping to get a piece of bread or a few drops of water, as humanitarian aid is being prevented from reaching Gaza, except very little as compared to the overwhelming needs.

Even the wounded and the sick have been deprived of their right to health care, as Israel has deliberately and unacceptably targeted hospitals and health facilities, compelling their evacuation. Concurrently, there have been deliberate disruptions to fuel and medical supplies. In sum, such actions have led to a collapse of the entire

health sector. Children's limbs were amputated without anaesthesia; premature infants were removed from incubators; and patients in intensive care units have died, turning health facilities into graves.

Furthermore, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were forced to displace from northern Gaza to southern Gaza amid extremely difficult and dangerous conditions. That has occurred despite the absence of any safe havens in the Strip and the painful scene that evoked memories of the 1948 Nakba. The fact that nearly 80 per cent of the people in Gaza have been displaced since the beginning of the offensive, with more than 1 million people taking refuge in the facilities belonging to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, demonstrates the magnitude of the catastrophe, especially in the light of the significant lack of relief aid.

The United Arab Emirates reaffirms in the strongest terms its condemnation of Israel's collective punishment policy against the brotherly Palestinian people, as well as the attempts to displace the Palestinians, which we categorically reject. The future and the governance of Gaza must remain in the hands of the Palestinian people. Any presumptions or plans that seek to separate the Gaza Strip from the State of Palestine are unacceptable.

We also stress the need for the international community to adopt unified rules condemning violations of international humanitarian law. That includes the indiscriminate bombing of civilians, civilian objects and United Nations facilities. Applying double standards across those issues causes chaos and undermines our international order, which must continue to be based on respect for international law and the Charter of the United Nations for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Following weeks of dangerous escalation, the United Arab Emirates believes that the truce reached by the two parties last week and the ceasefire for four days while delivering limited amount of aid, exchanging Palestinian prisoners with Israeli detainees, extending the truce for two more days represent a sign of hope. Furthermore, scaling up humanitarian aid and agreeing on further truce extensions are necessary to allow sufficient time and space for the implementation of critical relief activities, such as reaching thousands of people trapped under rubble. Simultaneously, ongoing

efforts must persist to ensure an immediate and permanent ceasefire.

We express our appreciation to Qatar, Egypt and the United States for their tireless diplomatic efforts to reach that agreement and for their support in its implementation. We also value their efforts in addressing one of the most difficult crises in the history of the Middle East today.

We stress the importance of ensuring the full implementation of resolution 2712 (2023), which demands that all parties respect their obligations under international law and calls for urgent and extended humanitarian pauses and the unconditional release of detainees. In that context, we underline the relevance of the Secretary-General's remarks today and stress the importance of establishing mechanisms to ensure the effective implementation of that resolution.

It is also necessary to improve mechanisms for the safe, permanent, unhindered access of aid into Gaza through all crossings in a safe and sustained manner with sufficient quantities needed on the ground, while ensuring the distribution of aid to all those in need without restriction or delay. We commend the efforts made by the Arab Republic of Egypt in facilitating aid access through the Rafah crossing and allowing the sick, injured, hostages and other civilians to exit Gaza.

For its part, the United Arab Emirates continues its efforts to stand by the brotherly Palestinian people during the most difficult crisis in Gaza. A few days ago, we began delivering the necessary materials to establish a field hospital in the Gaza Strip under the supervision of a United Arab Emirates medical team. We received groups of children from Gaza in our hospitals. That is part of our initiative to host 1,000 children and their families, along with an additional 1,000 Palestinian cancer patients, ensuring they receive the necessary medical attention. In addition, we have announced contributions to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and launched a public campaign to support those affected in Gaza. The campaign has collected more than 1,600 tons of relief materials, which were delivered to the Gaza Strip.

As the world is focused on the catastrophic situation in the Gaza Strip, we must not overlook the worrisome conditions in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Those areas have been facing mounting Israeli aggression since the beginning of 2023, resulting in the killing of



400 Palestinians. Repeated incursions into the Al-Aqsa Mosque by extremist groups under the protection of the Israeli authorities have become commonplace. Settler violence has also reached unprecedented levels, manifesting in serious and severe forms, while Israel has bombed refugee camps in Jenin, Nablus and other locales. Concurrently, Israel continues to build and expand its settlements, further dividing Palestinian communities in violation of international law and Security Council resolutions. All those illegal practices must stop now. The ongoing turmoil cannot endure additional provocative measures or violence and hate speech. The security of both peoples and the region is at stake.

The recent events have demonstrated the need for the international community to stop merely managing the conflict. Instead, we must work to revive hope for the possibility of reaching a just, lasting and comprehensive political solution to the Palestinian question. From now we must work towards creating conditions conducive to resuming serious negotiations, based on the agreed terms of reference, to achieve the two-State solution, so that those steps may be implemented as soon as a ceasefire is reached.

We underscore that achieving durable peace will not be possible without ending the Israeli occupation of all Palestinian and Arab territories and establishing an independent Palestinian State, along 4 June 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side with Israel in security, peace and mutual recognition. Meanwhile, we must prevent the region from sliding into regional war, which would have repercussions affecting the entire world. Therefore, the ongoing skirmishes in southern Lebanon, the Syrian Golan and the Red Sea must end. We cannot allow our region to remain hostage to crises and conflicts. Our peoples deserve to live in security and stability. Our youth aspire for a better future. And we in the United Arab Emirates are determined to achieve that.

**The President** (*spoke in Chinese*): I now call on the State Secretary of Switzerland.

**Mr. Gürber** (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for facilitating this meeting, attended by many ministers and representatives of countries affected by the hostilities in the Middle East. Their participation testifies to the international community's determination to find a solution to this crisis. Time is running out. As the Secretary-General

and Special Coordinator Wennesland, whom I thank warmly for their presentations, just said, the situation on the ground is serious.

By adopting resolution 2712 (2023), the Security Council opened a breach in the bloody dynamic of this conflict. The resolution demands

“that all parties comply with their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law, notably with regard to the protection of civilians” (resolution 2712 (2023), *para. 1*).

At the same time as it recognizes Israel's right to ensure its defence and security, Switzerland recalls that respect for international humanitarian law is imperative. The Council has a duty to ensure that this law and human rights are respected by all parties to the conflict. International humanitarian law protects all civilians, including the wounded and the sick, humanitarian and medical personnel and civilian infrastructure, including hospitals and schools of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. Civilians have paid the heaviest price since the outbreak of hostilities. The lives of more than 1,000 of them were snuffed out by Hamas during the acts of terror it perpetrated on 7 October in Israel, which Switzerland strongly condemned. A large number of hostages remain captive in Gaza. We welcome the releases that have taken place through the mediation of Qatar, Egypt and the United States of America and thanks to the important role of neutral intermediary played by the International Committee of the Red Cross. We call for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages still held in Gaza.

Of the thousands of civilians killed in Gaza, more than one third are children. Switzerland calls for an extension of the humanitarian pause due to end tomorrow morning. The catastrophic humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip demands it. We welcome the additional aid delivered over the past week, including fuel. However, it is still far from enough. We must insist that humanitarian aid be delivered unhindered and without preconditions to civilian populations in need throughout the Gaza Strip. To that end, we call for every effort to be made to allow humanitarian access through all crossing points, including for commercial goods. In that regard, Switzerland would like to thank the Secretary-General in advance for the proposals that he intends to submit for the practical implementation

of resolution 2712 (2023). We are ready to engage constructively in finding a new consensus within the Council, while bearing in mind the need to pursue a political solution to the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians.

Throughout the occupied Palestinian territory in Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, the situation continues to deteriorate. In the West Bank, increased settler violence has led to the forced displacement of entire communities. Switzerland recalls Israel's obligations under international law, including the obligation to protect the civilian population. In the context of operations by Israeli security forces, the use of force must in particular meet the criterion of proportionality and respect the rights of every individual to life and security of person. All violations of international law committed in Israel and throughout the occupied Palestinian territory must be investigated and the perpetrators brought to justice.

Lastly, it is essential to find a comprehensive political solution to the conflict. In that process, it is important to pay attention to the voices and contributions of Palestinian and Israeli women who want to build peace. The Council must take concrete steps towards a two-State solution, which is the only possible foundation for peace and stability in the region. We must contribute to rebuilding the foundation for two democratic States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace within secure and recognized borders.

**The President** (*spoke in Chinese*): I now call on the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration of Ghana.

**Ms. Nkansah-Boadu** (Ghana): I would like to begin by thanking China for its leadership of the Security Council this month and for convening this meeting on the Middle East peace process at a high level, reflecting the exigencies of the moment.

Ghana thanks the Secretary-General for his statement, especially the updates on the implementation of resolution 2712 (2023) and the options to effectively monitor the implementation of the demands of the Council in the resolution. We also thank Special Coordinator Tor Wennesland for his briefing on the situation on the ground.

We have also taken note of the statements by the representatives of Israel and Palestine. Ghana appreciates the complexity and horrors of the tragedy

that has unfolded in the region since 7 October, as well as the frustration of both sides. Now, however, it is time to embrace the overwhelming call of the international community for reconciliation and for peace and security for the peoples of the region. The tears, suffering and deaths on both sides must end.

Over the past 54 days, the world's focus and attention has been fixated on the Middle East, in particular southern Israel and the Gaza Strip. The brutal and horrific attacks by Hamas and other armed actors against Israel on 7 October, the loss of 1,200 Israeli lives and the abduction of over 200 Israeli and foreign nationals as hostages marked an escalation in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict not seen in recent years. The Israeli military response, which has led to the reported killing of more than 14,000 Palestinians, has compounded the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip with dire consequences.

We are saddened by the turn of events and the impact that the hostilities that have ensued has caused on both sides, especially to women and children, as well as United Nations and other humanitarian relief workers. We reiterate our heartfelt condolences to the affected families and friends of all those whose promise of hope for tomorrow and for the future has been ruined by the brutality of war.

