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New York

President: Mr. Hauri. (Switzerland)

Members:

Algeria.	Mr. Merabet
China.	Mr. Niu Xiaoqiang
Ecuador.	Mr. Egas Benavides
France.	Mr. Di Mascio
Guyana.	Mrs. Edwards
Japan.	Mr. Hanami
Malta.	Mr. Ciscaldi
Mozambique.	Mr. Bambissa
Republic of Korea.	Mr. Jaeseob Kim
Russian Federation.	Mr. Terekhov
Sierra Leone.	Ms. Baimarro
Slovenia.	Mr. Ponikvar
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. . .	Ms. Zahedi
United States of America.	Ms. Ring

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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The meeting was suspended at 6.35 p.m. on Tuesday, 29 October, and resumed at 5.20 p.m.

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

I now give the floor to the representative of India.

Mr. Parvathaneni (India): At the outset, I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this quarterly open debate. I also thank the briefers for their remarks.

The world has been witnessing large-scale human suffering and destruction in the ongoing conflict for a period of more than 12 months. Tens of thousands have lost their lives and many more have been injured. Civilian infrastructure, including schools and hospitals, has been damaged. It is estimated that reconstruction efforts in Gaza will take years.

The people of Palestine are in dire need of humanitarian assistance. We have been calling for safe, timely and unimpeded humanitarian supply to the affected population. As we have repeatedly demonstrated in the past, India stands ready to do more for the Palestinian people. We are committed to carrying out human-centric projects for the people of Palestine in diverse sectors. Our thrust is on projects that have a tangible and lasting impact on the daily lives of the people. The scale of our development assistance currently stands at \$120 million. That also includes our cumulative support of \$37 million to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). We also sent the first tranche of six tons of medicines and medical supplies to UNRWA on 22 October.

The terror attacks in Israel on 7 October 2023 were shocking and deserve our unequivocal condemnation. There can be no justification for terrorism and hostage-taking. India has a long-standing and uncompromising position against terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. At this juncture, I reiterate India's call for the immediate release of all hostages and for a ceasefire. Civilians have been the biggest casualties of the conflict — their plight needs to change. There should be a halt to violence without any delay. We also call for adherence to international law, including international humanitarian law.

India's support to the people of Palestine and their cause has been consistent and unwavering. We support a two-State solution that entails the establishment of a sovereign, viable and independent State of Palestine within recognized and mutually agreed borders, living side by side with Israel in peace with due regard for the legitimate security needs of Israel.

I would also like to state that India was one of the first countries to recognize the State of Palestine, in the 1980s, and we have supported Palestine's membership of the United Nations. India has always emphasized an early and peaceful resolution of the conflict through dialogue and diplomacy.

The path to peace is through the gates of dialogue and negotiations. While we implore all the parties concerned to work towards peace, we also urge all members of the international community in that endeavour.

India underlines its abiding faith in its vision of a peaceful and stable Middle East. In India, the international community has a reliable partner that is willing to continue its engagement with all concerned stakeholders towards forging long-term peace and stability in the region.

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

Ms. Oehri (Liechtenstein): The situation in the Middle East is dire. In this Chamber, we have spent many months now calling on the parties to cease escalation, protect civilians and respect international law — largely to no avail. The price is being paid in civilian life, in the shredding of international law and, increasingly, in attempts to undermine the work of this Organization.

We have all seen the footage from Gaza. Civilians are being displaced over and over again, trying to survive in conditions unfit for humans and being killed in unacceptable numbers. We must again emphasize the central principles of international humanitarian law, which apply universally: distinction, proportionality and precaution. There is an indispensable and non-negotiable imperative to protect civilian life at all times. Attacks on civilians and on civilian objects are war crimes.

In that respect, we continue to encourage the International Criminal Court (ICC) to carry out its mandate, independently and with impartiality. We

reiterate our strong support for the ICC, as well as our full respect for its independence and its procedures.

We also now see an increasing need to reiterate those principles with regard to the escalation between Israel and Hizbullah, including with regard to strikes on civilian areas in Lebanon and in Israel. In the West Bank, we note again that the continued building and normalization of settlements are in direct violation of resolution 2334 (2016) and of the obligation therein to cease all new settlement activities, as put forward by the International Court of Justice in its recent advisory opinion.

Those developments also exemplify the increasing and concerning erosion of the *jus ad bellum* framework in the region. The decision to begin a military operation — which necessarily bears the cost of civilian casualties — must be a last resort, and only to ensure the protection of civilian life. Attacks in reprisal, for example, are prohibited under international law.

Liechtenstein deplores the adoption by the Israeli Parliament of legislation prohibiting cooperation with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and aimed at drastically restricting its operations, including in East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip. Those laws are incompatible with Israel's obligations under international law and set a dangerous precedent for the multilateral system as a whole. We reiterate that UNRWA facilities are protected under international law. UNRWA provides an indispensable lifeline for the protection of Palestinian civilians, and its work must be safeguarded and protected. In that regard, we welcome the important press statement (SC/15874) issued by the Security Council today. Similarly, Liechtenstein places on record our full support for the work of the Secretary-General, as a significant majority of the United Nations membership, as well as the Council membership, has done in recent days.

