



Security Council

Eightieth year

9914th meeting

Tuesday, 13 May 2025, 3 p.m.

New York

Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Sekeris	(Greece)
<i>Members:</i>	Algeria.	Mr. Koudri
	China.	Mr. Fu Cong
	Denmark	Ms. Lassen
	France	Mr. Bonnafont
	Guyana	Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett
	Pakistan.	Mr. Ahmad
	Panama	Mr. Alfaro de Alba
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Hwang
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Sierra Leone	Mr. Kanu
	Slovenia.	Mr. Žbogar
	Somalia	Mr. Osman
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Dame Barbara Woodward
	United States of America.	Ms. Shea

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Israel and the United Arab Emirates to participate in this meeting.

I propose that the Council invite the Permanent Observer of the Observer State of Palestine to the United Nations 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.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Tom Fletcher, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator; and Ms. Angélica Jácome, Director of the Food and Agriculture Organization Liaison Office with the United Nations.

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

I now give the floor to Mr. Fletcher.

Mr. Fletcher: Briefing the Security Council again on this topic is a grim undertaking. Before starting, I ask the Council to reflect for a moment on what action we will tell future generations we each took to stop the twenty-first century atrocity in Gaza to which we bear daily witness. It is a question we will hear — sometimes incredulous, sometimes furious, but always there — for the rest of our lives. We will surely all claim to have been against it. Maybe we will say we issued a statement, or that we trusted that private pressure might work, despite so much evidence to the contrary, or we will pretend that we thought a more brutal military offensive had more chance of bringing hostages home than the negotiations that brought so many hostages home. Maybe some will recall that in a transactional world, we had other priorities, or maybe we will use those empty words: “we did all we could”.

Let me start with what we see and are mandated by the Council to report.

Israel is deliberately and unashamedly imposing inhumane conditions on civilians in the occupied Palestinian territory. For more than 10 weeks, nothing has entered Gaza — no food, medicine, water or tents. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians have, again, been forcibly displaced and confined into ever-shrinking spaces, as 70 per cent of Gaza's territory is either within Israeli-militarized zones or under displacement orders.

As my colleague from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) will explain, every single one of the 2.1 million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip face the risk of famine, and one in five face starvation, despite the fact that members have funded the food that could save them. The few hospitals that have somehow survived bombardment are overwhelmed. The medics who have somehow survived drone and sniper attacks cannot keep up with the trauma and the spread of disease. Even today, the European Gaza Hospital in Khan Younis was bombed, again, with even more civilian casualties reported.

I can tell the Council, from having visited what is left of Gaza's medical system, that death on this scale has a sound and a smell that does not leave you. As one

hospital worker described it, “children scream as we peel burned fabric from their skin”. And yet we hear that we did all we could.

Our response as humanitarians is to make a single ask of the Council: let us work. The United Nations and our partners are desperate to resume humanitarian aid, at scale, across Gaza, in line with the fundamental principles of humanity, impartiality, independence and neutrality. We have a plan. We have shown we can deliver, with tens of thousands of trucks reaching civilians during the ceasefire. We have lifesaving supplies ready at the borders. We can save hundreds of thousands of survivors. We have rigorous mechanisms to ensure our aid gets to civilians, not Hamas.

But Israel denies us access, placing their objective of depopulating Gaza before the lives of civilians. It is bad enough that the blockade continues. How does one react when Israeli ministers boast about it, or when attacks on humanitarian workers and violations of the United Nations privileges and immunities continue, along with restrictions on international and non-governmental organizations?

The Council has adopted resolutions that demand all parties to the conflict comply with international humanitarian law and ensure the protection of civilians, including humanitarian personnel. I would give this reminder: Israel also has clear obligations under international humanitarian law. It must treat civilians humanely, with respect for their inherent human dignity. It must not forcibly transfer, deport or displace the civilian population of an occupied territory. As the occupying Power, it must agree to aid and facilitate it. So, for anyone still pretending to be in any doubt, the Israeli-designed distribution modality is not the answer. It practically excludes many, including people with disabilities, women, children, the elderly and the wounded. It forces further displacement. It exposes thousands of people to harm. It sets an unacceptable precedent for aid delivery, not just in the occupied Palestinian territory, but around the world. It restricts aid to only one part of Gaza, while leaving other dire needs unmet. It makes aid conditional on political or military aims. It makes starvation a bargaining chip. It is cynical sideshow, a deliberate distraction, and a fig leaf for further violence and displacement. If any of that still matters, have no part in it.

For the record, we have tried. The United Nations met 12 times — and again this morning — with the Israeli authorities to discuss the proposed modality. We wanted to find a way to make it possible. We repeatedly explained the minimum conditions for our involvement on the basis of long-settled fundamental principles: aid based on independent assessments of who needs it — the globally tested and donor-demanded basic requirement — and the ability to deliver aid to all those in need, wherever they are. The Secretary-General set out relevant international law in his submissions to the International Court of Justice. The Council’s resolutions have strongly condemned the starvation of civilians as a method of warfare and the unlawful denial of humanitarian access. Resolution 2417 (2018) demands the Council’s full attention to widespread, conflict-induced food insecurity.

It is not just Gaza. Appalling violence is also increasing in the West Bank, where the situation is the worst in decades. The use of heavy weaponry, military methods of war, excessive force, forcible displacement, demolitions and movement restrictions, as well as ongoing, illegal settlement expansion. Entire communities are destroyed, and refugee camps depopulated. Settlements are expanding, and settler violence continuing at alarming levels, sometimes with the support of Israeli forces. Recently, settlers abducted a 13-year-old girl and her three-year-old brother. They were found tied to a tree. Do we also say to them that we did all we could?

There is, I fear, a broader context here. For the past 19 months, Palestinian journalists, civil society and individuals have live-streamed their destruction to the world. Many have been targeted and killed because of their testimony. During this

time, international aid workers have been the only international civilian presence in Gaza, watching and reporting the unfolding horror. We are Council members' eyes and ears, and be in no doubt that we feel the weight of that responsibility, to the Council, to the communities we serve and to the world. And so, we have briefed the Council in great detail on the extensive civilian harm we witness daily: death, injury, destruction, hunger, disease, torture, other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment and repeated displacement on a large scale. We have described the deliberate obstruction of aid operations and the systematic dismantling of Palestinian life, and that which sustains it, in Gaza. The Council therefore has that information.

Now the International Court of Justice is considering whether a genocide is taking place in Gaza. It will weigh the testimony we have shared. But it will be too late. Recognizing the urgency, the International Court of Justice has indicated clear provisional measures that must be implemented, yet they have not been.

Previous reviews of the United Nations conduct in cases of large-scale violations of international human rights and humanitarian law — the 2019 report on Myanmar, the 2012 report on Sri Lanka and the 1999 reports on Srebrenica and Rwanda — pointed to our collective failure to speak to the scale of violations while they were being committed. So, for those killed and those whose voices are silenced, what more evidence do we need now? Will the Council act decisively to prevent genocide and ensure respect for international humanitarian law? Or will it say, instead, that we did all that we could?