We are heartened by the humanitarian pause mediated by Qatar, Egypt and the United States between the parties on 22 November, which has so far led to the release of several Palestinian prisoners and Israeli and foreign hostages. We welcome the extension of the deal for an additional two days, ending today. We appeal to Israel and Hamas to extend the humanitarian pause for repeated two-day periods on the basis of the original arrangement, which requires Hamas to also release a number of hostages. That is necessary to continue to save lives and to enable those mediating the conflict to build confidence with further mutual measures.

We note the need for additional humanitarian aid, even though the deal has significantly increased the number of trucks entering Gaza through the Rafah border crossing. The supply of food, medicines and fuel is an important factor to prevent the population of Gaza from being pushed into an unimaginable public health catastrophe. We therefore support practical arrangements that can increase supplies through different border crossings and restore a minimum level of public health capacity.

We reiterate our demand that facilities of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), including storage facilities, should be separated from the conflict, and we strongly appeal for a positive response by donors to the flash appeals by UNRWA and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. We believe that the continuing efforts of the Council to preserve lives should hinge first on how we can ensure that those not consumed by the conflict are provided support to live.

We emphasize that the protection of civilians is a cardinal responsibility of the Council and requires a strong reminder to the parties of their obligations to respect international humanitarian law and to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure, which are non-negotiable principles that preserve our common humanity.

Events over the past few days remind us of the consequences of elusive peace in the Middle East in the past 75 years. We also contemplate a Gaza after tomorrow. We cannot overlook the totality of peace required in Palestine, which demands of the parties their full commitment to seeking the narrow and difficult path for a renewed and constructive dialogue on a political horizon.

Ghana, like many others, does not see an alternative to the two-State solution. While the unacceptable settlement-related activities, the unending cycle of violent clashes, particularly in the West Bank, and the arbitrary arrest and detention of Palestinians constitute obstacles on the way forward, they should not be hindrances too difficult to overcome for the cause of peace.

The cost of war and a deterioration in the security situation in Palestine portend greater danger for the Middle East region and beyond. That is a cost none of us should be willing to incur. We must therefore spare no effort to de-escalate the conflict and prevent its spread beyond its confines. In that regard, we urge all countries with mediating influence to come together to abate the tensions in the region. That also requires us to act to stop the exchange of fire across the Blue Line, including around the contested Shab'a Farms area, as well as to help the cessation of maritime seizures of Israeli-owned or -managed cargo ships in the Red Sea and off the coast of the Gulf of Aden. The persisting launch of drones and missiles from neighbouring

countries towards Israel amid the Israeli-Hamas war is also provocative and must stop.

Those incidents, among others, have put at risk the lives of members of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and present a direct threat to the peace and stability of all countries in the region. We reiterate the important stabilization role of UNIFIL and the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force and appeal to all parties and countries in the region to exercise extreme restraint and rein in the activities of all armed groups operating from within their territories.

Distressed by the humanitarian and security situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, particularly in the Gaza Strip, where approximately 1.8 million people — over 80 per cent of the population — have been displaced, the majority of whom are women and children, the Council has not seen a shortage of initiatives to find consensus beyond the adoption of resolution 2712 (2023). Like many Council members, Ghana believes that the increasing mistrust between Israel and Palestine makes it imperative for the Council to enhance its actions to support direct engagement by the parties in a manner that would enable the Palestinian people to exercise their rights to a homeland, while assuring the State of Israel its security.

Regrettably, the Middle East Quartet, which had served as the unifying shepherd for the peace process, has not been able to act in recent times. Cognizant of the need for a horizon, we strongly encourage the Council to consider appointing a rapporteur from among its members, in accordance with its provisional rules of procedure, to unify the position of the Council on how to further proceed with the two-State solution. We must do so while being mindful of the need for a comprehensive and sustained effort to address the root causes of the conflict.

While we therefore regret that the Middle East region has witnessed some of the worst forms of violent clashes in recent times, the overwhelming desire around the world for peace in the region, especially in the occupied Palestinian territories, should galvanize us to seek some practical steps now. Tomorrow may be too late to reverse the trends of instability that are taking root in the region. We therefore urge for renewed support by the international community for the two-State solution to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive solution for the Palestinian question, on the basis of the 1967 lines, with Jerusalem as a shared capital.

In conclusion, I renew Ghana's commitment to support efforts towards lasting peace in the Middle East region and underscore the need for cooperation and unified action by all of us.

**The President** (*spoke in Chinese*): I now call on the Special Envoy for Middle East Peace of Japan.

**Mr. Uemura** (Japan): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important meeting. My appreciation also goes to the Secretary-General and the Special Coordinator.

Today is the forty-sixth anniversary of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. I have been engaged in the Middle East for four decades. A lot of my friends are in Palestine, including in the Gaza Strip and Arab countries, as well as Israel. I feel indescribable grief, but nothing deprives me of hope for the future. I am convinced that sadness and hope are shared. Peace in the Middle East should be built on that common ground. Japan's position on the current situation has been repeatedly explained in this Chamber. Therefore, I would like to focus on what we should share, as an old friend of the region, not on where we differ. I am a person who has devoted his whole career to this complex, but fascinating, region. Despite many challenges and difficulties, the region holds great potential to realize coexistence and shared prosperity.

A true peace can be achieved only through dialogue based on mutual trust, not violence. Japan has consistently supported a two-State solution to be achieved through negotiations. Our approach to a two-State solution has been based on three pillars, that is, political dialogue, confidence-building and economic assistance to the Palestinian people. My colleagues and I have worked very hard and have strongly promoted important policies, such as the Jericho Agro-Industrial Park, under the aegis of the Japan International Cooperation Agency, and the Conference on Cooperation among East Asian Countries for Palestinian Development. Japan continues to work together with all parties for the peace and prosperity of the region.

The current suffering of children, women and the elderly breaks our hearts. The news of the released hostages gives us a sense of relief, but the remaining hostages must be released immediately and without conditions. I also emphasize that the humanitarian situation in Palestine is still deteriorating. We need to stop its further deterioration. All parties must act in

good faith based on the Security Council resolution recently adopted (resolution 2712 (2023)). All parties must comply with international law, including international humanitarian law. The ongoing pause and its momentum must lead to hope for the future. The current conflict, which began on 7 October, must not be allowed to block the path to peace in the Middle East. The international community should continue to make the utmost effort to bring about peaceful coexistence between the two sides.

Japan's Foreign Minister, Ms. Yoko Kamikawa, issued a message for this International Day of Solidarity. We need lasting peace and stability in the Middle East. There is no solution other than the peaceful coexistence of Israel and Palestine.

Lastly, I would like to recall a value of importance for the Japanese and the people in the Middle East, that is, the importance of moderation. In Arabic, they say that even in difficult situations, taking the middle path is the best way. That is also an important virtue advocated by Confucius, Aristotle and many other world philosophers. There is a common thread running through all of us in our fundamental way of life. In good times and bad times, as a supporter, Japan runs alongside Palestine, Israel and all people living in the Middle East. We are very much prepared to be a part of any international effort to make a better future in the region.

**Mrs. Ngyema Ndong** (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I commend China on taking the initiative to convene this open meeting and on its leadership throughout the month of November. I thank the Secretary-General for his update on the situation in the war between Israel and Hamas.

We welcome the return to humanity, represented by the agreement that enabled the start of the truce on Friday and the release of Israeli hostages and Palestinian prisoners. That emotional moment of respite must be used to save lives, provide assistance to those in need and create the conditions for a permanent cessation of hostilities. It is a window of hope to implement resolution 2712 (2023), adopted by the Security Council on 15 November, and the resolution adopted by the General Assembly (General Assembly resolution ES-10/21). We welcome the combined efforts of Qatar, Egypt and the United States, which made achieving the pause possible. The truce must be maintained so that we can once again ground ourselves in international



humanitarian law among the ruins in Gaza and the suffering of its population. The deadly violence unleashed by Hamas's barbaric attacks on 7 October took on unbearable proportions. The time has come to stop counting the dead by the tens of thousands. It is time to stop the flood of children killed by the thousands. The time has come to end the bloodbath in Gaza and the chaos reigning among its civilian population.

Gabon once again calls on all parties to show restraint, uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law and ensure accountability for serious violations of international law. We will continue to reaffirm that the solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict must be political and diplomatic, based on dialogue and good-faith negotiations and ensuring respect for the legitimate concerns of both sides. Gabon reiterates its firm condemnation of all indiscriminate deadly violence and calls for the unconditional release of all hostages. We reiterate our call for unhindered, secure and sustainable access to the delivery and distribution of essential goods and services for the millions of people in need.

In conclusion, I reaffirm Gabon's commitment to the two-State solution, with both States coexisting peacefully on the basis of internationally recognized borders. More than ever, it is the time to translate that solution into concrete action. In order to achieve that, dialogue and negotiation are the indisputable channels, with a central role to played be the United Nations.

**Mr. Hoxha** (Albania): Let me thank the Secretary-General for his remarks, and the Special Coordinator for his briefing.

The holding humanitarian truce is the key fact and key word of these days. It has been six days without hostilities; six days without the deafening noise of war and its deadly consequences; six days without the terrifying sirens announcing missiles flying over Israel; and, most important, six days without victims. Diplomacy has made headway; humanity has prevailed; and some hope has been restored. The truce is holding and extending, and we see it as a testimony of a desire for peace.

The continued release of the hostages is very positive and very welcome, but so too is the relief for the Palestinians in Gaza. We commend Qatar, Egypt and the United States for their efforts and urge them to continue until all hostages are reunited with their families. We are encouraged to note that some key

elements of resolution 2712 (2023), which Albania supported, are being implemented, and we call for the resolution to be fully implemented. In that context, we welcome the considerable increase in the volume of humanitarian aid to Gaza, including fuel and cooking gas, but way more is needed, and way more needs to be done.

The horrific events of 7 October — the deliberate massacre and abduction of civilians — cannot be forgotten. Hamas carefully planned and knowingly executed the worst. Nothing can, or will ever, justify terror. And nothing can, or will ever, justify taking civilian hostages, including babies, children and the elderly, and using them for political purposes. It is unfortunate that, seven weeks after the events, the Council has not been able to issue a condemnation of the unacceptable and the unforgivable.