Finally, Liechtenstein supports the work of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and reaffirms the status of its personnel as protected persons, attacks on whom may constitute war crimes. We urge a commitment by all parties to resolution 1701 (2006) and acknowledge calls to strengthen UNIFIL's mandate in that regard.

Our countries share a common perspective to foreground the protection of civilians and international law. I thank you, Mr. President, for standing up for

those values on the Council when they are under attack. Your principled engagement with like-minded States on the Council, in particular its elected members, remains vital. Members of the Council cannot bring back the dead or heal the lifelong trauma of war, but it remains our duty to take every step to end the war, to hold those responsible to account and to strengthen the work of this Organization in which we have placed our trust.

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

Ms. Brattested (Norway): In January, Israel received a clear message from the International Court of Justice that it must comply with its obligations under the Genocide Convention. Among other things, the Court demanded that Israel immediately implement measures to ensure that Palestinians in Gaza have access to basic services and humanitarian assistance. Despite numerous clear demands from the United Nations in the past year, the violations of international law have continued, with increasing severity. That cannot go on.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), mandated by the General Assembly, is the backbone of the international community's humanitarian response in Gaza. Norway strongly rejects the two bills that were adopted by the Israeli Knesset on Monday, which will, if enacted, make it impossible for UNRWA to operate in Palestine. No one can fulfil UNRWA's responsibilities in addressing the fundamental needs of Palestine refugees for food, protection, shelter, health care and education. We remind Israel that, in its advisory opinion of 19 July 2024, the International Court of Justice clearly concluded that Israel's continued presence in the occupied Palestinian territory is illegal and must be brought to an end. At the same time, the Court emphasized that Israel continues to be bound by the obligations incumbent on it as an occupying Power. A central element of those obligations is to administer the occupied area for the benefit of the local population. By the Knesset's recent decisions, essential services for the protection of millions of Palestine refugees will be severely hampered. That is not just an attack on one single United Nations agency, but also on the United Nations and the multilateral system. It sets a very dangerous precedent.

The international community cannot accept that the United Nations, international humanitarian organizations and Member States face systematic

obstacles when working in Palestine and delivering humanitarian assistance to Palestinians under occupation. That undermines the right of Palestinians to receive life-saving assistance. The international community has a responsibility to respond to that travesty. Norway will therefore initiate a draft resolution before the General Assembly requesting the International Court of Justice to give an advisory opinion on Israel's obligations as an occupying Power to facilitate humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian population.

Few conflicts in the world move us like the Israel-Palestine conflict. We felt, and continue to feel, great sorrow and empathy for Israel following the Hamas terrorist attack on 7 October 2023. We continue to call for the immediate and unconditional release of the hostages. Similarly, there is profound desolation over the horrific suffering among the civilian population of Gaza.

For more than a year, we have been paralysed in the face of the bloodiest conflict in the Middle East in decades. We need to change our strategy. A ceasefire between Israel and Hamas is paramount. We remain extremely concerned about the risk for further escalation in the region. The conflict between Hizbullah and Israel is causing great civilian suffering and destabilizes Lebanon. The Iranian and Israeli retaliation attacks have led to increased tensions. We repeat our clear call to all parties to exercise the utmost restraint to avoid further escalation.

There is no military solution to this conflict. Ending it requires diplomatic efforts that address not only the immediate crisis but also the long-term security needs and legitimate aspirations of the various parties. A long-lasting and just resolution to the Palestinian question is at the heart of that. Norway is, and has always been, a strong supporter of the two-State solution. We are convinced that the two-State solution is the only lasting solution for peace. Norway continues to call on those States that have not yet done so to recognize the State of Palestine as a step towards the two-State solution, within a broader regional framework, including the Arab Peace Initiative. During the General Assembly high-level week, Norway, the European Union and Saudi Arabia launched the global alliance for the implementation of a Palestinian State and the two-State solution. We believe that that initiative is one way to get out of the current deadlock. We also encourage other constructive initiatives. We need to consolidate

all good efforts. For the sake of the civilians in Gaza and the future of both Israel and Palestine, the present situation cannot go on.

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

Mr. Albanai (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, and your friendly country on your successful presidency of the Security Council during this month. You have been successful in facilitating the work of the Council to strengthen international law, in line with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, given the exceptional and dangerous conditions that we have been facing for more than a year.

Time and again, we have warned that the Israeli aggression could spread throughout the region if Israel continued with its violations without accountability. Let us look at what is happening to our brothers in the Lebanese Republic. Let us look at their human tragedy caused by the brutality of that occupation entity. In that context, my country condemns in the strongest terms the military operations that were launched — and continue to be launched — by the Israeli occupation forces against the brotherly Lebanese people, which have claimed the lives of hundreds of civilians. We also condemn Israel's violations of Lebanon's sovereignty and its attempts to embroil Lebanon in the regional conflict.

We meet today amid exceptional tragic developments facing the brotherly Palestinian people. Those developments have serious and real consequences on the security and stability of the region.