That degradation of international law is corrosive and infectious. It is undermining decades of progress on rules to protect civilians from inhumanity and the violent and lawless among us, who act with impunity. Humanity, the law and reason must prevail. The Council must prevail. Demand that this end. Stop arming it. Insist on accountability. To the Israeli authorities: stop killing and injuring civilians; lift the brutal blockade; and let humanitarians save lives. To Hamas and other armed Palestinian groups: release all hostages immediately and unconditionally; and stop putting civilians at risk during military operations. To those who will not survive what we fear is coming in plain sight, it will be no consolation to know that future generations will hold us, in this Chamber, to account. But they will, and if we have not seriously done all that we could, then we should fear that judgment.

The President: I thank Mr. Fletcher for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Jácome.

Ms. Jácome: At the outset, I wish to thank the Greek presidency of the Security Council for inviting the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to brief members on this item, "The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question", and specifically on the food security situation in Gaza.

The situation in Gaza is very difficult, as millions of people facing acute food insecurity, and the risk of famine is imminent. The latest Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) analysis, released just yesterday, confirms that the entire population of the Gaza Strip — approximately 2.1 million people — remains at critical risk of famine, following months of conflict, mass displacement and severe constraints on humanitarian access.

Half a million people — one out of five — are in the IPC phase 5 category, defined as "catastrophe". Essential items for people's survival are depleted or likely to be exhausted in the coming weeks. Compared to the previous IPC analysis released in October 2024, the situation has significantly deteriorated. Between 1 April and 10 May, 93 per cent of the population — 1.95 million people — were classified

as being in crisis phase or worse, that is, IPC phase 3 or above. Of them, 244,000 people — 12 per cent of the population — are in IPC phase 5, “catastrophe”, and 925,000 — 44 per cent — are in IPC phase 4, that is, “emergency phase”.

While levels of acute malnutrition remain at the alert and serious levels in the governorates of North Gaza, Gaza City and Rafah, there is a deep concern that that could quickly worsen. In what is considered according to the IPC to be the most likely scenario, from 11 May to the end of September 2025, the entire Gaza Strip could be classified as emergency, that is, IPC phase 4, with the entire population expected to face crisis or worse levels of acute food insecurity. That would include 470,000 people — 1 in 5 people — reaching catastrophe, that is, IPC phase 5 levels of food insecurity; more than a million people — 54 per cent — would face emergency levels of hunger; and the remaining half a million — 24 per cent — would experience crisis, that is, IPC phase 3 levels of hunger. Should humanitarian and commercial blockades continue, the worst-case scenario could unfold, leading to near-complete lack of access to food, water, medicine, non-food items, supplies and services that are essential for survival.

Children and women have not been spared in this crisis. Prior to 7 October 2023, Gaza had low rates of malnutrition that were comparable to those in European countries, owing to diverse and affordable food supplies. It was self-sufficient in vegetables, eggs, milk, poultry and fish and produced much of its meat, olive oil and fruits. Nearly 71 per cent of children under the age of five are expected to be acutely malnourished over the next 11 months, from May 2025 to April 2026. Of them, 14,100 cases are expected to be severe. In addition, nearly 17,000 pregnant and breastfeeding women will also require treatment for acute malnutrition during that period.

Agrifood systems have collapsed in the Gaza Strip, while food prices have soared. Local food production — the primary source of a healthy diet — has been decimated. Nearly 75 per cent of cropland, which contributed up to one third of daily consumption, has been damaged or destroyed since the escalation of hostilities. Animal production has been devastated, with almost 95 per cent of cattle and more than half of sheep and goat herds now dead, and the price of wheat flour has increased by 3,000 per cent since February 2025. We are witnessing the systemic breakdown of conditions essential for survival. People in Gaza are not only experiencing lack of food but going through a profound breakdown of health, livelihood and social structures, leaving entire communities in a state of desperation, devastation and death. The right to food is a basic human right, and this crisis is preventable. Food, food production kits, medicine, water and hygiene kits are waiting to be delivered across the border.

By the time famine is declared, people are already dying of hunger, with irreversible consequences that will last generations. The window of opportunity to deliver assistance is now. Resolution 2417 (2018) reaffirms that protecting civilians and objects that are critical to preventing hunger is a shared responsibility. The FAO stands ready to work with all partners.

The President: I thank Ms. Jácome for her briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Dame Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom): I would like to start by thanking Under-Secretary-General Fletcher and Director Jácome for briefing us today and not pulling their punches on stark detail.

The United Kingdom called this meeting alongside Denmark, France, Greece and Slovenia in response to the alarming warnings that the humanitarian situation in Gaza is worse than it has ever been. We are calling for three urgent measures.

First, the United Kingdom calls on Israel to lift its block on aid. The World Food Programme warned us over a week ago that they had no food left, and Integrated Food Security Phase Classification data released yesterday shows that the whole of Gaza is at risk of famine. Meanwhile, tons of food are currently sitting rotting at the border, blocked from reaching people who are starving. That is cruel and inexcusable and risks further deaths that should be avoidable.

Secondly, the United Kingdom will not support any aid mechanism that seeks to deliver political or military objectives or puts vulnerable civilians at risk. We call on Israel to urgently engage with the United Nations to ensure a return to delivery of aid in line with humanitarian principles. International law requires Israel to allow the rapid and unimpeded provision of humanitarian aid to all civilians.

Thirdly, the United Kingdom reiterates our outrage at the killing of Palestinian Red Crescent workers and the strikes on a United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) compound in March. We are disappointed that Israel has not yet released the final findings of its investigation into the UNOPS incident or taken concrete action to ensure that such incidents can never happen again.

The release of Edan Alexander yesterday after 17 months of cruel Hamas captivity offers a rare moment of hope. We must never forget the suffering of those hostages who remain in Gaza and those families awaiting the return of their loved ones' remains. It is ceasefire deals that have delivered the release of more than 180 hostages and allowed a massive scale-up of aid for desperate Palestinians. That shows what is possible with political will. That is why we strongly oppose an expansion of the conflict, as do many hostages' families. And it is a ceasefire deal that now offers the best hope of ending the agony of the hostages and their families, alleviating the suffering of civilians in Gaza, ending Hamas' control of Gaza and achieving a pathway to a two-State solution.

Mr. Bonnafont (France) (*spoke in French*): First of all, I thank Mr. Tom Fletcher, Emergency Relief Coordinator, and Ms. Angélica Jácome, Director of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Liaison Office with the United Nations in New York, for their briefings. France commends the work of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the FAO and that of all humanitarian actors working in Gaza to maintain a semblance of humanity and solidarity in a region plunged into horror.

France requested a meeting along with its four partners for compelling reasons.

First, there is the continued Israeli bombardment of civilian infrastructure and populations, which also affects humanitarian workers. Israel must comply with international humanitarian law, which requires that civilians be protected. That respect for the law also applies to the operations being carried out in the West Bank in support of an illegal settlement policy.

Secondly, there is the release of hostages. All hostages held by Hamas and other terrorist groups must be released immediately and unconditionally. Their unbearable ordeal must come to an end so that they can be reunited with their families. The deplorable staging we have seen during previous releases should not be repeated. May the release of Edan Alexander be the beginning of the end of the ordeal for all the other hostages.

Thirdly, the blocking of all humanitarian aid for more than two months and its use as a means of exerting pressure in the ongoing war are violations of international humanitarian law. The civilians of Gaza are starving and thirsty. We call on Israel to immediately and unconditionally lift all impediments on the delivery of aid and the work of humanitarians.