In this conflict, as in every conflict, civilians have paid an unprecedentedly heavy human toll — especially women and children, who are always the most affected. This is intolerable and must stop. We recall that the protection of civilians must be the primary concern in every conflict and that international law must be fully observed, and this also applies to civilian infrastructure. The World Health Organization has raised alarms about the rise in outbreaks of infectious diseases in Gaza. Without medicine, without routine vaccination activities, without proper access to safe water and hygiene and without sufficient food, disease could kill way more people than the hostilities do. That must be reversed quickly.

Let us not forget that, while the attention is focused on Gaza, innocent civilians, including children, are also dying in the West Bank. We expect Israel to commit the same efforts and ingenuity to saving innocent Palestinian lives as it does in its efforts to decimate and eliminate Hamas, because as long as the Palestinians see the war against Hamas as collective punishment in which they end up being the first victims, the prospects for long-lasting peace will be remote and shaky, if anything.

Oppressive and brutal regimes are never liked — they are only feared. Hamas ruling Gaza is no exception. During 18 years of Hamas rule, the Gaza Strip has been besieged, impoverished, underdeveloped and left without a clear perspective. And as we discover now, Hamas's only real investment in Gaza

are the tunnels — not for the population, but only and exclusively for Hamas and its warmongering policies.

I hope that the people of Gaza will come to understand that, while Hamas is trying to sell them terror as a false victory, it will never be able to do more than drag them into war with Israel. However justified their frustration over the lack of progress and their fatigue from never seeing their dreams come true, peaceful Palestinians should not be fooled into believing that Hamas will give them the State they need and deserve or the future they want and aspire to. Instead of joining the Palestinian Authority, the legitimate representatives of the Palestinian people and seeking a viable and long-lasting solution through political means only, Hamas seeks the destruction of the State of Israel.

Such a policy will never see the end of a tunnel. It risks remaining buried in the ground or dying under the rubble, killing at the same time the hopes of Palestinians for a normal life and a decent future. That is why, while the urgency of the day is — and rightly so — to save lives and bring humanitarian aid up to scale for everyone in need, it is crucial to think about and work for the day after the current conflict is over. There is no alternative. Palestinians need and deserve their State, and Israel needs and must have its security. Those are not mutually exclusive — on the contrary, they are mutually reinforcing and mutually reassuring.

The Palestinian question cannot remain the modern-day Sisyphean task. It must be set, as soon as possible, on the right path — that of a serious political process where there is talk and walk for peace, for a viable, secure and free Palestinian State and for security, cooperation, progress and dignity for all — Israelis and Palestinians alike. If not, we will fail again, and the nightmare of today will end up being the prelude to tomorrow.

**Mrs. Frazier** (Malta): I begin by thanking the Secretary-General for his briefing on the implementation of resolution 2712 (2023). The full implementation of that resolution remains paramount. I also thank Special Coordinator Wennesland for his important briefing on the situation on the ground.

Malta commends the mediation efforts of Qatar, Egypt and the United States, which led to the first humanitarian truce, the gradual release of hostages from Gaza and the release of detained Palestinian women and children from Israeli prisons. The extension of that truce for an additional two days was also a

welcome development. We urge the parties to continue to build on those steps. As a first measure, the truce must continue to be extended. A genuine commitment towards a ceasefire and a lasting political solution is also needed as a matter of urgency.

We also commend the International Committee of the Red Cross for its efforts in facilitating the transfer of hostages and detainees. We call for them to be allowed access to the remaining hostages.

Malta reiterates its strong condemnation of the terror attacks by Hamas against Israel and its people on 7 October. We once again call for the release of all remaining hostages safely and unconditionally. At the same time, the catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza is untenable. Thousands of civilians, many of whom are women and children, have been killed. The population continues to suffer from colossal difficulties and hardships related to health care, food security, shelter and sanitation. A large number of journalists have also lost their lives.

Meanwhile, countless children continue to live in increased anguish and deprivation. They are disproportionately affected by this conflict and the lack of necessities. The long-term impact that the violence will have on their mental health cannot be ignored. The World Health Organization's statement that more people will die due to rising rates of disease elicits grave concern, and immediate action is needed to prevent that scenario.

The truce we have seen in these past days has made clear that a cessation of hostilities is the only way to ensure that civilians are protected and continue to receive humanitarian support. The scaling-up and distribution of humanitarian aid can take place only under such conditions. We urgently call on all parties to ensure the protection of civilians and aid workers, in compliance with their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law.

In that light, we also recognize the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which has continued to take place under extremely dangerous circumstances. We convey our sincerest condolences for the more than 100 UNRWA staff who have been killed in this conflict.

We cannot afford to lose more lives. We cannot return to further bloodshed and insecurity. It is in that

spirit that Malta echoes the Secretary-General's call for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire.

While all eyes are on Gaza, the West Bank is also suffering unprecedented escalations. Since 7 October, there has been a sharp increase in the killing, violence and forced displacement suffered by Palestinians as a result of settler violence and hundreds of arrests. Malta underlines Israel's obligations to abide by international law and ensure the protection of the Palestinian population from all acts or threats of violence. We reiterate that settlements are illegal under international law and are an obstacle to peace. We call on the parties to urge de-escalation and exercise the utmost restraint. Avoiding a regional conflagration is of the utmost importance and must be avoided at all costs. We also call on the parties to show restraint given de-escalation along the Blue Line. The implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) remains key.

It is also imperative that we consider a credible foundation for future peace. Malta therefore reaffirms its commitment to a two-State Solution along the pre-1967 borders, while addressing the legitimate aspirations of both sides, with Jerusalem as the future capital of two States living side-by-side in peace and security, in line with the relevant Security Council resolutions and the internationally agreed parameters. Within this dire context, and particularly today on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, it remains clear that this is the only viable path to achieving peace.

**Mr. Montalvo Sosa** (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): We join other delegations in welcoming the high-level officials present at this meeting. I thank Secretary-General António Guterres and Special Coordinator Tor Wennesland for their briefings. Above all, I reiterate Ecuador's recognition for their work and that of all United Nations personnel. We also express our condolences for the 111 staff members who have lost their lives in recent weeks due to this conflict.

Ecuador has been clear in expressing its most energetic and unequivocal condemnation of the unjustifiable terrorist attacks perpetrated by Hamas, as well as in conveying its condolences to the families of the victims of those atrocious acts and its solidarity with the people of Israel. There is no possible justification for attacking innocent civilians. We also take this opportunity to request the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages taken by Hamas.

Hamas's terrorist attacks do not represent the Palestinian people, their inalienable right to self-determination or their legitimate aspirations to live in security, freedom, justice, opportunity and dignity. In recent weeks there have been thousands of painful and unacceptable deaths of innocent civilians, including Palestinian women and children. Ecuador's solidarity is also with their families and with the Palestinian people.

Israel has the right to defend its population and, in doing so, must respect the principles of international law and international humanitarian law. There is no justification for causing pain and death to innocent civilians. Every effort must be made to avoid that. The pause in hostilities in recent days is valuable in that it has allowed the release of dozens of hostages kidnapped by Hamas, especially the most vulnerable, as well as the entry of humanitarian aid, which is urgently needed for the civilian population of Gaza. It has also allowed the release of dozens of Palestinians detained in Israel. That is a hopeful first step towards peace, and we call on the parties to do everything possible to seek its extension. Every day without hostilities is an opportunity for people, not weapons, to speak. It also helps prevent the spread of the conflict to other areas and gives respite to civilians, as well as to the closely attentive international community.

My country's positions on this and all issues are based on the principles of international law. We are of the view that Council resolutions must always be respected. The implementation of resolution 2712 (2023) is important to alleviate the conditions faced by the civilian population in Gaza, especially women and children, who constitute the majority of the victims. It is essential to facilitate the arrival of humanitarian aid, including medicines, fuel, water and food, to all those who need it, in the appropriate quantity and with the requisite frequency. To that end, we believe that an immediate, lasting and respected humanitarian ceasefire is indispensable.

Likewise, it is necessary to respect the provisions of resolution 2334 (2016). The situation in the West Bank is worrisome, as is the increase in violence since 7 October and the continuation of settlement activities. Every measure that undermines the viability of the two-State solution serves to perpetuate the conflict and does nothing to improve security. All actors must show restraint, avoid exacerbating tensions and prevent an expansion of violence to other areas, including the border between Israel and Lebanon. The almost eight

decades of conflict, the thousands and thousands of deaths and the immeasurable pain and suffering of entire generations are the clearest evidence that violence is not the solution. It is time to stop the mindset of looking for someone to blame and to focus on achieving, once and for all, a permanent settlement to this issue.

Finally, I reiterate what Ecuador has stated on countless occasions in the Council, in the General Assembly and in other forums: the only way to end this conflict is through a peaceful, negotiated, definitive and fair solution for the parties, with the existence of two States, Palestine and Israel, based on the 1967 borders and the relevant resolutions.

**Mr. Fernandes** (Mozambique): Mozambique warmly commends China's presidency for convening this high-level briefing on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. We thank the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, for his efforts in keeping momentum on the agenda for peace all over the world, particularly the conflicts in the Middle East. We also extend our thanks to Mr. Tor Wennesland for the insightful briefing on the Middle East peace process.

The humanitarian situation in Palestine is of the utmost concern. It needs to be addressed effectively and demands urgent action. Mozambique welcomes the new developments that culminated with a four-day truce, which was extended for two more days, allowing critical humanitarian assistance to reach the most vulnerable and innocent recipients of this conflict. Regrettably, the situation is still worrisome, and we are all concerned about what will happen in the following hours given that the humanitarian pause expires today.

We urge all the parties involved to persist in discussions and apply their wisdom in finding enduring resolutions for peace and security between the two parties. Both Israelis and Palestinians should assess the recent developments, particularly the humanitarian pause, as a starting point to a more consistent and lasting solution that brings the war to an end. We believe the truce was fundamental in mobilizing initiatives for humanitarian assistance, particularly the protection of the civilians and saving lives in the Gaza Strip.