My country strongly condemns and rejects the Israeli act of aggression against the Islamic Republic of Iran a few days ago. It is a reflection of the chaotic policy adopted by the Israeli occupation forces as they violate the sovereignty of countries, jeopardize security in the region and violate the principles of international law and international norms and conventions.

The State of Kuwait once again calls on the international community and on the Security Council to shoulder their responsibilities to put an end to the practices that are threatening the future of the region and its peoples. It is necessary to take serious steps to maintain regional security and stability according to international conventions and international law.

The unprecedented actions and practices by a rogue entity require that the international community

be united in putting an end to those acts, which are continuing and worsening owing to a lack of accountability. Accountability is one of the most important pillars of justice. What happened a few days ago in the Parliament of the occupation entity came about as a direct result of the lack of accountability for that entity, which, through its brutality and inhumane behaviour, has been violating all norms for more than a year.

Two days ago, the Knesset adopted a law that would ban the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in the occupied Palestinian territory. That rogue entity believes that this is a success, but other countries around the world see it as a clear and obvious violation of Article 59 of the Charter of the United Nations. In that regard, it is useful to demonstrate to the international community that the dream of the occupation entity is to eliminate UNRWA. That is not a spur of the moment decision, but rather a long-term strategy by extremists there to eliminate the right of the brotherly Palestinian refugees to return to their occupied land.

It should be clear to everyone that the continued presence of UNRWA is the result of the international community's failure to implement the two-State solution and to enforce binding Council resolutions in that regard. Before the adoption of those laws two days ago, there were unprecedented and dangerous actions taking place. The rogue entity confiscated the premises of UNRWA in occupied East Jerusalem and turned it into a settlement outpost, in blatant violation of international law. We categorically reject those actions.

The international community must reject and oppose the occupation entity's attempts to change the legal and historical status quo in Jerusalem. No one who is of sound mind can deny the fact that UNRWA was, is and will remain one of the achievements in the history of the Organization. It is the backbone and the cornerstone of humanitarian work in the occupied Palestinian territory. It is an indispensable agency that cannot be replaced. There is no United Nations organ or agency that can do what UNRWA does. Since its establishment, 75 years ago, pursuant to a General Assembly resolution, UNRWA — the home of Member States — has provided a ray of hope to generations of Palestinian refugees and has actively contributed to regional security and stability. Therefore, we must all stress with one voice the importance of UNRWA's role as

a pillar of regional stability and a lifeline that bears the hopes and opportunities of the millions of Palestinian refugees whom the Agency serves, including children and women, and that any interruption or suspension of the Agency's vital work will pose grave humanitarian, political and security threats.

In that regard, we express our condolences over the death of the Agency's 233 humanitarian workers who perished as a result of the barbarity of the occupation entity, its brutal, unrelenting bombing of the Gaza Strip and its countless attacks on the remaining occupied Palestinian territory. In that context, we demand that the necessary protection be granted to humanitarian workers, and we reject any attempts to undermine or alter the mandate of UNRWA or to target its staff. We call upon the international community to continue to support the work of the Agency at the political, financial and humanitarian levels so that UNRWA can continue to carry out its mandate until the last Palestinian refugees return home to their land and their homeland.

In a spirit of solidarity, 123 United Nations States members signed the declaration of shared commitments to support UNRWA politically. It is inconceivable that approximately two thirds of the Members of the Organization and all its officials can see the danger facing UNRWA, while the other side regards what it is doing as a great victory. Those countries, which comprise different beliefs, religions and ethnicities and represent every geographical region, have come together to send a single message, namely, that what the occupying Power is doing to UNRWA sets a dangerous precedent. In spite of all that, the Security Council remains deadlocked, and geopolitical differences remain the main driver of the Council's resolutions.

Perhaps it would be useful to draw attention to the press release issued by Mr. Volker Türk, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, on 25 October, in which he called on world leaders to uphold their responsibilities to ensure respect for international humanitarian law, ensure the delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza and halt flagrant violations of human rights. The High Commissioner for Human Rights also urged the international community "to pressure all the parties to the conflict to stop acts of aggression and uphold international humanitarian law". In his press release, Mr. Türk also stressed that, under the Geneva Conventions, States have an obligation to act when a serious violation of international humanitarian law has been committed. Under the Genocide Convention,

State parties also have the responsibility to act to prevent such a crime when risk becomes apparent. And the High Commissioner mentioned that States have a responsibility to ensure respect for international law as set out in the Geneva Conventions. Those are universally accepted and binding norms developed to preserve the very bare minimum of humanity.

Given that we are meeting in the Security Council, it would be instructive for me to conclude my statement today by recalling some Council resolutions that are being violated daily by the rogue entity on a daily basis.