Fourthly, we are opposed to the mechanism for distributing and managing humanitarian aid put forward by Israel. The envisaged modalities run counter to international law and would not meet the needs of the population. We reaffirm our support for the multilateral and humanitarian actors operating in Gaza, in particular the United Nations agencies and programmes, primary among them the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and the International Committee of the Red Cross, which have proved their effectiveness and reliability. Setting up field hospitals, delivering food aid, medical care, vaccinations, protection and assistance, education — that is their mandate, entrusted to them by international conventions and United Nations resolutions. It is their job, which they carry out with complete humanity, independence, neutrality and impartiality. It is Israel's responsibility to allow them to operate.

Fifthly, France condemns the planned extension of Israeli operations in Gaza and reiterates its firm opposition to any plan to occupy territory in Gaza and displace the population. Such actions would lead to an absolute impasse. Those serious violations of international law would not help to improve Israel's security in any way and would jeopardize the stability of the region. France remains strongly opposed to any form of annexation, be it in the West Bank or Gaza.

In that context, the urgency is twofold: the ceasefire must be re-established and the blocking of humanitarian aid lifted. The Arab reconstruction plan must be supported. We hope that the United States President's current trip to the region will allow for progress in that direction.

Lastly, the search for a political solution must be brought back to the forefront as a matter of urgency. Only a comprehensive political settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will allow Israelis and Palestinians to live side by side in peace and security. It is with that goal in mind that Saudi Arabia and France will co-chair the High-Level International Conference for the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution next month here in New York City. The intended goal is clear: to bring the international community together around concrete proposals to implement the two-State solution. That is how we will be able to guarantee Israel's security and regional integration, while meeting the Palestinians' legitimate aspiration to statehood. It also means disarming Hamas, defining a credible form of governance from which it will be excluded and reforming the Palestinian Authority. It is an arduous path that requires strong political will. France will continue to work in that regard and calls on the Security Council to live up to its responsibility.

Ms. Lassen (Denmark): Let me thank Under-Secretary-General Fletcher and Director Jácome for their sombre and extremely concerning briefings.

Denmark called for this urgent meeting together with France, Greece, Slovenia and the United Kingdom owing to the urgent humanitarian situation in Gaza. More than two months have passed since the start of the complete humanitarian blockade of Gaza by Israel. Trucks loaded with life-saving assistance, including food, water and medicine, are waiting at the border crossings. Food is rotting at the border, while the people of Gaza are starving. Medicine and hospital supplies are held up, while the sick and wounded suffer and die from preventable and treatable diseases. The situation is the worst it has been since the conflict started with Hamas' terror attack on 7 October 2023. Yesterday the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) released its report on the food situation in Gaza. It shows a significant deterioration as compared to the most recent analysis in October 2024. And as we heard, the entirety of Gaza is classified as IPC 4 — emergency — and there is a high risk that famine will occur. That is deeply alarming, and we all have a responsibility to act.

The catastrophic and deteriorating situation is coupled with Israel's announcement that it will expand its military operations in Gaza. We strongly oppose those plans, which risk having immense consequences in an already desperate humanitarian situation and displacing the majority of the civilian population. That does nothing to serve the long-term interests of peace and security in the region. At the same time, the Israeli Government has announced plans to establish a new mechanism for aid delivery to Gaza under the control of Israel, including Israeli military forces, and private contractors. The United Nations has decided not to participate in that modality, citing that it contradicts Israel's obligations under international humanitarian law and disregards the International Court of Justice's provisional orders requiring unhindered provision of humanitarian assistance at scale to all civilians in need. Denmark supports the position of the United Nations. Denmark will only support an aid mechanism that adheres to humanitarian principles and is in line with international law. Humanitarian aid must never be politicized or used as a political bargaining chip or as part of a military strategy. Such militarization is not only contrary to humanitarian principles and international humanitarian law — it sets a dangerous precedent for the future of humanitarian work in war zones around the world.

As we heard from the Under-Secretary-General, the United Nations and its humanitarian partners already have an established aid system in place, ready to deliver desperately needed humanitarian aid to the people of Gaza. The World Food Programme reports that it alone has enough food to feed 1 million people for up to four months. Those supplies are already positioned in aid corridors ready to be brought in. The people of Gaza do not need a new aid mechanism — they need humanitarian aid to flow freely.

We reiterate our strong condemnation of any attack on the United Nations and humanitarian workers. We recall that it is prohibited to attack civilians and civilian objects under international humanitarian law. Humanitarian personnel must be respected and protected. Full and transparent investigations into all such incidents are central to the efforts to avoid repetition, as well as imperative for assuring accountability.

I also wish to underline our strong condemnation of Hamas and continued alarm by the unspeakable suffering that the heinous terrorist attacks on 7 October 2023 have caused. The hostages held by Hamas have endured and continue to endure merciless treatment. That is completely unacceptable.

We welcome the release of the American-Israeli hostage who has finally been reunited with his loved ones after having been brutally held captive by Hamas. We reiterate our call for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages and for Hamas to allow humanitarian access to them.

In conclusion, in the face of continued suffering we call on all the parties to reach an immediate and lasting ceasefire to end the bloodshed and to save innocent lives.

Mr. Žbogar (Slovenia): I want to thank Director Jácome for her briefing. I also want to thank Under-Secretary-General Fletcher for his really powerful testimony. And I want to thank him for confronting us with our responsibility or, even more importantly, with our conscience.

As a country, Slovenia keeps asking itself if it is doing enough. Probably and obviously, we are not, but we keep trying, and we will continue to try.

For 19 months, the messages of the humanitarian community have echoed throughout this Chamber — warnings, asks, pleas and principles repeated time and again. Today the consequences of ignoring those pleas are starkly visible. More than 15,000 children have died — each a tragic reminder of our collective failure. We fear

that the war and the absence of our decisive reaction to it could change the way wars are being fought in future. Therefore, we want to clearly say: wars have rules, and Gaza is no exception.

Our calls today are simple.

First, the blockade must be lifted, and the starvation must be stopped. Two months into the absolute denial of humanitarian aid to the territory, stocks inside Gaza that keep the people alive are depleted. Stocks outside are waiting and going bad. Yesterday the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification partnership delivered an alarm with a sobering message: 2 million people are heading into famine; half a million are already starving right now as we speak. A rock bottom of humanity and dignity has been reached. Blocking aid kills. Starvation as a method of warfare is strictly prohibited under international humanitarian law and is codified as a war crime. Failing to agree on an immediate and sustained cessation of hostilities and immediate resumption of humanitarian aid will be measured in lives lost, systems collapsed and a people pushed beyond the brink.

Secondly, humanitarian principles must be respected. Humanitarian action, including aid delivery, must be based on the established principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. Those principles ensure effective and ethical delivery of aid in any conflict zone. They prevent humanitarian aid from being used as an instrument of war. We reject any model that does not meet the minimum bar for principled humanitarian support, including the one recently outlined by Israel. I want to state Slovenia's clear support for the aid distribution system established and carried out by the United Nations and its humanitarian partners and in conformity with international humanitarian law. The long-established network of United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the World Food Programme and others, must remain the backbone of the response.