Mozambique seizes this opportunity to convey its gratitude to the United Nations staff and mediators, such as Egypt, Qatar and the United States, involved in this endeavour. Their unwavering efforts during this difficult period have played a crucial role in mitigating

the hardships faced by civilians. That serves to remind us all that the protection of civilians in conflict situations is a priority and mandatory, in accordance with international human rights law and international humanitarian law.

The situation on the ground warrants a long humanitarian pause or an agreed compromise to ensure that all those in a dire situation have access to basic needs, such as water, electricity, food and medicine. We are of the view that a de-escalation of the conflict will allow for the free mobility of aid workers and the relaunching of dialogue between the parties in conflict. In that context, Mozambique associates itself with the parties advocating an urgent implementation of resolution 2712 (2023). It is necessary to facilitate the delivery of the critical goods and services needed for the health, survival and protection of civilians, especially the most vulnerable — children. Also imperative is the release of hostages. It is urgent to scale up and improve the delivery of critical and timely humanitarian assistance into Gaza through the relevant United Nations channels.

Because of the ongoing conflict, Mozambique foresees a challenging process of rebuilding infrastructure, recovering economic functionality and building trust between Palestine and Israel.

In our view, the two-State solution remains relevant and indispensable for lasting peace and harmony in the region. That requires both the conflicting parties and the wider United Nations family to redouble their efforts to achieve that desirable goal in accordance with resolutions 242 (1967) and 2334 (2016). The Security Council and the international community at large have a decisive role to play in containing and bringing this conflict to an end.

In conclusion, we urge the parties to pursue the path of dialogue, work together constructively towards peace and respect the principles of the two-State solution.

**Mr. De Rivière** (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Secretary-General and Mr. Wennesland for their briefings.

France once again commends the United Nations, the staff of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and all humanitarian actors, who carry out remarkable work, for their commitment on the ground.



France also welcomes the extension of the truce and thanks Qatar, Egypt, the United States and the International Committee of the Red Cross for their efforts. The current truce must be sustained and must lead to a ceasefire. We welcome the release of three French children who had been taken hostage, as well as the release of all other hostages. All hostages must be released immediately and unconditionally.

France reiterates its condemnation of the terrorist attacks perpetrated by Hamas and other terrorist groups against Israel on 7 October. The Security Council must condemn them unequivocally and without further delay. Israel has the right and duty to defend itself in strict compliance with international humanitarian law. Civilians and civilian infrastructure must be protected.

The current truce has made it possible to increase the delivery of aid to Gaza, including to the north. That progress is very positive, but the aid is insufficient. Other crossing points must be opened. France has already deployed more than 100 tons of cargo and increased its support to €100 million since 7 October, including €54 million for UNRWA. We are also following up on the humanitarian conference in Paris on 9 November. Since yesterday, the medical ship *Dixmude* has been treating the first wounded Palestinians in Al-Arish as part of the medical support coordinated by Egypt, whose action in this area I also commend. France calls for the full implementation of resolution 2712 (2023).

France condemns the violence perpetrated by settlers against the Palestinian population in the West Bank. They have caused the death of many Palestinian civilians and the forced departure of several communities in Area C. France demands that the Israeli authorities take measures to put an immediate stop to the violence. We also have a duty to prevent regional escalation. France is fully committed to preventing this conflict from spreading. We strongly warn those who would take advantage of the situation against doing so. The safety of the peacekeepers of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force and the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization peacekeepers must be ensured. We are concerned about the recent shooting involving UNIFIL.

To put an end to the cycles of violence, a credible and serious peace process must be relaunched, without further delay, in order to enable the Palestinians and Israelis to live side by side in peace and security. The

further postponement of that process will invariably lead to the resumption and worsening of violence. The two-State solution, with essential guarantees for Israel's security and a State for the Palestinians, is the only viable solution. France is committed to its realization. The President of the Republic hosted the League of Arab States and Organization of Islamic Cooperation Gaza contact group on 22 November in Paris and continues to dialogue with his counterparts in the region. France will continue to work to achieve those objectives and to ensure that the Council speaks with a single voice in that respect.

**Mr. Nebenzia** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are grateful to the Chinese presidency for holding today's meeting. We highly appreciate Beijing's contribution to multilateral efforts to resolve the situation in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict zone.

For more than two months, a conflict of biblical proportions has been raging in the Middle East. It is no exaggeration to say that it has become one of the deadliest regional conflicts in recent decades. The statistics of victims are setting monstrous records — in less than two months, 1,200 Israelis and 15,000 Palestinian civilians, half of whom were children, have died. A total of 1.7 million Gazan residents have become internally displaced — such numbers have not been seen since 1948. More than 111 employees of United Nations humanitarian agencies have died.

We express our condolences over the dead and injured civilians in Israel and Palestine, including to the families of the deceased humanitarian workers. We are deeply grateful to all humanitarian workers who continue to risk their lives every hour to courageously fulfil their duty on the ground.

As bitter as it might be to acknowledge, I will be frank in saying that their contribution to mitigating the consequences of this escalation for ordinary people is much greater than what the Security Council has managed to achieve. Now is the time to ask ourselves how that could have happened.

In response to the generally correct calls made today for the unity of the Council, I would like to directly touch upon a number of awkward issues for our Western colleagues that are fundamentally important for understanding the current situation.

The first such issue is the blatant double standards of Western delegations regarding the Palestinian people.

I will give a few illustrative examples. How many times have Western delegations requested Security Council meetings on Ukraine? The answer is at least twice a month. The United States and Albania are doing everything they can to express concern about the political aspects of the crisis, while France and Ecuador are positioning themselves as fighters to overcome its humanitarian consequences. How many times have those delegations requested Security Council meetings on the Middle East? The answer is zero. Why are my colleagues being so timid in that regard? Or is the fate of the Palestinian population is much less interesting to them, from a domestic political perspective, in their capitals?

We have already seen those same double standards laid bare with regard to the migration crisis in the European Union, as Ukrainian refugees are given all sorts of benefits and preferences on the basis of the fact that they are allegedly accustomed to that way of life at home, whereas refugees from Africa and the countries of the Middle East are kept in camps in inhumane conditions.

Incidentally, yesterday a serious scandal broke out in Ukraine after Sergiy Leshchenko, an adviser to the Office of the President of Ukraine, published a video of his attendance in a nightclub in Kyiv filled to the brim with dancing young people. Ukrainians were outraged by this story from the point of view of the total mobilization taking place in parallel. But I want to ask the Council something else. After two years of our special military operation in Kyiv, nightclubs are still operating and enjoying enormous popularity. By contrast, how many entertainment venues are operating in Gaza? Even asking that question is abominable against the backdrop of the destruction of homes, schools, hospitals, food manufacturers and civil infrastructure in general. The residents of Gaza have no time for entertainment right now.

My next point relates to the treatment of children. On camera, our Western colleagues hypocritically express much concern about Ukrainian children and do not hesitate to spread absolutely absurd and disgusting rumours about their abduction in order to smear Russia. Meanwhile, Russia is doing everything possible to protect children from the consequences of the Ukrainian crisis inspired by the West. And what about Palestinian children? Secretary-General Guterres has said that Gaza has become a graveyard for children. Those words would make any normal person shudder.

More children have died in Gaza in one month of escalation alone than were killed in all the conflicts of the past few years. Every day in the enclave, dozens, if not hundreds, of children are killed or maimed. The Israel Defense Forces strikes are hitting schools and hospitals. Children's basic rights to life and health are being trampled. I ask my Western colleagues, where are their appeals to the International Criminal Court for arrest warrants? Where are their efforts to create various commissions of inquiry and tribunals?

Another telling subject is the situation of women. Western delegations take every opportunity to preach about equal rights, demanding that literally every product of the Security Council include the mantra about the need to ensure the meaningful participation of women in political decision-making processes. They demand that the gender aspect be taken into account, even in subjects that objectively have nothing to do with it, such as nuclear disarmament. Which women do they therefore care about? Apparently, it is not Palestinian women — they have been robbed of even the most basic rights to life and security. We all heard the chilling briefings last week by Ms. Sima Bahous, Executive Director of UN-Women, and Ms. Natalia Kanem, Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund, about the suffering of women in Gaza (see S/PV.9484), including types of suffering that men do not face due to physiological differences. Palestinian women in the enclave have to give birth in unsanitary conditions, under bombings, and they have to undergo major surgeries without anaesthesia or medication. Western delegations in the Council prefer to remain shamefully silent on the subject. What kind of supporters of the women and peace and security agenda are they, then? We see only hypocrites and unprincipled opportunists who, if political expediency requires it, are able to turn a blind eye to any crimes and, on the contrary, to look for them where they do not exist.

Over these weeks, one extremely unpleasant fact has become obvious: to the West, Palestinians are second-class people, and the West is simply not interested in protecting their interests. That is the main reason for the problems that the Council has faced when making decisions. For almost two months, the international community, humanitarian agencies, non-governmental organizations and ordinary citizens have been calling on the Council to demand an immediate ceasefire from the parties. Russia has been saying that since the beginning of the escalation. We were the first, back

on 16 October, to propose a draft resolution to the Council (S/2023/772) to that effect. A few days later, we proposed a second draft resolution (S/2023/795), but that call has yet to be acted upon. A sustainable ceasefire is not just a moral imperative; it is the only guarantee of an effective humanitarian response, which simply cannot take place in the context of hostilities.