Resolution 1261 (1999) was the first of its kind to condemn the targeting of children in situations of armed conflict, their forced displacement and attacks on objects protected under international law, including places where there is usually a significant presence of children. Resolution 1998 (2011) condemns attacks against schools and hospitals and the denial of humanitarian access by parties to armed conflict. Resolution 2286 (2016) condemns acts of violence, attacks and threats against the wounded and sick, medical personnel and humanitarian personnel. Resolution 2347 (2017) condemns the destruction of cultural heritage, inter alia, the destruction of religious sites, in the context of armed conflicts. Resolution 2417 (2018) concerns starvation and its use as a method of warfare in armed conflict. Resolution 2573 (2021) condemns attacks in situations of armed conflicts directed against civilians or civilian objects, as well as indiscriminate or disproportionate attacks, resulting in the deprivation of the civilian population of objects indispensable to their survival.

The list is long, but I will leave it at that.

The President (*spoke in French*): Before continuing, I would like to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than three minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously and conclude the debate today.

Mr. Al Rubkhi (Oman) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, and your friendly country, Switzerland, on your presidency of the Security Council this month and to wish you success in carrying out your tasks in order to maintain international peace and security.

My country's delegation associates itself with the statement delivered by His Excellency the Permanent

Representative of the fraternal Islamic Republic of Mauritania on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

We face today an acute crisis that casts a shadow on international peace and security and requires that the Council take decisive and responsible action commensurate with the gravity of the challenges and the magnitude of the ongoing violations in the occupied Palestinian territories. The continuing crimes and violations require an urgent and effective response from the Council in order to consolidate the principles and values that underpin the United Nations and underscore the international community's commitment to protecting human rights and preserving human dignity.

Based on its firm commitment to the principles of international law and international humanitarian law, my country, the Sultanate of Oman, reiterates its condemnation of the crimes of genocide and the military aggression waged by the Israeli occupation against the Palestinian people. We call on the Council to take urgent action to establish a comprehensive and unconditional ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, put an immediate end to all forms of occupation and violations and allow the passage of humanitarian aid to affected civilians. We also call on the international community to exert political pressure on Israel to ensure that it complies with United Nations resolutions and end its illegal occupation of all Arab territories. In that context, the Sultanate of Oman expresses its condemnation and categorical rejection of the Israeli laws that target the humanitarian efforts of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in the occupied Palestinian territories. My country values the vital role of UNRWA in providing support and relief to more than 2 million Palestinian refugees. We also warn that attempts to eliminate the agency or decrease its role could have dangerous consequences. We call on the international community to immediately intervene to protect the rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination, and to ensure ongoing humanitarian support.

My country, the Sultanate of Oman, condemns all ongoing Israeli practices that target the sovereignty of neighbouring countries in the region. That is a clear violation of international law that increases tensions and undermines efforts to strengthen security and stability through peaceful and diplomatic means. Therefore, we call on the Council to act effectively and put an end to such repeated acts of aggression and to all blatant violations against the sovereignty of neighbouring

countries in the region, as well as to work to prevent any escalation that will fuel the cycle of violence in the region.

In conclusion, the Sultanate of Oman reiterates its call for addressing the root causes of the crises in the region by ending the illegitimate Israeli occupation of all Arab territories, putting an end to the aggression against the Gaza Strip and abiding by General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. We emphasize the importance of granting the Palestinian people the right to self-determination and the establishment of their independent State within the 1967 borders, in line with the two-State solution under the Arab Peace Initiative, in order to guarantee a just and lasting peace for all.

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

Mr. Mohamed (Maldives): There is a “situation in the Middle East” for one reason and one reason alone — Israel’s relentless aggression against the people in the region, aggression supported by foreign funds, imported advanced weaponry and even imported soldiers. To end the crisis, Israel must be compelled to comply with international law and respect the Council’s resolutions. Only then can we begin to resolve the situation in the Middle East, especially the question of Palestine.

The question of Palestine stands as one of modern history’s most challenging issues. It burdens our conscience as a human struggle for existence, for justice and for basic rights. We have convened countless meetings, adopted resolutions and made desperate appeals to Israel to end its apartheid policies against Palestinians, to return the land it has forcefully grabbed from the Palestinian people and to bring an end to the killing of Palestinian people.

Yet war rages on. More than 40,000 lives have been lost in Gaza since October 2023, many of them children. Nearly 2 million have been displaced, forced into uncertainty. These are documented realities, not fabrications. How many reports must we see before we act? The Council’s inaction is enabling Israel’s aggression to continue. Where justice should prevail, Israel’s military advances defy international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

Today workers of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

(UNRWA) are under threat; tomorrow others may face the same fate if the silence continues.

As we debate today, Israel’s war on Gaza is widening across borders. In Lebanon, Israel has disabled Blue Helmets from operating, undermining resolution 1701 (2006) and challenging the foundations of multilateralism. The protection of United Nations personnel is not only essential, but vital to uphold the core values of the Council and multilateralism.

We acknowledge resolution 2720 (2023) as a positive step, but it falls short of what is needed. The situation demands an immediate, unconditional ceasefire. We rely on the Council to enforce the International Court of Justice’s ruling and respect for General Assembly resolutions.

The path to justice for Palestinians, Lebanese and all innocent civilians cannot rest on empty promises. True peace requires the establishment of an independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, based on the pre-1967 borders. Palestinians deserve equal rights, dignity and a future free from violence, a future in which bread is not replaced with violence, where children laugh without fear, and where the blue of the Mediterranean meets the desert sand in a horizon of hope and peace.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Mr. Niang.