Thirdly, lives that save lives must be spared. We are appalled by the recent attacks on humanitarian workers, whose sole mission is to deliver life-saving assistance. That encompasses the attack on an aid ship outside the territorial waters of Malta. The United Nations, including UNRWA, and all humanitarian workers must be allowed to carry out their work in a safe and secure manner. That is simply paramount for every humanitarian action, including the polio vaccination campaign which has been postponed despite crucial need. The number of incidents leading to the deaths and serious injuries of humanitarian workers is unacceptable. We call for their protection and for accountability for all past incidents. As Assistant Secretary-General Msuya in front of this very audience rightly said recently, there is no lack of legal protection for humanitarian workers, but there is a lack of political will (see S/PV.9889).

Slovenia is convinced that further military escalation in Gaza would only exacerbate an already catastrophic situation for the civilian Palestinian population and threaten the lives of the hostages who remain in captivity. The notion of humanity in Gaza is being crushed before our eyes. Our final plea is the one we have been repeating consistently — it is the beginning to an end to the suffering of the people in Gaza, including those taken hostage. It is never too late to change course, to end this stain on our humanity and dignity. The war must end.

Mr. Koudri (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, we would like to express our deepest thanks to Mr. Tom Fletcher and Ms. Angélica Jácome for their comprehensive briefings which painted a clear picture of an unbearable situation that we can no longer ignore.

After nearly 19 months of brutal aggression against a defenceless people and after more than 70 days of a suffocating blockade on Gaza, we are not facing a mere passing crisis, but a humanitarian tragedy that is as large as the moral shame that will continue to haunt all those who participated or were complicit in it and even those who have remained silent as it unfolded.

Today the only thing that is allowed to enter Gaza is death. Bombs and gunfire pass freely into the Gaza Strip, while milk for infants is denied entry. Water and medicine are denied, and border crossings are closed in the face of life. Children are left to fend for themselves and face the spectre of starvation and the inferno of the blockade. The residents of Gaza are deprived of everything except death and fear and watching their homes collapse and their emaciated bodies wither. And we see that the international community has lost its humanity and revealed its hideous face. The world has grown accustomed to the catastrophe unfolding before our eyes without even batting an eyelid, as if the images of mothers and fathers collecting the remains of their sons and daughters torn apart by the missiles and bombs of the Israeli occupier were meaningless.

We stand today before the resounding collapse of the system of values which until recently we imagined united us. We are at a crossroads between morality and special interests. And, unfortunately, the Palestinian people are being treated as disposable beings without a right to life, hope or dignity. How could it be otherwise since the occupier has described the residents of Gaza as human animals and is treating them as such? I would even contend that animals are granted more mercy and rights than the defenceless Palestinian people who are besieged in their homeland.

We are witnessing — in real time and before the eyes of the world — the systemic crime of starvation, perpetrated by the Israeli occupier against more than 2 million Palestinians. That crime is clearly taking place on a large scale, and the perpetrator is known to and condemned by all. All humanitarian organizations and all those who continue to have a conscience in regard to that lawless situation have condemned that crime and have called for it to end immediately and for those responsible to be held to account.

The Director General of the World Health Organization said,

“[w]e do not need to wait for a declaration of famine in Gaza to know that people are already starving ... while food and medicines are minutes away across the border”.

However, we have unfortunately been witnesses to indifference — complicity even — as if we have grown accustomed to the suffering of the Palestinian people.

Families are being bombed. Children are being burned alive. People are not only starving, but they are dying slowly and painfully, as the world witnesses the unfolding tragedy. The wave of death does not discriminate between young and old people. They are all suffering from starvation, disease and desperation. Over the course of one week, 14 older persons in Gaza starved to death. Since 2 March 2025, 57 children have died because of malnutrition. Despite those elevated figures, that is merely the beginning, because of a severe shortage of food and the collapse of the health system and humanitarian operations. Humanitarian organizations have warned that more than 93 per cent of the children of Gaza — 930,000 children — are at risk of starvation.

While the residents of Gaza are witnessing and suffering from that catastrophe, there are more than 3,000 trucks and 116,000 metric tons of food ready to enter Gaza to be distributed to the starving, awaiting permission to enter. The only thing blocking its entry is the occupying Power, Israel, in a blatant violation of international law and in direct contravention of the binding orders of the International Court of Justice.

The occupying Power has first restricted the humanitarian space for humanitarian organizations, especially the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East — the backbone of humanitarian action in Gaza. It has been promoting a so-called humanitarian plan that would provide meagre relief to the residents of Gaza, while its instruments of blockade and killing are taking their lives. Humanitarian organizations and the United Nations have rejected that plan, because it does not meet the urgent and basic needs of the more than 2 million people and completely fails to respect the humanitarian principles of neutrality, independence and dignity.

The catastrophe is human in origin. It is the result of the inaction that has paralyzed multilateralism. There is food. There is the ability to treat the sick. What we are lacking is the will and the capacity to enforce the law. We are not short of supplies; we are short of humanity. Families in Gaza are forced to eat animal feed and to boil leaves — whatever leaves are left — in order to survive. It is not a crisis of resources; it is a crisis of conscience.

It is high time for the Council — which is responsible for maintaining international peace and security — to listen to the cries of Gaza, muffled under the rubble, and to listen to the call of humanity. It is no longer possible for the world to stand idly by as the people of Gaza are being silently killed and as the Palestinian people are besieged and denied the basic right to life. We call for a lasting and comprehensive cessation of the unjust aggression, for lifting the blockade against the people in Gaza, for the opening of crossings to allow the delivery of humanitarian aid and for the end to all forms of enforced displacement.

The Palestinian people want a nation. They want a country, dignity and peace without conditions — not a partial peace but a fair and permanent peace. They want an independent State on a land called Palestine, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

Mr. Alfaro de Alba (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important briefing. Panama also thanks Mr. Tom Fletcher, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, and Ms. Angélica Jácome, Director of the Office in New York of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) — a Panamanian compatriot to whom we extend a special greeting — for their moving briefings. Panama admires the tireless work of the agencies of the United Nations system in the midst of one of the most harrowing humanitarian crises of our time.

Panama reiterates its call for an immediate and sustained ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, which would put an end to human suffering, facilitate safe access for humanitarian aid and the unconditional release of hostages. Those measures are urgent, indispensable and feasible, as demonstrated by the days in which the temporary truce allowed for concrete progress.

We cannot ignore the fact that much of the suffering currently being experienced by the Palestinian population in Gaza has its origin in the extremist decisions and actions taken by Hamas that triggered and that have prolonged that tragic conflict — including the taking of hostages — acts which Panama condemned from the outset and which, owing to their premeditation and human cruelty, as demonstrated in that fateful October, have unleashed devastating consequences.

The recent release of citizen Edan Alexander — following talks brokered by key actors and supported by the International Committee of the Red Cross — represents a small but significant breakthrough in the midst of a larger tragedy that continues to unfold. However, 58 people are still being held in Gaza, at least 20 of whom are estimated to be alive. We reiterate our demand that all those still held in Gaza be released immediately, safely and unconditionally.

We express our solidarity with their families, who live in pain and uncertainty. No cause justifies the deprivation of liberty or the deliberate suffering of innocent people. The reasons for our appeal are obvious.

The latest information from humanitarian agencies is stark. Nearly 2 million people in Gaza are living in conditions of severe food insecurity, and close to half a million — most of them children and women — are at imminent risk of starvation if sustained access to vital humanitarian aid is not allowed. In addition, the World Food Programme warns that stocks of life-saving supplies are depleted, owing to the prolonged closure of border crossings. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs estimates that more than 1.9 million people have been displaced. The minimum conditions for life are disappearing, with devastating consequences, especially for the most vulnerable: children, women and the elderly.