The maximum that the Council has been able to produce in all this time is resolution 2712 (2023), a toothless resolution on humanitarian pauses. And without any mechanism to monitor its implementation, it is not surprising that it is not being implemented. Its initial positive message ended up being extremely watered down through the efforts of the United States, and it does not contain a demand for a ceasefire or provide for practical measures to ensure broad and unimpeded humanitarian access to those in need and the provision of assistance to those who are suffering. It also left out Israel's forceful raids in the West Bank and arbitrary air raids on Syria, as well as the growing tensions along the Blue Line with Lebanon, which could lead to a further expansion of the crisis in the Middle East region. Unfortunately, representatives of the Israeli leadership took full advantage of the United States-induced rift in the Council and did not hesitate to call the adopted resolution meaningless, declaring their intention to ignore it and to continue their clearing of the Gaza Strip, after which have followed new bombings of schools, hospitals, mosques and facilities of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

My Council colleagues all understand very well that that is an open violation of resolution 2712 (2023) and Article 25 of the Charter of the United Nations, yet they have not uttered a single word of condemnation about it — but they clearly would not have failed to do so in other country situations. That is yet another demonstration of their blatant double standards.

Of course, we cannot help but be pleased that lives were saved as a result of the recent humanitarian pause and hostage exchange. But those steps were the result of an agreement among players in the region and have nothing to do with resolution 2712 (2023). That means that, while this arrangement offers a glimmer of hope, it is neither sustainable nor comprehensive. In particular, it has not allowed Palestinians to return to the north of the enclave, and neither does it cover Syria and Lebanon. The main question therefore remains, what lies ahead for long-suffering Gaza and the other

occupied Palestinian territories tomorrow? There is a high risk that, in the absence of a clear, verifiable Council decision on a ceasefire, this brief respite will be followed by a new round of violence, and the Gazans who received assistance during the pause will die under the renewed shelling. The unambiguous statements by representatives of the Israeli leadership about their plans to continue their intensive clearing of the Gaza Strip after the end of the humanitarian pause also point to the extreme likelihood of that highly negative scenario. It is therefore important that ensuring the humanitarian pauses and addressing the acute humanitarian issues in the Gaza Strip become a prologue to a ceasefire rather than a *de facto* green light for Israel to continue the bloodshed in Gaza.

There is only one way to address this — the Council needs to adopt decisive measures in this regard, the implementation of which can be ensured — unlike in any bilateral agreements — through an international monitoring mechanism. As a first step, we expect the Secretary-General, as stipulated in resolution 2712 (2023), to submit proposals as soon as possible on specific options for organizing a mechanism to monitor the resolution's implementation. Today we heard from the Secretary-General about the establishment of a working group to work on this issue. And we would like to ask, how long will we have to wait for the results that working group? One of the options could also be to expand the mandate of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization. That mission has more than 200 military observers, and the number of those who could be deployed could be increased, provided that there is a commensurate increase in resources. We urge the Secretary-General to work on that option or to propose alternatives.

Speaking about the “tomorrow” of this conflict, it is also time to consider the day after tomorrow. There are many questions about the ways to rebuild Gaza and, in general, about the future long-term solution to the Palestinian issue, without which it will not be impossible to ensure a truly sustainable security situation for Israel. Russia is actively working in that direction. Foreign Minister Lavrov recently held a meeting in Moscow with the members of the committee established by the decision of the 11 November Joint Extraordinary Summit of the League of Arab States and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) on the situation in the Gaza Strip, held in Riyadh. Strongly condemning terrorism in all its manifestations, the

participants spoke in solidarity in favour of establishing a sustainable ceasefire as soon as possible and ensuring the protection of civilians.

We should also remain focused on preparing for the relaunching of the peace process on an internationally recognized basis, endorsed within the framework of the United Nations and underpinned by the Arab Peace Initiative of 2002, which was put forward by King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia and supported by all members of the League of Arab States and the OIC. That relates first and foremost to the establishment of an independent, contiguous, sovereign Palestinian State within the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, coexisting in peace and security with Israel. It is clear that, in order to move towards that goal, alongside the efforts made to address the acute humanitarian issues that I mentioned, a collective diplomatic mechanism will also need to be established. We are convinced that the countries of the region — Arab and Muslim States — should play an important role in that mechanism.

The Quartet of international mediators, which was essentially dissolved by a decision of the United States — as we know, it refused to work in that format — unfortunately did not include representatives of the Arab and Muslim world. It consisted of Russia, the United States, the European Union and the United Nations. To compensate for that shortcoming, long before the current events, we advocated that the Quartet should work in full coordination with the Arab League. Our Western partners, to put it mildly, responded frostily to that. The United Nations, unfortunately, has not taken the necessary initiative in that regard. As a result, the Quartet was never given the opportunity to carry out the functions entrusted to it by the Security Council of our world Organization. An updated external support mechanism for negotiating the terms of a long-term, sustainable settlement based on the two-State solution should be truly representative and include those in the region who understand as well as, or rather better than, others how to achieve a just solution based on an agreed international legal framework. We are ready to engage in such work once the flames of the current regional aggravation have been extinguished. Unfortunately, there is still a long way to go.

**The President** (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the State of Qatar.

**Sheikh Al-Thani** (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, we would like to congratulate your friendly country, Mr. President, on steering the Security Council wisely during this month, and we would like to thank you, Sir, for holding this important meeting and for giving us the opportunity to participate in it. We would like also to thank the Secretary-General and the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process for their efforts to de-escalate the situation and stop the fighting in Gaza.

The brotherly Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip have gone through seven disastrous weeks, and the Council has been continuously informed about the serious and unprecedented consequences, including flagrant violations of international humanitarian law. At the very beginning, the State of Qatar, based on its faith in the importance of diplomacy and peaceful efforts to settle conflicts, started to coordinate with its brothers in Arab and Islamic countries and to communicate closely with regional and international partners and with the United Nations to de-escalate the situation and stop the bloodshed of civilians while addressing humanitarian issues, including the release of hostages and the rapid delivery of aid.

The relentless diplomatic efforts undertaken last week, pursuant to the instructions of the Amir of the State of Qatar, His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, and in collaboration with President of the Arab Republic of Egypt Abdel Fattah Al Sisi and President of the United States of America Joe Biden, culminated in an agreement to establish a humanitarian truce for four days, which was subsequently extended for two more days, and the release of more than 90 women and children hostages in the Gaza Strip and more than 210 Palestinian women and children who had been held in Israeli prisons. The truce has also enabled the delivery of more relief assistance, which is badly needed in the Gaza Strip.

We would like to thank the members of the Security Council for welcoming those efforts. We hope that the progress made so far will underpin a comprehensive and sustained agreement to put an end to war and bloodshed and lead ultimately to serious discussions and a political process resulting in a comprehensive, just and lasting peace for the brotherly Palestinian people and the enjoyment of their legitimate rights in accordance with the resolutions of international legitimacy.



We would like also to commend the efforts of the States members of the Security Council that led to the adoption of the long-awaited resolution 2712 (2023), as the first step in the right direction. The resolution calls on the parties to comply with international law and calls for urgent humanitarian pauses and humanitarian access, together with releasing hostages and refraining from depriving civilians of basic services. We look forward to more steps being taken by the Security Council to reach a sustainable ceasefire and to guarantee the flow of sufficient and unhindered humanitarian assistance to all those who need it throughout the Gaza Strip, including by establishing a monitoring mechanism to oversee the delivery of humanitarian aid through all crossing points and front lines and to ensure that the occupying Power complies with its obligations under international humanitarian law.

We would like to see international law applied justly, without double standards and without preferential treatment to any party whatsoever. The silent international community and the double standards that it applies with respect to the atrocities, massacres and crimes perpetrated by the Israeli occupation against civilians and civilian infrastructure and against teams of humanitarian workers are a stain on the conscience of humankind and could also undermine confidence in the international order and its organizations.

Indeed, the current cycle of violence makes it incumbent on the international community and the Security Council to ensure that the situation does not continue. It is high time that serious work be undertaken and real measures be adopted towards a just and comprehensive peace. Recent events have demonstrated that any attempts to undermine a just settlement through partial solutions or political manoeuvres will only waste time and lead to using an iron fist in all forms of violence to get rid of the Palestinian people. Those attempts are doomed to fail. The Palestinian people are there to stay and will not abandon their rights, especially their right to self-determination and their national independence.

We call for peace. We do not call for war. Therefore, instead of spreading lies against Arab States, it is better to go back to the records and ask: Where is the peace plan that Israel agreed to? When we speak about the post-war period, we must reiterate that the Gaza Strip is part and parcel of the occupied Palestinian territory which should be governed by Palestinians, and only the Palestinian people should have a say in that regard. We

reiterate that the region will not enjoy peace without a comprehensive, just and lasting solution based on the resolutions of international legitimacy, the Arab Peace Initiative and the two-State solution with the establishment of an independent Palestinian State along 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital and with the Palestinian people attaining all their rights.

**The President** (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Arab Republic of Egypt.

**Mr. Selim** (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, allow me to extend my thanks to the People's Republic of China, the current President of the Security Council, for its relentless efforts to lead the Council at this critical juncture and for supporting the calls to end the current war on Palestinian territory. I also thank the Secretary-General for his valuable briefing.

Since the conflict began on 7 October, Egypt has unequivocally and unconditionally condemned at the highest levels the targeting of civilians, regardless of who they are. Despite that, the destruction in the Gaza Strip has reached unprecedented levels. More than 15,000 Palestinian civilians have been killed, including 6,000 children and 4,000 women. More than half of the residential buildings in the Strip have been destroyed. The entire health-care system has been targeted. Two thirds of the population have been displaced.

Together with the ongoing blockade, there has been starvation, the Israeli crossing points have been closed and humanitarian access has been restricted. Those acts constitute serious and blatant violations of international law and international humanitarian law. It is a true humanitarian tragedy that cannot be justified under any pretext. Yet, surprisingly some States that pretend to defend international legitimacy and human rights refrain from describing what is happening as a violation of international humanitarian law. They simply call for respect for international humanitarian law, and their calls go unanswered.

The concept of self-defence cannot be invoked in situations of serious violations of international humanitarian law. What right of self-defence would allow the occupying force to destroy and repress the lives of the occupied people? Which international laws legitimize self-defence against people languishing under occupation? International law requires that the occupying State respect the occupied peoples' humanity and meet their basic needs.