Mr. Niang (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by congratulating Switzerland for its outstanding presidency of the Security Council during the month of October. I also thank His Excellency Minister Ignazio Cassis for presiding over this important meeting.

(*spoke in English*)

I also thank the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Mr. Tor Wennesland, for his briefing and tireless advocacy for peace and justice, including a just solution to the question of Palestine.

Today I bring three critical messages from the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People — with regard to addressing the profound urgency to reach a ceasefire in Gaza, the escalating threat to the United Nations operations in the occupied Palestinian territory, and the imperative for the implementation of the significant General Assembly resolution regarding the International Court of Justice

advisory opinion (General Assembly resolution ES-10/24).

For more than a year, we have witnessed unimaginable destruction and civilian casualties and gross violations of international law, including humanitarian and human rights law, in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. Hopes for an immediate and lasting ceasefire have all but vanished, in spite of the calls of the Council, the General Assembly and the international community at large. The assault by Israel, the occupying Power, on the Gaza Strip has reached unprecedented levels, with northern Gaza now facing near total devastation. An estimated 400,000 Palestinians are being forcibly displaced before our eyes. That is not an evacuation but forced displacement and ethnic cleansing. Civilians are being forced to leave their homes and shelters, under bombs and gunfire, and are starving, with little or no aid.

Most alarming is the Security Council's passive tolerance of the killing and maiming of civilians and the wanton destruction of civilian property, repeatedly and wrongly justified by Israel and other members as self-defence. The critical urgency of enforcing a ceasefire has been completely lost, eclipsed by the relentless violence of Israel's occupying forces and a soaring Palestinian civilian death toll. Instead, the bloodshed continues unabated, marking a profound failure of our collective humanity and the Council's fundamental duty under the Charter of the United Nations.

Analysis of data from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs by the Bureau of our Committee shows that between 10 June 2024, the date of the adoption of resolution 2735 (2024), on a ceasefire, and 25 October 2024, 5,723 Palestinians were killed and 15,832 were injured in Gaza. That is unconscionable, and it has happened on our watch. That devastating toll has now surpassed 42,847 deaths since 7 October 2023, representing not just a statistic, but the tragic loss of men, women, children and elderly persons. Those innocent lives could have been saved if the Security Council had enforced its own ceasefire with resolve and urgency.

The failure to implement resolution 2735 (2024) has not only led to continued bloodshed, destruction and loss of civilian lives in Gaza, which independent experts, scholars and jurists around the world believe amount to genocide, but it has also undermined the

very credibility of the Council and the multilateral system. Each life lost is a testament to our collective failure to uphold the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and ensure the protection of civilians. The Security Council must act decisively to end this horrific war. It is our duty under the Charter to demand an immediate ceasefire, protect civilians and uphold international law. The Council's hesitation has enabled the weaponization of humanitarian assistance and starvation and the forced displacement of Palestinians by Israel, the occupying Power, which threatens to become permanent, as threatened by the Israeli officials who now boast about their plans to build settlements in Gaza.

The urgency cannot be overstated — this is a matter of life and death for millions and poses a direct threat to international peace and security. International humanitarian law is being violated with impunity, and perpetrators are often shielded by double standards that undermine the rule of law and the multilateral system. The divisions in this organ are testimony to that reality. We call on all Members of the Organization to unite to act now and prevent further atrocities. The failure to act threatens not only the credibility of the United Nations but also the recently adopted Pact for the Future (General Assembly resolution 79/1). The values enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations are being flagrantly disregarded in the occupied Palestinian territory, and now there are threats to dismantle the very institutions providing vital humanitarian aid, including the United Nations system operating there.

We strongly condemn Israel's threats to the United Nations, especially its unlawful attempts to ban and abolish the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which remains the only lifeline for millions of Palestinian refugees and displaced Palestinians. Since the conflict started, 464 incidents have affected UNRWA premises in Gaza, including military interference and attacks that have killed and injured civilians and damaged and destroyed UNRWA properties, such as shelters for nearly 2 million displaced Palestinians. UNRWA's critical work is being impeded and obstructed, and 233 members of its staff had been killed as of 21 October. The Secretary-General has been publicly targeted and vilified. We condemn Israel's ban on UNRWA, Gaza's primary lifeline amid a deepening crisis. The unprecedented unilateral Israeli decision endangers Gaza's fragile aid distribution, contravenes the Charter

of the United Nations and violates Israel's obligations under international law. We demand that the Security Council reject it. We urge the Security Council to stand firm in support of the Secretary-General and UNRWA's mandate, which has been supported by international consensus for decades. Immediate, unimpeded humanitarian access must be ensured, and the United Nations role in the region must be protected. The Council must reject any attempts to intimidate or sideline the United Nations lawful and legitimate humanitarian efforts and commendable efforts to protect civilians.