Panama takes note of the urgent appeal of FAO, which warned that agriculture in Gaza is on the verge of total collapse. Immediate, sustained and large-scale access to humanitarian aid is essential not only to prevent further deaths from starvation, but also to safeguard public health, prevent epidemic outbreaks and protect the human right to food.

In the face of this dire situation, we urgently call for urgent action to be taken to avert an even greater catastrophe.

The Council analyses figures, reports and evaluations with the regularity mandated by its role. We cannot lose sight of the fact that behind every statistic are lives broken by hunger, displacement, extremism and the prolongation of a conflict without clear political solutions. And behind every effort to sustain those lives are those who, with deep humanitarian commitment, take extreme risks to assist them. Hundreds of humanitarian workers have lost their lives since the beginning of the conflict while carrying out their duty to assist the civilian population. Panama recognizes the dedication and courage of those who, in the name of humankind, continue to provide medical care, distribute food and give moral support to displaced people amid the chaos of war. Protecting them is not only a moral duty; it is the legal responsibility of all parties, at all times.

Similarly, any humanitarian response must be properly implemented and governed by the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. No circumstance should prevent aid from effectively reaching those in need or compromise the integrity of humanitarian work. Panama underscores that facilities operating under the United Nations flag must be respected without exception, and it recalls that attacks on those facilities constitute a serious violation of the international norms governing armed conflict. Panama also warns of the risks associated with the misuse of those facilities for purposes unrelated to their humanitarian mandate, which endangers civilians and compromises the neutrality of the humanitarian space.

In times like these, preserving trust in humanitarian institutions and guaranteeing their work is essential to saving lives. That laudable aim should be the main and highest priority, for, in the face of destruction and despair, humanitarian engagement represents not only relief, but a concrete affirmation that the international community has not abdicated its moral duty or its humanity.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett (Guyana): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's briefing. I also express my gratitude to Under-Secretary-General Fletcher for his pellucid and indeed profound presentation, as well as to Director Jácome for the invaluable information provided.

The catastrophic situation in Gaza continues to be compounded by several worrisome developments, of which I highlight the following.

First, the latest Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) report underlines the critical risk of famine, which confronts the population in the Gaza Strip. The factors directly elevating that risk were identified as the protracted and large-scale military operation and the continuation of the humanitarian and commercial blockade. Those are both human-made factors, subject to the decision and control of the occupying Power. Guyana also took note that the findings reflected in the IPC report mark a significant deterioration from previous IPC analyses. The state of food security continues to decline rapidly in Gaza, with the North Gaza and Rafah governorates projected to reach emergency levels of acute malnutrition between now and September. The Security Council cannot allow hundreds of thousands of civilians, including babies, to simply starve and waste away while food, medicine and other items essential to their survival sit in trucks, rotting and expiring. That misery is compounded as one third of United Nations-supported community kitchens recently shut down, owing to the depletion of food supplies and limited access to fuel. Guyana calls on Israel to comply with its obligation under international humanitarian law not to deprive the civilian population of the items indispensable to its survival. We further stress that the use of starvation as a weapon of warfare is a war crime. Guyana also stresses that aid must not be weaponized.

Secondly, Guyana remains deeply concerned about the shrinking and extremely dangerous space in which aid workers and other humanitarian personnel are forced to operate in the Gaza Strip. With the lack of fully functioning coordination and deconfliction mechanisms, aid workers and other humanitarian personnel are forced to operate at great personal risk. Aid workers and other humanitarian personnel are guaranteed special protections under international law, and parties to a conflict are obligated to ensure their safety. We therefore condemn all direct attacks on aid workers and humanitarian personnel and call for full accountability for the lives lost and the injuries suffered on account of such attacks. We also call on all parties, including the occupying Power, to strictly abide by their legal obligations regarding the protection of aid workers and humanitarian personnel.

In that context, Guyana took note of the modality proposed by Israel for the distribution of aid in Gaza. The proposal entails replacing the existing aid distribution system run by the United Nations and its humanitarian partners and delivering supplies through Israeli hubs under conditions set by the Israeli military. We took note of the response of the humanitarian country team for the occupied Palestinian territory to that proposal, particularly their observation that

“it contravenes fundamental humanitarian principles and appears designed to reinforce control over life-sustaining items as a pressure tactic — as part of a military strategy. It is dangerous, driving civilians into militarized zones to collect rations, threatening lives, including those of humanitarian workers, while further entrenching forced displacement”.

We also noted that both the Secretary-General and Under-Secretary-General Fletcher emphasized that the proposed modality fails to meet the minimum standards for principled humanitarian action and that the United Nations will not participate in any arrangement that does not fully respect humanitarian principles. Guyana stresses that the international community must not allow established international legal norms and standards governing humanitarian assistance to civilians in conflict situations to be upended by proposals that do not satisfy humanitarian principles and that will further violate the dignity of civilians.

The third issue that I wish to highlight concerns the continuing forcible displacement of civilians in Gaza. We are deeply concerned by the reported approval on 5 May by the Israeli security Cabinet of a plan to expand military operations in the Gaza Strip and to concomitantly move most of the population to the southern part of the Strip, where the Israeli military would retain a presence. According to

the Israeli army spokesperson, the Rafah model will be replicated in other parts of the Strip. The observations of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in response to Israel's announcement are instructive. The High Commissioner noted that Israel's reported plans "further aggravate concerns that Israel's actions are aimed at inflicting on Palestinians conditions of life increasingly incompatible with their continued existence in Gaza as a group." On that note, Guyana recalls the pronouncement of the International Court of Justice on the displacement of the Palestinian people by Israel and calls on Israel to adhere to its obligations.

Allow me to also reiterate Guyana's deep concern about the situation in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, where the Israeli military operation in the northern West Bank is still ongoing. The demolitions of Palestinian property, the forced closure of schools of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the harassment of UNRWA teachers, the expansion of settlements and other illegalities are serious violations of the rights of the Palestinian people, which must not remain unaddressed.

I conclude with the following appeals. We need to immediately return to a ceasefire in Gaza as the first crucial step to saving civilian lives. There must be an immediate and unconditional lifting of the aid blockade on Gaza that has been imposed since 2 March. Palestinians cannot simply be condemned to a fate of starvation, malnutrition and disease in the interest of advancing military objectives. All remaining hostages must be released and all Palestinians detained in Israeli prisons without charge must also be freed. The recent release of Israeli-American hostage Edan Alexander is a welcome move. Guyana stresses that the taking of hostages is a war crime and a release should not be transactional. Guyana reiterates its appeal for the protection of aid workers and humanitarian and United Nations personnel, including staffers from agencies such as UNRWA. Guyana calls on Israel to halt its military operations in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and to halt all activities that are causing great suffering and hardship to the civilian population.

Lastly, Guyana appeals for real peace to be given a chance in the Middle East. That peace is premised on a resolution of the Palestinian conflict in line with the two-State solution, on the basis of the pre-1967 borders. Anything short of that will only perpetuate the cycle of violence and pain at the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Our sincere hope is that all Member States will use the upcoming June conference to achieve concrete outcomes for resolving the Palestinian question.