We and other States in the world have warned against the danger of targeting civilians in the Gaza Strip. However, the Israeli conduct for more than 50 days can be interpreted only as a deliberate policy to make life in the Gaza Strip impossible by targeting civilian and medical facilities and residential buildings and forcing the inhabitants of the north to evacuate towards the south of the Strip, which is already densely populated and has been suffering from a harsh blockade for years. The policy of forcible displacement and mass transfer has been rejected by the entire world. It represents a violation of international law. That policy is still the aim of Israel. It is pursued not only through the statements and calls of the Israeli officials but also through the creation of a new dire reality on the ground in order to expel the Palestinians of Gaza from their land and liquidate their issue by isolating the people from their land and confiscating it. That is happening without the international community preventing it, which has repeatedly failed to put an end to annexation, demolitions, settlement-building and extrajudicial killings, all of which are unlawful practices that are happening amid the silence of the international community and while the occupying State continues them.

What is happening in Gaza, in full view of the world, is also happening in the West Bank. The same policy expels Palestinians from the West Bank, including through settler violence, expulsions and military incursions in the towns of the West Bank, in addition to the annexation of land via systematic settlement activities that consolidate the illegal occupation. Egypt reaffirms before the Council its complete rejection of any intent, plan or attempt to liquidate the Palestinian question by transferring the Palestinian people from their land occupied since 1967. Egypt warns against the consequences of such conduct on peace in the entire region.

Egypt calls on the international community to stand firm against all practices that could lead to that situation — the question is whether today or the day after; and the answer is clear. Based on logic and on international legitimacy, there is a need to end that damned war in order to save lives and protect civilians from the scourge of war. Egypt is working on the implementation of General Assembly resolution ES-10/21, on humanitarian obligations. In cooperation with sisterly Qatar and the United States, Egypt succeeded

in brokering the hostage and prisoner exchange, as well as the delivery of aid to the north and the south of Gaza.

Egypt will continue its efforts to extend the truce and arrive at a ceasefire and put an end to the war and destruction. We call on the Security Council to support those efforts and to hold perpetrators responsible for the crimes they have committed against civilians, whoever they are. Since day one, Egypt has called for the release of civilian hostages. We have condemned the targeting of innocent people. However, we wonder about the position held by the international community and the Security Council with regard to Palestinian prisoners, including women and children, who for years have been imprisoned in harsh conditions, without charge or trial. Are they not hostages taken by the occupying State?

Furthermore, we are working with our partners within the Ministerial Committee established during the Joint Arab-Islamic Extraordinary Summit, held in Riyadh, to secure humanitarian access to the Gaza Strip. In that context, we have submitted a non-politicized draft resolution to the Council. It focuses solely on humanitarian issues and on saving 2.5 million innocent people in Gaza. We urge the Council to give positive consideration to the draft resolution and to assume the level of responsibility that this unprecedented humanitarian tragedy requires.

We also encourage increased humanitarian assistance to Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip. What has been provided so far — and Egypt has contributed 70 per cent of it — does not meet the needs of 2.5 million Palestinians. We also urge the Council to avoid double standards and to turn statements of support with the people of Gaza into action.

Furthermore, we consider any attempt to block the draft resolution as an endorsement of the blockade on Gaza and of starving women and children, denying them shelter and basic health care in extremely harsh conditions, with winter approaching.

Concerning the day after, although the picture is not yet clear given the ambiguous goals of the current war, we believe that the only alternative is to address the root causes of the conflict and the real reasons for the suffering we are witnessing today. Addressing the Palestinian question completely will end the occupation. Anything less than that will lead to temporary results. Cycles of violence will be repeated and the desired peace and security in the region will not prevail, including in Israel.

We must put aside all useless statements and work hand in hand to implement the only internationally agreed solution, namely, the two-State solution. That solution should be enforced, not just supported by statements. At the same time, Member States that have not yet done so should recognize the State of Palestine. I call on the Council to accept the full membership of the State of Palestine in the United Nations. That lies at the core of the Council's mandate, pursuant to the Charter of the United Nations.

In conclusion, to all actors interested in the day after, it is time for us to work seriously. We stand ready to cooperate with anyone, with no exception, to set up a political framework and take the necessary measures to end the temporary stage, which started with Oslo, in order to start implementing the two-State solution by creating an independent, contiguous Palestinian State, along the lines of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital. That is the day after that will restore the rights of the Palestinian people, provide security to the Israeli people and allow all peoples of the region to enjoy security, stability, coexistence and cooperation for development and prosperity, in line with our common human values.

**The President** (*spoke in Chinese*): The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia chairs the Ministerial Committee mandated by the Joint Arab-Islamic Extraordinary Summit. I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia.

**Prince Al-Saud** (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the People's Republic of China for the judicious way in which it has presided over the Security Council this month and for convening today's important meeting to discuss the grave developments in Palestine. I also thank the Secretary-General for his important briefing on the implementation of resolution 2712 (2023), adopted by the Council on the situation in Gaza. We appreciate his role and efforts in that regard.

The Security Council meets again in the light of the ongoing difficult and painful conditions in the Gaza Strip. Since the previous meeting (see S/PV.9486), the number of civilians killed in Gaza now exceeds 14, 000, of whom 67 per cent are women and children. The number of displaced persons exceeds 1.5 million, as a result of the appalling military escalation of the Israeli occupation forces, in continued violation of resolutions of international legitimacy and our common

humanitarian principles. However, there is a total lack of international accountability while the Council remains unable to take any deterring measures that would prevent such violations. We categorically reject that bitter reality.

As there has been a need to take swift action, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia hosted the Joint Arab-Islamic Extraordinary Summit in Riyadh on 11 November in the presence of Heads of State and Government of the member States of the League of Arab States and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. The summit adopted resolutions that reflected the will of Arab and Islamic peoples in order to stop the bloodshed, deliver unhindered assistance, put an end to violations, overcome the unjustified crisis and suffering in Palestine and stand with the Palestinian people in achieving their legitimate rights, namely, to take back their occupied territories and establish their independent State. We call on the international community and its institutions to shoulder their responsibilities without any further delay.

Our message is clear and unified after the Joint Arab-Islamic Extraordinary Summit. What is needed is an immediate and permanent ceasefire that will pave the way for a serious and credible peace process. We call on countries that seek peace and justice and to maintain the legitimacy and strength of the international system, whose credibility was shaken following the slow response to that humanitarian crisis, to join us.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia welcomes the humanitarian truce. We appreciate the efforts of Qatar, Egypt and the United States in that regard. The truce is the first step. However, it is insufficient, especially given the continued restrictions on the number of aid trucks entering Gaza. Aid delivery must be continuous, sustainable and sufficient, without undue restrictions or additional complications, because civilians cannot wait any longer to access urgent aid. Resolution 2712 (2023) must also be fully implemented. We must build on it in order to reach a comprehensive and immediate ceasefire. The truce does not exempt the Israeli side from its responsibilities under international law and international humanitarian law. The weak pretexts of self-defence are unacceptable given the humanitarian tragedy that is unfolding in Gaza on a daily basis. If the military escalation were to continue following the truce by going two steps backward, it would be a disgrace for this Organization and the Council.

We heard during this meeting that water, food and medicine will not help us reach a solution. What will help us reach a solution? More death and more civilian suffering? No. A solution can be reached through ceasefire and Israel's response to the peace endeavours that have lasted for decades. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia presented the Arab Peace Plan during the Fez summit in 1982. We also presented the Arab Peace Initiative during Beirut Arab summit in 2002, which was supported by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. And the Palestine Liberation Organization recognized the State of Israel in 1993. Where is the Israeli peace plan? Where is the Israeli recognition of the State of Palestine? We are peace-loving and peace has always been our strategic choice, but we also want it to be Israel's choice as well. It is high time for an international recognition pursuant to a Security Council resolution on an independent Palestinian State that should receive full membership at the United Nations. We reiterate our call for an international peace conference sponsored by the United Nations so that we can implement a serious and credible peace operation that guarantees the implementation of the two-State solution based on resolutions of international legitimacy.

**The President** (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

**Mr. Safadi** (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): Thirty-three days ago, my colleagues and I came before the Security Council to ask it to adopt a draft resolution calling for an end to the Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people in the occupied Gaza Strip (see S/PV.9453). The draft resolution was not adopted, and the aggression has not ended. On the contrary, it has become more barbaric, bloody and savage.

Israel has taken the Council's silence on its aggression as a cover for its crimes. It has stolen the lives of 3,750 more Palestinian children since our meeting on 25 October. That brings the number of children killed by Israel's aggression to 6,150, not counting those still buried under the rubble and another 61 children who have died since the start of the aggression in the West Bank. The most recent are 8-year-old Adam Samir Al-Ghoul and 15-year-old Basil Sulayman Abu Al-Wafa, who were killed by the occupation yesterday. Some of those children were killed by the white phosphorus used by the occupiers. Others died as a result of illnesses, the medicine for

which was withheld by Israel. Others perished under the ruins of homes destroyed by Israel's precision bombs. Their blood is light, their blood is a right. Such is the vengeful Israeli aggression that some still justify as self-defence, in clear violation of international law, which states decisively that an occupier has no right to self-defence. Such is the vengeance that has killed 15,000 Palestinians in Gaza and, since 21 October, has allowed only 4,757 aid trucks to enter — which cover needs for three and a half days — in 38 days, according to the estimates of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, which stated that the besieged Gaza Strip needs 800 aid trucks daily.

Such carnage fuels the racist instincts of some Israeli individuals who have tended to deny the very humanity of Palestinians. They have turned their ministerial and parliamentary platforms into platforms of hatred against Palestinians, launching policies of killing, displacement, starvation and violation of sacred values and the desecration of their rights to life, dignity and freedom. Those who genuinely want to protect their people do not steal the lives of another people, arm settlers and defend their acts of terrorism. Those who seek security for their people do not colonize another people's land, imprison their children without trial and show no mercy. The Israeli occupation of Palestinian land is the root cause of the conflict, and it is the essence of evil. Its removal is the path to security and the road to peace for Palestinians, Israelis and all the peoples of the region. Anyone who says that the conflict is religious is lying, attempting to distort history and ignore the present, where its brutality, exacerbated by occupation leading to bloodshed and suffering of civilians, challenges our shared humanity. There is a conflict because there is an oppressive occupation. There is a blatant injustice that stole an entire people's past, destroyed their present and besieged their future with repression and hatred.