We commend the General Assembly's adoption of resolution ES-10/24, of 18 September, on the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legal consequences arising from Israel's policies and practices in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and from the illegality of Israel's continued presence in the occupied Palestinian territory, and we urge the immediate implementation of that landmark decision. The Committee is collaborating with Member States on its implementation, including efforts to encourage Member States to submit proposals for inclusion in the Secretary-General's upcoming report. We therefore appeal to the Security Council to fulfil its responsibility by urgently considering actions needed to swiftly end Israel's illegal occupation of Palestinian territory, foremost through the implementation of its own numerous resolutions. In addition, we welcome Türkiye's initiative, in cooperation with 26 Member States, to jointly call for a halt to arms transfers to Israel and pressing for an immediate ceasefire — efforts that are in line with the General Assembly resolution and deserve support.

The Committee will once again commemorate worldwide the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People on 29 November. This year the event will be marked by even deeper mourning, as the Israeli military assault on Gaza and the West Bank continues unabated. At Headquarters here in New York, we will commemorate the event on 26 November in the Economic and Social Council Chamber, and I invite everyone here to join us in reaffirming our support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including self-determination and independence, and to honour the United Nations enduring commitment to their cause until a just solution is realized in conformity with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

In conclusion, let me stress once again that only dialogue and justice — not violence — will resolve the Palestinian question. That is why we in the Committee support the Secretary-General's principled position that there can be no "day after" in Gaza without a political horizon. The Security Council must take the lead in efforts to urgently restart dialogue to address the Palestinian question. A lasting peace in the region will be achieved only through a two-State solution, with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security based on the 1967 borders and with a just solution for the Palestinian refugees, whose plight we continue to painfully witness today in this ongoing Nakba.

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

Mr. Vinhas (Portugal): Since the previous open debate on this topic (see S/PV.9687), the situation in the Middle East has deteriorated at an increasing and alarming pace. Therefore, at the outset, we reiterate our call on all parties to exercise maximum restraint to prevent an imminent regional escalation.

Regarding Gaza, Portugal will always reaffirm its condemnation of Hamas for the terrorist attacks of 7 October 2023 and for keeping hostages captive. After more than a year of war in Gaza, we underline the international consensus around the need to de-escalate the situation on the ground, and we reaffirm our call for an immediate and urgent humanitarian ceasefire. We also call for the immediate and unconditional release of the hostages.

We have seen a pattern of attacks against hospitals, schools, United Nations premises, refugee camps and journalists, which have been perpetrated over the past year, particularly in Gaza. We strongly condemn the targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure. The protection of the civilian population in full compliance with international humanitarian law must be guaranteed at all times. Gaza is facing a humanitarian calamity amid a drastic decrease in the entry of humanitarian assistance into the territory in October, aggravating an already dramatic situation for the civilian population. As the Acting Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Ms. Joyce Msuya, warned, the entire population of north Gaza is at risk of dying. Portugal is increasingly concerned about the fate of Palestinian civilians in Gaza, trapped in a small strip of land with nowhere safe to go.

We therefore call for humanitarian access to the Gaza Strip. The continuous and safe delivery of humanitarian aid is indispensable to save Palestinian children from malnutrition and preventable diseases, repair hospitals and schools and save lives. In that regard, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is an indispensable and irreplaceable actor in Gaza and the region and must be supported. Portugal condemns the recent adoption of legislation by the Knesset revoking the Agency's privileges and immunities and curtailing its capacity to provide essential human services in Gaza and the West Bank. Together with the United Nations and other partners, Portugal will continue to support UNRWA. We stress our full and unwavering support for the Secretary-General at a time when his good offices are needed the most. Declaring the Secretary-General persona non grata is regrettable and counterproductive.

The land military operation against Lebanon has started, and within just a few days the military escalation displaced more than 1 million inhabitants and caused more than 2,000 deaths. We condemn the attacks perpetrated against the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon and call on all parties to respect its mandate and assure the safety of its soldiers.

Iran attacked Israel on 1 October. Israel retaliated against Iran this past weekend. Portugal once again calls on both sides to exercise maximum restraint and avoid further escalations. Further destabilization can have catastrophic consequences for the region and must be avoided at all costs.

The situation in the West Bank is also deeply worrisome. We strongly condemn the continued Israeli policies of settlement expansion and the use of violence by radical settlers and Israeli security forces. Such actions violate international law and further undermine the efforts to achieve a two-State solution. We are also concerned about the reports of violence committed by Palestinians against Israelis.

In conclusion, an immediate ceasefire in Gaza is the most pressing priority. We support all diplomatic efforts that can contribute to putting an immediate end to the current cycle of violence in the region. We must turn this war into a new political horizon of hope and recommit to the two-State solution as the only way to put an end to so much suffering and violence and reach a durable peace in the region. To that end, we are committed to supporting any peace initiative

conducive to the implementation of the two-State solution, including the most recent initiative launched on the margins of high-level week in September. Ensuring sustainable peace and stability in the Middle East implies a renewed commitment to effective multilateralism, with the United Nations at its core. That is absolutely crucial in order to protect and promote a rules-based international order.

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

Mr. Abdullah (Bangladesh): We thank the Swiss presidency for convening this quarterly open debate, especially at a moment when the situation in the Middle East is on the brink.