Mr. Ahmad (Pakistan): We would like to begin by paying tribute to the extraordinary courage of United Nations personnel and humanitarian workers, who are operating under harrowing conditions in Gaza. Let me thank Ms. Jácome for her briefing. We also thank Under-Secretary-General Tom Fletcher for his sobering and deeply troubling briefing. We must commend Mr. Fletcher for his statement, because it could not have been put in clearer terms. It is not just sobering, it is an indictment of the occupying Power, its continuing illegal policies and actions, its war crimes and crimes against humanity, the genocide in progress, all taking place with complete impunity, and persistent and blatant violations of international law. Mr. Fletcher rightly said that it must be a moment of reflection for the Council, for all of us — whether we will continue to watch all of this happen before our eyes or act urgently and decisively to stop this atrocity.

As we convene once again, the suffering of Gaza's people continues unabated. The humanitarian tragedy has reached catastrophic proportions. What we are witnessing is not incidental. It is the systematic destruction of the civilian population, the deliberate use of starvation, a relentless siege and the targeted, methodical dismantling of humanitarian architecture. That is something that Israel, the occupying Power, is doing deliberately and unashamedly, as Mr. Fletcher put it.

After more than 10 weeks of total blockade, indiscriminate bombardment from the air, land and sea and an escalation of ground operations, Gaza lies in ruins. More than 2 million people, half of them children, are enduring the unendurable. Aid is blocked. Hospitals have collapsed. Families are trapped amid rubble and despair. Famine is no longer looming, it is present. One in every three children under two years of age is acutely malnourished.

The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification snapshot, released yesterday by the World Food Programme (WFP), presents a grim reality. In Gaza, 470,000 people are facing catastrophic hunger, and the entire population is experiencing acute food insecurity. On 25 April, the WFP exhausted its last foodstocks for supporting kitchens that serve hot meals to families. All 25 WFP-supported bakeries have been shut down, as wheat flour and cooking fuel have run out. More than 71,000 children and 17,000 mothers urgently require treatment for acute malnutrition, and 60,000 children need immediate medical care.

Attacks on hospitals, aid convoys, humanitarian workers and United Nations staff, including the killing of 290 personnel of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), are not isolated violations. They form a pattern of targeted attacks, which has dangerously eroded the protection afforded under international humanitarian law.

The Geneva Conventions and Security Council resolutions, which are binding, are clear. Resolutions 2175 (2014), 2286 (2016) and 2730 (2024) and articles 18, 23, 33 and 59 of the Fourth Geneva Convention explicitly prohibit the starvation of civilians, attacks on medical facilities, the obstruction of humanitarian aid and collective punishment. Yet we are witnessing the inverse — the politicization and militarization of aid, the weaponization of starvation and the systematic destruction of humanitarian lifelines.

The so-called militarized aid coordination mechanism, which would reduce humanitarian access points from 400 to a mere five tightly controlled hubs near military installations, undermines and violates the core humanitarian principles of neutrality and impartiality. It risks transforming humanitarian aid into an instrument of coercion and forced displacement. That must be unequivocally rejected. It is totally unacceptable. The humanitarian country team in the occupied Palestinian territory, which brings together approximately 15 United Nations entities and more than 200 non-governmental organizations, has categorically denounced plans by Israeli officials to dismantle the existing aid distribution system, affirming that they contravene fundamental humanitarian principles and appear designed to reinforce control over life-sustaining items as a pressure tactic as part of a military strategy.

I would like to emphasize four urgent imperatives.

First, there must be a permanent and unconditional ceasefire. Resolution 2735 (2024) must be implemented in full, across the occupied Palestinian territory, including the West Bank. A ceasefire is not just a precondition for aid — it is a precondition for life.

Secondly, the blockade imposed since 2 March must be lifted. Humanitarian access is not a favour — it is a legal obligation. Aid convoys and medical teams must be protected and allowed to operate freely and safely. The normalization of starvation as a weapon of war is a crime. Collective punishment must end, and there must be accountability. The Gaza reconstruction plan must be fully and actively supported, and no forced displacement of Gazans must be tolerated.

Thirdly, UNRWA must be allowed to operate without obstruction. Its forced exclusion violates both the neutrality of humanitarian assistance and the provisions of international humanitarian law and multiple United Nations resolutions.

Fourthly, the Council must address the root cause: the prolonged occupation of Palestinian territory. The humanitarian crisis is a symptom of systematic political injustice. The only viable path to peace lies in a just resolution of the Palestinian question based on the two-State solution, along the pre-1967 borders, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as the capital of a sovereign and independent Palestinian State. In that regard, Pakistan supports the upcoming High-Level International Conference for the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution, to be co-chaired in June by France and Saudi Arabia. The Conference must yield a credible, time-bound road map for Palestinian statehood, the protection of holy sites and the reversal of illegal settlement activity.

The people of Gaza have endured unimaginable suffering. They deserve to live in peace and dignity and to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination. The Council must rise to its responsibility to uphold its own resolutions, end the occupation and act with urgency to bring long-awaited justice to the people of Palestine. The entire world is watching. The Palestinian people are watching. The children and babies deprived of food and safety might be wondering what is happening around them and who was supposed to come to their rescue. We, the Council members, and those most responsible, are being judged and will be judged by future generations. Let us come together to act, united, in the interest of peace and for the sake of humankind.

Ms. Shea (United States of America): I thank Under-Secretary Fletcher and Director Jácome for their briefings.

The United States is committed to bringing hostages home. We welcome the fact that New Jersey resident Edan Alexander is finally returning home as a result of President Trump's efforts and Israel's military pressure on Hamas. Hamas continues to prolong this horrific conflict by refusing to lay down its arms or release the remaining hostages. Hamas bears sole responsibility for the war it unleashed on 7 October 2023 and for the recent resumption of hostilities. The terrorist group has rejected numerous proposals put forward by the United States, Qatar and Egypt that would release the remaining 58 hostages — who have now been cruelly held for 584 days — and bring calm to Gaza. Had Hamas agreed to the proposals put forward and accepted by Israel, there could have been a new ceasefire weeks ago. The conflict could end tomorrow if Hamas released the hostages, laid down its arms and left Gaza forever. Its reckless decisions have caused enough bloodshed. Hamas must now return all living and deceased hostages without further delay, including the bodies of Americans Itay Chen, Gadi Haggai, Judi Weinstein Haggai and Omer Neutra. They will not be left behind. They will not be forgotten.

Every day, Hamas demonstrates its lack of regard for the Palestinians it purports to represent in Gaza. Its use of civilians as human shields is deplorable as a violation of international humanitarian law. The Security Council must apply pressure on Hamas to free Palestinians from Hamas' tyranny. Shielding Hamas from accountability undermines Israel's security and does nothing to improve the lives of Palestinians. The United States supports Israel and its right to defend itself from groups that have attacked it. We recognize the steps that Israel has taken to avoid inadvertent civilian casualties when targeting terrorists, and we stand unequivocally for the protection of civilian lives during armed conflict. No one wants to see Palestinian civilians in Gaza go hungry and thirsty.

The United States supports getting assistance to non-combatants in Gaza in a way that does not allow Hamas to benefit. For weeks, members of the Council have been calling for a resumption of the flow of humanitarian aid to Gaza. There is now a means through which that can be done. The Gaza Humanitarian Foundation is an independent entity that has been established to provide a secure mechanism capable of delivering aid directly to those in need without Hamas stealing, looting

or leveraging the assistance for its own ends. Safeguards are in place to ensure that Palestinian civilians in Gaza will have access to aid, preventing diversion by Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and criminal organizations and ensuring that Israel can remain secure.