Bullying is a tool in the hands of those who have no real arguments. I therefore call on members not to give in to the unfounded bullying of those who have attacked the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Executive Directors of UNICEF and UN-Women and anyone who is against killing, starvation, blockade and violations of international law. We the Arabs have presented a vision for a total peace in which Palestinians and Israelis can enjoy security. Our Arab initiative dates back to 2002. Israel refused our Arab Peace Initiative



leading to peace for its people and for the Palestinians. Israel did nothing except entrench the occupation.

We call on the Council to impose a ceasefire to put an end to this aggression, and we call on the international community to end the occupation in order to put an end to the conflict. All members support the two-State solution, which, by definition puts an end to the occupation. A new peace process exploited by Israel is not the solution. There is only one viable path to the peace we all want, which is for the Council to adopt a binding resolution that recognizes the independent Palestinian State with occupied Jerusalem as its capital, based on the 4 June 1967 borders. The resolution would set a specific timetable and bring an end to Israel's illegal unilateral acts, which further entrench the occupation and blocks all opportunities for peace. Israel's acceptance of the resolution would ensure peace and security for Israelis and Palestinians and would put the entire region on the path to a future free of fear, oppression and hatred. If Israel rejects the resolution that means that it wants the conflict to persist in the region. Therefore, Israel must be internationally deterred so as to end its oppression and intransigence and bring the occupation to an end. Otherwise, the conflict will continue, and after the war on Gaza, there will be other wars — because freedom has a door to open at all times and everywhere.

Israel has aborted all efforts for peace for the past 30 years. It has thereby denied the whole region its right to stability and security. Israel cannot be allowed to make the region suffer from bloodshed and conflict for another 30 years.

The desire to live is stronger than the desire to kill. Freedom is stronger than oppression. During the pause, Palestinians of Gaza tried to find their homes amid the rubble in the north. As soon as the Israeli bombs stopped destroying Gaza, its children took to the streets to play and dream. As soon as Wael Al-Dahdouh buried his wife, daughter, son and his infant granddaughter, he spoke through a microphone about the resilience of the Palestinian people, who want justice, freedom and their right to life, which they deserve.

Today is the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. Let solidarity be a reality that puts an end to the ongoing bloodshed of Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank. The world should confirm to the Palestinian people that it supports their right to freedom and self-determination and against occupation

and its injustice. Occupation and peace are contrary to each other and cannot coexist. Occupation and security are contrary to each other and cannot coexist.

We call for just, comprehensive and lasting peace, because peace is the only way forward to end the occupation and establish a sovereign and independent Palestinian State along the 4 June 1967 borders, with occupied Jerusalem as its permanent capital, living side by side in peace and security with Israel. This peace is a right for all people of the region. Its path is clear and its achievement is a global responsibility. Stand against those who prevent its implementation, and impose it.

**The President** (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Türkiye.

**Mr. Fidan** (Türkiye): Let me start by thanking China's presidency of the Security Council this month for convening this meeting.

We meet on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People to talk about yet another catastrophe that that noble and resilient nation endures. Almost all speakers before me addressed the gravity of the human tragedy in Gaza. Israel's brutal attacks on Gaza and its population constitute war crimes. We urge all civilized nations to disassociate themselves from those crimes. In such dire times, we need strong global institutions to enforce international law and protect the moral compass of humanity.

Unfortunately, the Security Council has yet again failed to fulfil its responsibility to maintain international peace and security, despite being entrusted by the Charter of the United Nations to do so. It was unable to call for an effective ceasefire with one voice. What is more, the Council cannot even present a remedy to undo the historical injustice that the Palestinians have suffered for many decades. That paralysis will surely reverberate through the Council's ability to cope with other global crises and further erode its credibility in the eyes of humankind. It also wrecks the rules-based international system upon which the United Nations was established.

Without international law, principles and a moral compass, we are all in uncharted waters. If we do not fix the problem soon, we will all be haunted yet again by aggravated radicalism of all sorts, which will be feeding on impunity and injustice. Millions of people all around the world are rallying in solidarity with Palestine. The outrage and frustration of those

masses in the face of Israel's atrocities run the risk of social upheaval in many countries. Their expectations of the Security Council are clear: it must ensure a ceasefire leading to a cessation of hostilities and enable unhindered humanitarian assistance into Gaza.

The extension of the humanitarian pause in Gaza, as well as the exchange of hostages and detainees to that effect, are glimpses of hope. We are, however, following some scenarios about the day after with grave concerns. Those deliberations gave Israel further ammunition to uproot millions of Gazans from their homeland and impose an oppressive regime upon them. Therefore, we should translate this dark episode into an opportunity to address the root causes of the conflict. Otherwise, the symptoms that we see today will be more catastrophic tomorrow.

Eleven years ago today, we voted at the General Assembly to endorse the non-member observer State status of Palestine (General Assembly resolution 67/19). Once we allow the Palestinians to have their own functioning State with all the rights, privileges and capabilities of statehood, most of the challenges we face today will disappear. This time, we must all roll up our sleeves and finish the work with a peace process based on the two-State solution, which guarantees the ultimate safety of Israel and Palestine.

Israel and Palestine should be able to live side by side in peace and security along the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Palestine. We also have to make sure that such a settlement will be implemented, unlike past experiences. With that in mind, Türkiye has put forward the idea of a guarantorship mechanism. Such a mechanism will safeguard peace and prevent any breaches by any of the parties. That could be envisaged in the process leading to the final agreement and become a part of the package. From the statements of our many partners, we understand that such a mechanism is indeed needed and supported.

Before concluding, let me invite all our friends and colleagues once again to join hands and minds to stop the ongoing atrocities without delay and reverse the historical injustices done to the Palestinian people, which is long overdue.

**The President** (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia.

**Mrs. Marsudi** (Indonesia): I have returned to the Security Council to attend this meeting because I want to be on the right side of history, defending justice and humanity for the Palestinians.

Indonesia remains enraged about the unfolding situation in Gaza. Indonesia is also increasingly very concerned about the evolving situation in the West Bank, with the increasing number of attacks on the Palestinians, including refugee camps. While prisoners are being released as part of the humanitarian pause, nearly the same numbers of new prisoners are being arbitrarily detained in the West Bank. When will that atrocity be stopped? When will Gaza, the West Bank and Palestine be freed? Will they have their future?

I want to repeat what I said last month in this Chamber (see S/PV.9451): the Security Council has a major responsibility to maintain peace and security. For sure, I welcome the adoption of resolution 2712 (2023). I also welcome the extended humanitarian pause and the release of hostages and prisoners. Of that small glimpse of peace, we could see hope, with families being reunited and aid reaching those in desperate need. But is it enough? No, it is insufficient. The humanitarian pause is too narrow and too fragile, and it will not be able to create a better situation in Gaza. Prime Minister Netanyahu mentioned that he will restart a full military operation when the humanitarian pause ends. I cannot understand his statement, and I could not understand if the Security Council were to allow that continued threat against humanity to happen.

The Council must act to preserve trust in the multilateral system. The Council must ensure that the hostilities do not return with a vengeance and work together to move beyond a humanitarian pause into a durable ceasefire. That is because another day without fighting is a day worth fighting for. Further action is needed to really make a significant impact in Gaza, the West Bank and Palestine.

First, it should ensure the delivery of unhindered humanitarian assistance in a swift adequate, safe, well-monitored and sustained manner throughout Gaza.

Secondly, it should ensure adherence to international law, particularly international humanitarian law, whereby all parties safeguard human rights, protect civilians and uphold the sanctity of public infrastructure, particularly hospitals, schools, places of worship and United Nations places of refuge.

Thirdly, there is the importance of a ceasefire to end all hostilities.

Let us not forget that Palestine has the right to have an independent State, based on a two-State solution. It is the right time to restart the peace process. As we honour this year's International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, let us not turn a blind eye to, or remain silent on, the struggle of the innocent people in Gaza, whose only sin in this situation is having been born Palestinian.

**The President** (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia

**Ms. Fajon** (Slovenia): I thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this ministerial-level briefing. It is my honour to address the Security Council for the very first time and to do so on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

Over the weekend, I concluded my visit to the Middle East. Together with my Portuguese colleague, we held numerous meetings in Israel, Palestine, Jordan and Egypt. As emotions are running high on this topic, it is of the utmost importance to make way for diplomacy leading to a political solution. The United Nations and the Security Council should play a key role in that regard.

First, a permanent ceasefire is urgent. People in Gaza are experiencing unspeakable horrors. I am deeply disturbed by the blockade of Gaza and the lack of most basic items. In relation to yesterday's statement by the World Health Organization, I am particularly concerned about the health situation on the ground. I welcome that increased levels of aid have been distributed in recent days, and I urge for more crossings to be opened. The aid delivered still falls below the level of dire needs. Let me inform the Security Council that Slovenia has stepped up its humanitarian support and is ready to play an active role in the psychosocial rehabilitation of children. I am appalled by reports of attacks on civilians, schools, hospitals, United Nations facilities and other civilian objects. The number of victims is devastating. Two thirds of all victims in Gaza are women and children. Civilians must be protected. What we are witnessing today in Gaza are clear violations of international humanitarian law. Even wars have rules. I welcome the agreement on the release of hostages and prisoners and a humanitarian pause. We commend the efforts of all involved, especially Qatar, Egypt and the

United States, in reaching the agreement. Once again, the conflict must end now.