Bangladesh aligns itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

Gaza is almost destroyed, the death toll has been rising every day, and genocide and atrocities are ongoing against innocent Palestinians. At the same time, we have not witnessed any effective action from the Security Council. It seems as if the resolutions adopted by the Council and the General Assembly have no value. Nothing can stop Israel from committing genocide, atrocity crimes and mass killings in Gaza. The atrocities and killings are continuing in the occupied Palestinian territory in the West Bank as well. In the current situation, if our activities still remain confined to delivering statements and adopting resolutions — but with no implementation — the credibility of the Council will come under serious question. Implementing an immediate and unconditional ceasefire in Gaza must be the priority of the Council today. We are especially concerned about the current situation in northern Gaza, which can be described as a genocide within a genocide. More than 470,000 civilian lives in the northern Gaza Strip are in imminent danger. On top of that, we cannot accept in any way Israel's adoption of two unjustified bills concerning the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). We refer to the words of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA, when he said that the rules-based international order is crumbling, in a repetition of the horrors that led to the establishment of the United Nations and in violation of the commitments taken to prevent their recurrence. The attacks on UNRWA are an integral part of that disintegration.

We strongly condemn the ongoing Israeli military attacks in Lebanon, many of which are aimed at unarmed civilians. Those attacks constitute a severe breach of Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity and are blatant violations of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. We call for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire in Lebanon. We are also deeply concerned about the attacks on the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon peacekeepers. The safety and security of the peacekeepers cannot be compromised in any situation.

Bangladesh also unequivocally condemns Israel's recent military strikes on the Islamic Republic of Iran, viewing those actions as a severe violation of Iran's sovereignty and a breach of the United Nations Charter and international law. Such provocations threaten to destabilize an already fragile region, with far-reaching consequences for regional and global peace and security. We call on regional and global stakeholders to use their influence to urge the parties to exercise restraint and to prevent further escalation.

It is deplorable that a Member State of the United Nations declared the Secretary-General persona non grata. Bangladesh joined 116 Member States and organizations in condemning that flagrant act, which undermines the ability of the United Nations to carry out its mandate, including by mediating conflicts and providing humanitarian support. We reaffirm our full support for and confidence in the Secretary-General and his work.

We once again call for the immediate cessation of all military activities against the unarmed population in the Middle East. The Security Council needs to take all necessary measures to implement resolution 2728 (2024). We also call for the implementation of all relevant resolutions of the Council and the General Assembly, including General Assembly resolution ES-10/24. As part of the process of implementing that resolution, Bangladesh has joined the initiative of issuing a joint letter calling for a halt to arms transfers to Israel.

As responsible members of the United Nations, we need to ensure accountability for the perpetrators of mass atrocity crimes. We once again refer to the indictments by the International Criminal Court related to the war in Gaza and urge the international community to stand beside the Court. We also reiterate our urge to uphold the verdict of the International Court of

Justice. We cannot support the prevalence of non-action after witnessing the sheer disrespect and violations of international human rights and humanitarian law by Israel.

I would like to conclude by reiterating our call for the war to be stopped immediately and for the establishment of an independent Palestinian State, based on the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. That is what will bring peace and stability in the Middle East and ensure the well-being of all countries in the Middle East.

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

Mr. Alrowaiei (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to welcome Mr. Ignazio Cassis, Federal Councillor and Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland, who presided over today's meeting, and to thank the delegation of Switzerland for convening this important open debate in the light of the developments in the Middle East region. I also thank Mr. Tor Wennesland, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, for his valuable briefing.

The continued escalation of tensions and military operations in the Middle East region is a cause for deep concern, especially as it has grave repercussions on the lives of innocent civilians and exacerbates the catastrophic humanitarian situation. The conflicts in the region are also having deep and far-reaching consequences not only for the countries directly concerned but for international security, peace and stability. There is therefore an urgent need to strengthen our efforts and strive hard to achieve peace in this region of global strategic importance by relaunching every possible diplomatic endeavour, with a view to arriving at solutions that can lead to a just, comprehensive and lasting peace. Bahrain reiterates its call on the international community to assume its responsibilities for achieving an immediate, comprehensive and lasting ceasefire in the Middle East. We urge all the parties concerned to exercise restraint and prioritize de-escalation in order to prevent the spread of war and conflict. We also stress the need to revive the peace negotiations.

The Kingdom of Bahrain also reaffirms the need for an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and southern Lebanon. We call for protecting civilians and ensuring their safe return to their homes, for the release of the

hostages and detainees, the unimpeded delivery of humanitarian assistance and the implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions on the situation in Gaza. We call for the full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006), on Lebanon, and of the commitments under the Taif Agreement, and for ending the cycle of violence and mutual escalation with a view to preserving peace and security in the region and the world.

Bahrain urges all States to respond to the initiatives adopted at the recent Arab summit held in my country, including the call for the convening of an international conference aimed at resolving the Palestinian question on the basis of a two-State solution and establishing an independent, sovereign and viable Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital and within the 4 June 1967 borders, in accordance with the resolutions of international legitimacy. We also call for supporting efforts aimed at recognizing the State of Palestine and admitting it as a full Member of the United Nations. There is also a need to strengthen international cooperation in the provision of education and health services to those affected by conflicts.