In March, the Council heard the powerful testimony of freed hostage Mr. Eli Sharabi (see S/PV.9882), who shared that he personally witnessed his Hamas captors carry dozens and dozens of boxes of aid marked with United Nations and United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East emblems into the tunnel where he was being held hostage. That is unacceptable behaviour, and it began before 7 October 2023. It is time we try a real solution that will ensure that assistance goes to the civilians it was meant for — not Hamas. The Gaza Humanitarian Foundation's plan provides a means for doing so. The United States has sent senior members of the Administration to Israel to work on modalities. While some humanitarian organizations may ultimately choose not to engage in those conversations, others have chosen a more constructive path, and they will be able to deliver aid in an appropriate way, hopefully very soon. We appreciate their willingness to discuss their questions and concerns and to work through any challenges.

We call on the United Nations, humanitarian organizations and the international community to work with the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation in providing assistance to civilians. The Gaza Humanitarian Foundation has expressed a commitment to delivering aid consistent with the humanitarian principles of impartiality, neutrality, independence and humanity. Indeed, the Foundation has stated that those values are not abstract. They shape every decision we make and every action we take. Like all aid organizations, the Foundation is allowed to ensure its own security so that commodities reach civilians in need. Over the course of this war, we have seen deeply disappointing and disturbing instances of humanitarian and international organizations compromised by Hamas terrorists. There is no high road in opposing this plan, which will allow the safe and secure delivery of large amounts of aid directly to those who need it, while preventing diversion by terrorists and criminals. We therefore urge the United Nations to continue the discussions to which Under-Secretary-General Fletcher referred to explore a way forward to help those in desperate need of humanitarian assistance. Anyone serious about restoring the flow of aid should support that important effort.

The region ultimately has a choice. It can continue to allow Iran and its proxies, such as Hamas, to dictate the region's future or it can instead choose a path forward towards a more prosperous future for all its people.

We can start by meeting the immediate humanitarian needs of those who have suffered during the conflict by supporting a new way of delivering aid.

Mr. Osman (Somalia): Somalia welcomes the convening of this urgent meeting on the humanitarian situation and the protection of aid workers in Gaza. We thank Under-Secretary-General Mr. Tom Fletcher and Ms. Angélica Jácome, Director of the Food and Agriculture Organization Liaison Office with the United Nations in New York, for their sobering briefings.

My delegation is gravely alarmed by the worsening humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza. The continued Israeli military campaign, in blatant disregard of international law and the Council's repeated calls, has inflicted unimaginable suffering on civilians. The siege of Gaza, particularly in its northern areas, has brought the population to the brink of famine and starvation. Starvation is now being used as a method of warfare. Children, women and the elderly are being deprived of life-saving food, water and medicine.

Somalia strongly rejects the proposal reportedly put forward by Israel to impose a unilateral mechanism for the distribution of aid in Gaza. Such an approach contravenes the principles of humanitarian neutrality and impartiality, undermines the role of the

United Nations and its agencies and violates the binding provisional measures issued by the International Court of Justice. Humanitarian assistance must never be politicized.

We are deeply disturbed by the scale of attacks on humanitarian personnel. According to Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, at least 273 aid workers have been killed since the start of hostilities, the highest number ever recorded in any conflict. That includes doctors, nurses, first responders and United Nations staff. The targeting of humanitarian workers and medical facilities constitutes a grave breach of international humanitarian law and those responsible must be held fully accountable.

Somalia calls for the immediate, safe and unhindered entry of humanitarian aid through all crossings, including Rafah and Kerem Shalom. Israel, as the occupying Power, must meet its obligations under international law and facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance to all areas of Gaza.

We are also deeply concerned about the escalation of punitive measures targeting the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), and we condemn the suspension of the funding and obstruction of its operations. Those actions represent an assault on the rights of Palestinian refugees and violate the mandate given to UNRWA by the General Assembly. My delegation reaffirms its unwavering support for the Agency's indispensable work. Any attempt to forcibly displace Palestinians from Gaza or elsewhere in the occupied Palestinian territory must be categorically rejected.

The right of return and compensation for Palestinian refugees remains non-negotiable and must be upheld in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions.

My delegation condemns ongoing Israeli efforts to expand illegal settlements, expropriate land and alter the demographic composition of the occupied Palestinian territory. The escalation of military incursions and settler violence, with the help of the Israel Defense Forces, represents a blatant violation of international law and is further destabilizing the region. We underscore the need to respect the historic and legal status quo of Jerusalem and reaffirm the custodial role of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in safeguarding religious sites in the city.

The Security Council must shoulder its responsibility to maintain international peace and security. We call for an immediate and comprehensive ceasefire, an end to the blockade, the safe release of all detainees and the restoration of full humanitarian access to all parts of Gaza.

Somalia supports the convening of the upcoming High-Level International Conference for the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution in June, co-sponsored by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and France, as a critical step towards reviving a meaningful political process. We urge all parties to support that initiative and ensure that it leads to tangible progress towards a just and lasting solution — one that secures the full realization of the rights of the Palestinian people and the establishment of an independent and sovereign State of Palestine, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, in line with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

Mr. Hwang (Republic of Korea): I thank Under-Secretary-General Tom Fletcher and Director Jácome, Director of the Food and Agriculture Organization Liaison Office with the United Nations in New York, for their sobering briefings. I also thank Denmark, France, Greece, Slovenia and the United Kingdom for calling for this urgent meeting amid the heightened concern about the catastrophic situation in Gaza.

We are deeply alarmed by the unfathomable suffering and hunger that civilians in Gaza are enduring. Since March, not a single truck or grain of flour has entered Gaza.

Every day, we witness harrowing photos of children emaciated to their bones. It stains our common moral conscience to witness such images in 2025.

The United Nations, as well as the members of the Security Council, including the Republic of Korea, have clearly reiterated that Israel has the obligation, as the occupying Power, to ensure the requisite provision of food and medical supplies to the Palestinian population in Gaza, as detailed in article 55 of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

We also would like to stress the escalating outcries of humanitarian agencies, including the United Nations, describing the apocalyptic situation in Gaza. Just yesterday, as today's briefers mentioned, the United Nations-backed Integrated Food Security Phase Classification report pointed out that the entire population in Gaza is facing high levels of acute food insecurity, with half a million people facing starvation.

We are also concerned about the recent Israeli proposal for a new modality of Gaza aid distribution, according to which only 60 aid trucks per day will be allowed to enter Gaza; and weak and injured Palestinian civilians will be required to move long distances to militarized aid hubs to receive limited amounts of essential items.

When it began its military response to the horrible terrorist attacks by Hamas on 7 October 2023, Israel claimed it was fighting against Hamas, not against civilians. However, the undeniable fact is that women and children account for well over half of the more than 50,000 fatalities. Thus, we once again urge Israel to protect civilians and humanitarian aid workers and to immediately lift its harsh blockade, allowing the unimpeded flow of aid throughout Gaza.

And we take this opportunity to express our support for the tireless and selfless efforts of key humanitarian agencies, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, working on the ground in the most unforgiving conditions.