Collectively, we need to be able to condemn all forms of terror. I understand the agony, pain and vulnerability of the Israeli nation following the brutal terrorist attack by Hamas on 7 October. I once again call on Hamas to release all hostages immediately. Let me be clear. I condemn all forms of extremism. I am deeply concerned about the impact of the war on the children of Gaza. I am also troubled by the escalation in the West Bank, particularly the settler violence and the announced expansion of additional illegal settlements, as well as in the south of Lebanon. The crisis will have broader future implications, including the possible proliferation of extremism and extremist ideologies.

Lastly, I would like to stress that the international community must do more. We Europeans are ready to be part of achieving long and lasting peace. I thank the Secretary-General, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and the whole of the United Nations for their active role and clear call for humanity to prevail. Let me express my condolences on the deaths of United Nations staff members in Gaza. We must recognize that we have failed the test of humanity. As an incoming elected member, I want to emphasize that the Council must step up.

It has been 30 years since the signing of the Oslo Accords, and alarm bells in both the West Bank and Gaza have been ringing for years. The latest round of the conflict is providing neither peace nor security to anyone in the region. I therefore strongly support the convening of an international peace conference in order to agree on a peace plan leading to a two-State solution, with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peaceful coexistence. The only guarantee for the safety and security of Israelis is the recognition of the Palestinian State. Slovenia supports all initiatives seeking a politically viable solution to the conflict.

The images of the destruction and rubble in Gaza are devastating — rubble, under which many lives and families have been lost; rubble, which children used to call home; and rubble, which many left behind to find a safer place. UNICEF recently posted a photo of 8-year-old Mohammed sitting on the rubble of his family home, asking for a ceasefire. If only one of my messages stays with the Council today, it should be me joining his call for a ceasefire.

**The President** (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Malaysia.

**Mr. Abdul Kadir** (Malaysia): Malaysia expresses its appreciation to China as President of the Security Council for convening this important debate.

I am here bringing with me the message from peace-loving Malaysians, under the leadership of Prime Minister Mr. Anwar Ibrahim, who have been deeply concerned about and enormously distressed by the 7 October attack against civilians and the subsequent vengeful and brutal slaughter of innocent lives in Gaza. The heart-wrenching images of children killed, maimed and shell-shocked in the aftermath of Israel's indiscriminate shelling of their homes, schools and hospital have shaken our human sensibilities to the core.

Malaysia welcomes the adoption of resolution 2712 (2023) by the Security Council. We commend Council members on their wisdom to reach a compromise. The resolution was a breakthrough outlining the urgently needed temporary measures to address the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza. All parties must respect and implement the resolution in full. We therefore welcome the humanitarian pause, which began on 21 November and which was extended. But we must note that that is not the solution. That must be the beginning of a lasting peace process and a permanent ceasefire. We regret that it took about seven weeks before the humanitarian pause was agreed. It is outrageous that about 15,000 innocent civilians had to die, including about 6,000 children, before the deal for the humanitarian pause was reached. It was agreed only after Gaza had become a hell on Earth and graveyard for children, half of the homes and buildings in Gaza had been reduced to rubble and more than 1 million residents had been forcibly displaced. The pause was agreed only after more than 100 United Nations staff members had lost their lives, making Gaza the deadliest conflict ever for United Nations employees.

We must not let the killing of innocent lives continue. No more children must die, be maimed or become orphaned. We must stop the war and never allow anyone's hand to be stained complicitly and directly with the blood of the innocent. Malaysia calls on the Security Council to heed the resounding cry of the concerned citizens of the world who have been demanding a ceasefire, as well as the unequivocal calls repeatedly made by the majority of the States

Members of the United Nations, United Nations agencies and the Secretary-General. Our focus must be to relieve the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza. Unhindered humanitarian access and the supply of humanitarian aid, including such life-saving essentials as food, water, medicine and fuel, up to scale must be guaranteed. Malaysia rejects the forced displacement of Palestinians, which is a clear violation of international law. Malaysia is deeply concerned by Israel's intention to unilaterally established so-called safe zones, which has been rejected by the United Nations and other humanitarian agencies.

The only way to achieve a just and durable solution to the Palestinian question is by granting the Palestinian people their inalienable right to self-determination through the establishment of a free and independent State of Palestine based on the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. The Security Council must deliver on that responsibility and start taking all the necessary steps to make the two-State solution a reality. It is the solution that enjoys the overwhelming support of the international community and is endorsed by numerous United Nations resolutions.

The cycle of violence that has long been inflicted upon generations of Palestinians must end. They must emerge from the present darkness into a better, brighter future. Too much time has been wasted, and too many innocent lives have been lost. The whole world is looking to and counting on the Security Council. The Council has failed Palestinians too many times and for far too long. It is time to deliver. It is time to rectify the historical misadventures of the great Powers that, for more than seven decades, have caused one of the bloodiest and most interminable killings in modern history. That is the clear message, not only from my fellow Malaysians but from all peace-loving citizens of the world.

**The President** (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States.

**Mr. Aboul Gheit** (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to limit my statement today to four main points.

First, with every passing day, the continuation of Israeli aggression takes us further away from sustainable peace in the future. That wholesale killing and destruction, on the one hand, and the collective punishment perpetrated by the Israeli occupation, on the other hand, are sowing hatred and anger in Palestine



and the region for years to come and leaving open wounds that will not heal easily.

We are certain that there is rising hatred felt by all segments of our Arab and Islamic societies, due to the continuing and extremely violent acts of killing they are witnessing. Consequently, those seeking peace must recognize the great danger posed by continued open warfare waged in that manner. The price of the ongoing massacre is being paid not only by Palestinian civilians and the women and children who are losing their lives or the lives of their loved ones. We will all pay that price in the future. Hence the need to immediately stop the war, convert the humanitarian truce into a prolonged truce and a complete ceasefire, ensure that calm is restored and assist people in Gaza in regaining a minimum of their normal lives. That is the Council's responsibility first and foremost, not only to the millions of civilians in Gaza, but to the future of peace and stability in the region.

Secondly, addressing the humanitarian catastrophe caused by Israel's war machine, the horror of which is being exposed every day, is also an urgent and pressing global responsibility. We have seen people in Gaza trying to return to their homes in the northern Gaza Strip, homes that were demolished and destroyed. We have watched all the systems underpinning life crumble after 50 days of mass bombardment.

The overwhelming majority of Gaza's population has become a homeless internally displaced people lacking the minimum necessities for life. In that regard, introducing humanitarian assistance through a sustainable and effective mechanism makes a difference between life and death for the millions of people crammed into shelter tents and into schools of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East in the south. Many overlook the fact that the aid entering Gaza falls short of the minimum required needs of its population. That can only mean the death penalty for hundreds of thousands of people. It can only mean famine and the spread of epidemics.

It is the Council's responsibility, and we look forward to a swift resolution that will pave the way for the entry of aid and the basic necessities for human subsistence, such as food, medicine, clothing and fuel supplies, through a prompt and effective mechanism commensurate with the gravity of the horrific humanitarian catastrophe, thereby preventing the

unacceptable scenario of death by starvation or disease, rather than bombing.

Thirdly, despite the fact that stopping Israeli aggression is an absolute priority, as defined by the Joint Arab-Islamic Extraordinary Summit, we are not unaware of the need to look to the future. We also call on the Council to take into consideration the political horizon of this painful situation. However painful — and even shameful — the present that we are witnessing may be, the future means only one thing, namely, the inevitable need to sow the seeds of an independent Palestinian State, on the 4 June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. It is obsolete to envisage a future for the Gaza Strip apart from that State, or to envisage the displacement of Palestinians or other security solutions of that nature, given that such solutions have proven to be a complete failure, as anyone with eyes can see.

Common sense requires us to work swiftly to achieve the two-State solution, which has known parameters and terms of reference that were agreed upon over 30 years ago. More important, that solution enjoys international consensus. It is the essence of the Arab Peace Initiative, which was launched over 20 years ago. The only State rejecting the two-State solution is the occupying State. Therefore, implementing that solution on the ground requires facing the occupation with courage and decisiveness to remove any of its deep-rooted illusions concerning retaining all territories with achieving security. That leads to an apartheid State, meaning no rights for the Palestinian people and no political horizon for them. The entire world rejects that.

The way towards a two-State solution is not through endless negotiations. It should be through a decisive international will to implement this solution and to turn it into a reality as soon as possible by ending the occupation and establishing an independent Palestinian State.

I believe that the current war against the Palestinian people in Gaza provides us with an opportunity that we should seize before we lose it. We are looking for a settlement that guarantees that these tragedies will not happen once again. We seek a settlement that provides freedom and dignity for the Palestinian people and security and peace for the Israelis. We seek a settlement that will be possible only if there is international will to turn it into a reality on the ground through an international conference that draws a specific path

with clear time frame as soon as possible, with a view to ending the last settlement military occupation on Earth, establishing a Palestinian State and peacefully separating two peoples, with security guarantees from the international community to make sure that this settlement is sustainable. In the absence of such a settlement, we will witness a sixth, seventh, tenth and twentieth war, until the end of the century and beyond.

Fourthly and lastly, the war against Gaza has provided some positive outcomes in terms of public opinion at the international level, such as recognition of the universality of our moral values and rejection of the blatant double standards. However, at the same time, we are seeing massive anger and disappointment, especially among Arab and Islamic peoples. The disappointment lies in the failure of the international order that is supposed to be based on rules and respect for international law. The disappointment is towards those who speak about values and morality and then change their position as circumstances change. It is

therefore necessary to restore the trust of all peoples, in particular of Arabs and Muslims, in the justice of international rules.

We must all pay attention to that in order to avoid the bitter consequences of that repressed anger in the near future. We have seen throughout history how such anger could be exploited by extremism. The road towards restoring trust in this moment of truth, as sincerely said by Secretary-General António Guterres, is clear. We need the right position based on humanity and ethics, irrespective of religion, ethnicity or nationality. We should refuse to deviate from international humanitarian law. We need to condemn anyone who violates the law regardless of the perpetrator. We need to reject and condemn the killing of civilians. That is how we protect the international community from the evils of the conflicts of civilizations and religions, and the Council has a key role in that regard.

*The meeting rose at 1.25 p.m.*