In conclusion, Bahrain emphasizes the importance of the international community working collectively to fulfil its responsibilities and obligations and restore the hope of achieving the desired peace in a way that guarantees regional security and stability and preserves the right of all the peoples of the region to live in dignity, security, peace and prosperity.

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

Mr. Miarka (Poland): Poland supports the statement delivered earlier on behalf of the European Union (EU). Despite countless calls for de-escalation in the Middle East, little progress has been made so far. We continue to witness civilian casualties, including many children. We urge all parties to prioritize the protection of civilians. The deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza is a major concern as hunger and malnutrition rates continue to rise. We are deeply disturbed by the reports of hospitals and schools being targeted in the attacks. The situation in the West Bank remains worrisome, despite repeated calls from the international community for respect for the relevant resolutions of the Security Council. Israel's policy of supporting new Jewish settlements has not changed. The Israeli offensive is undermining the status of the authorities in the West Bank while enhancing the popularity of

Hamas. It is difficult to see how a meaningful political progress can be envisaged in such conditions.

We are deeply concerned about the Knesset's recent decision affecting the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. The Agency is the only United Nations organization prepared to provide humanitarian aid in Gaza and is safeguarded by international law. We oppose the decision. Humanitarian law must be enforced and respected, especially by the legislative bodies of democratic States. The immediate priority must be ending the violence and restoring a political pathway to a meaningful peace process. We join previous speakers in calling for an immediate cessation of hostilities and full compliance with international law, including international humanitarian law.

Recognizing Lebanon's importance to Middle Eastern stability and our shared ties of friendship, Poland remains committed to supporting Lebanon's unity, security, sovereignty and territorial integrity. We greatly value Lebanon's support for the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), whose role in the region is indispensable. As a contributor to the mission, with more than 200 troops deployed, we are deeply concerned about the recent attacks on UNIFIL positions. On 12 October, Poland initiated a joint statement with other troop-contributing countries, joined by 44 nations. We condemned the attacks on United Nations peacekeepers, called for their immediate cessation and demanded adequate protection for United Nations personnel, in accordance with international law. We call urgently for explanations and a thorough investigation by the Israeli authorities regarding the attacks on UNIFIL.

Poland, along with other EU member States, condemned Iran's attacks on Israel on 1 October. All destabilizing actions in the region, including those by terrorists and armed groups, pose a serious threat to regional stability. We note that Israel's recent response avoided populated areas and focused primarily on military targets. With regional tensions running high, Poland remains committed to promoting de-escalation. We urge all parties to exercise maximum restraint, as the risk of broader conflict grows by the day.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Mr. Beresford-Hill.

Mr. Beresford-Hill: I thank the Permanent Representative of Switzerland for inviting us to speak

at this critical juncture in the humanitarian crisis that is engulfing the Middle East.

The Order of Malta exists today as a unique presence on the international stage, one that is actively operating humanitarian aid projects in 120 countries and in the West Bank and Bethlehem, where the Holy Family Hospital, the only facility of its kind in the region, provides state-of-the-art care and comfort to pregnant women and their families and children. Our hospital is a key employer in the area, where food insecurity has been exacerbated through the collapse of the tourist economy. Of all the regions in Palestine, Bethlehem, after Gaza, is the poorest, with only 10 per cent of the population earning sustainable salaries. Each month our diplomatic mission to Palestine disburses cash subsistence allowances to thousands of individuals, while our formerly successful micro-finance outreach programmes for encouraging the development of small business opportunities have all but evaporated, along with any chance of new opportunities emerging.

The world continues to be shocked by the suffering that innocent families and orphaned children in Gaza are experiencing. The lack of even basic healthcare, including vaccines, has consigned a new generation to a lifetime of physical and mental stress that surely should not be a twenty-first-century legacy. What we at the Order of Malta and other international aid agencies are offering is inadequate, even by the most generous of interpretations. Yet to stand by and do nothing compounds evil with evil.

We are profoundly concerned about the fact that the valued and essential contribution of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East to the welfare of the Palestinian people has been compromised and that its vital mission has been closed down as a consequence. We acknowledge the Secretary-General's recent communication to the President of the General Assembly on the issue. Our own efforts in the region will be severely affected by this development. Replicating its work will be an impossible task given the current conditions on the ground in Gaza. The suspension of its activities will therefore severely retard any recovery or reclamation of human dignity when hostilities cease. Again, we urge the responsible authorities to find ways to both actively resolve the security concerns while also ensuring that the life-saving work guaranteed by the United Nations is preserved and protected.

In conclusion, every life, Muslim, Christian or Jewish, is a unique creation of the God that is central to all of those three primary monotheistic faiths. Shame on us that we indiscriminately inflict pain and suffering on one another, ignoring the tenet held by all of us that it is only peacemakers who are truly the children of God.

The President (*spoke in French*): There are no more names on the list of speakers. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the interpreters, who made it possible for the Council to conclude this important debate.

The meeting rose at 6:30 p.m.