Meanwhile, we reiterate our demand for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages held by Hamas. In that regard, we highly commend the United States efforts to secure the negotiated release of additional hostages. We wholeheartedly welcome the release of Israeli-American Edan Alexander, which was achieved through tireless negotiations rather than renewed hostilities. As the United States President announced, we hope that can be the first necessary step to finally bring the brutal conflict in Gaza to an end.

Unfortunately, our concern does not stop at the border of Gaza. The unrelenting instability and violence in the West Bank, along with ongoing settlement expansion, represent another source of fear in the region. The hostilities in the wider region, including in Lebanon, Syria and Yemen, have not ceased either. The compounding humanitarian situations in those areas are pushing communities to the brink.

However, we are also encountering some glimmers of hope for enhanced regional dialogue and peace. The timely agreement between the United States and the Houthis to stop mutual hostilities, as well as the indirect talks between Israel and Syria, and ongoing United States negotiations with Iran in Oman, are all demonstrating that even in this period of heated violence, dialogue is indeed possible and desperately needed to build long overdue peace. We therefore encourage all parties in the region to stay committed to diplomacy, not only for a renewed Gaza ceasefire, but also for a better future for the region.

The vast majority of the international community remains strongly committed to the two-State solution. Taking into account the upcoming June High-Level International Conference for the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution, to be co-chaired by France and Saudi Arabia, the Republic of Korea sincerely hopes that a peace process to realize the two-State solution can soon be reinvigorated.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Tom Fletcher, and the Director of the Office in New York of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Ms. Angélica Jácome, for their sincere and tragic briefings on the ever-worsening situation in the Gaza Strip.

Today we are compelled yet again to speak about a situation that can only be described as a humanitarian catastrophe. For 10 weeks running, Gaza has been under a severe blockade, which was resumed by the Israeli authorities. Millions of residents of the Strip are deprived of vital food supplies, water and medical care, and famine is rapidly spreading, as was mentioned today, according to the relevant statistics published yesterday.

Every day, we receive alarming reports that essential supplies in the Strip are on the point of running out, medical facilities and humanitarian centres are no longer operational and the remaining bakeries are closing their doors. At the same time, dozens of humanitarian trucks, carrying tons of food, medicines and fuel, are idling at the border, as the Israeli authorities have denied them access to Gaza.

We all must be clear about the fact that each minute of delay and each day of the blockade mean new lives lost. They mean that children continue to suffer and die from malnutrition, and families have to survive in the open, amid the rubble. They also mean that doctors and aid workers are struggling to save lives while lacking the critical resources to do their work.

Instead of showing political will and opening border crossings, West Jerusalem has announced the introduction of a new aid distribution mechanism that, as we know, was not supported by either the United Nations Secretariat or its humanitarian partners working directly in the field. By advancing that initiative, the Israeli leadership is essentially forcing United Nations agencies to become complicit in Israel's military operation, thereby jeopardizing the neutrality and impartiality of United Nations humanitarian activities. In those circumstances, it is highly unlikely that, even if the Israeli plans are implemented, it will be possible to provide effective assistance to the 2 million Palestinians who have been held hostage to such political and military decisions.

Every day, humanitarian workers in Gaza and the West Bank are risking their lives to carry out their mission. Those brave people are constantly facing threats, attacks and systematic obstacles to their work. The number of casualties among humanitarians is steadily growing. Since October 2023, 418 staff members have been killed, of whom 295 were United Nations staff and 290 were personnel of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). Those figures once again demonstrate the ineffectiveness of the deconfliction mechanism implemented by the Secretariat, which, unfortunately, fails to save the lives of humanitarian workers. In that regard, we must recall the incident involving the humanitarian convoy of the Palestine Red Crescent Society. On 23 March, its members were shot in cold blood by the Israel Defense Forces in the suburbs of Rafah. Among those killed were eight medics, five civil defence personnel and an UNRWA staff member. Israel has acknowledged its involvement and launched an investigation. However, we have not yet received any evidence that the ambulances were carrying members of Hamas, as Israeli representatives assert. That is an egregious situation that needs to be very thoroughly investigated.

The situation in which UNRWA and its staff have found themselves cannot be justified in any way. The Agency, which has provided vital assistance to the Palestinians for more than 75 years, is now being systematically squeezed out of the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. UNRWA medical and educational facilities are being shelled and destroyed, and its staff are being

systematically assaulted, interrogated and prosecuted. We are alarmed to hear of fresh acts of violence, including attacks on UNRWA schools and seizures of educational facilities and temporary shelters for displaced persons. In that context, we would like to recall that those incidents constitute grave violations of international humanitarian law and the principle of the inviolability of United Nations property and assets.

The current situation requires immediate and decisive action. Guaranteeing unimpeded and sustained access for humanitarian aid is not a panacea, but an absolutely essential precondition if the suffering of Gazan civilians is to be alleviated. First and foremost, it is a matter of basic humanity. We call on Israel to ensure the protection of humanitarian personnel and to lift the humanitarian blockade, which is a flagrant violation of articles 55, 56 and 59 of the Fourth Geneva Convention on adequate supplies for civilians in occupied territories.

As we have seen on many occasions, it is impossible to establish full humanitarian access and ensure the safety of humanitarian workers while hostilities are ongoing. In that regard, we would like to reiterate our call on the parties to establish an immediate and unconditional ceasefire and to resume the second phase of negotiations, which provides for the release of those forcibly detained and the withdrawal of Israeli units from Gaza.

We welcome the release by Hamas of an American-Israeli hostage, Edan Alexander. We hope that that goodwill gesture will help to swiftly reach agreements between Hamas and Israel, through the mediation of Egypt, Qatar and the United States. Such a scenario could become a prelude to relaunching the peace process, on the basis of two-States, with the ultimate goal of establishing an independent Palestinian State, within the 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side in peace and security with Israel. One important milestone on that path could be the High-level International Conference for the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution, which is to be held in June in New York, with Saudi Arabia and France as co-Chairs. We intend to actively participate in that Conference.

Mr. Kanu (Sierra Leone): I thank the United Kingdom, France, Denmark, Slovenia and Greece for requesting this timely meeting, which is also supported by Algeria and Guyana. I also thank Under-Secretary-General Tom Fletcher and Director Angélica Jácome for their very important and compelling, yet sobering, briefings.

Sierra Leone expresses its deep appreciation to all humanitarian personnel who continue to deliver life-saving assistance in the most trying and dangerous conditions in the Gaza Strip. We pay tribute to the humanitarian personnel who have made the ultimate sacrifice in the service of humankind.

Sierra Leone remains gravely concerned by the worsening humanitarian situation in Gaza. The Council's attention is once again drawn to the continuing humanitarian crisis in both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank and to the risks that humanitarian workers face daily in their efforts to provide services essential to civilian survival. According to the most recent reports, more than 62,000 Palestinians have been killed, the majority of whom are women and children. At least 1.7 million people have been forcibly displaced. Entire neighbourhoods have been reduced to rubble, critical infrastructure has been destroyed and nearly all hospitals have been rendered inoperable.

The risk of famine, particularly in northern Gaza, is imminent. As stated in the briefing — and it bears repeating — the most recent Integrated Food Security Phase Classification report estimates that approximately 2.1 million people — the entire Gaza Strip — face a critical risk of famine, with more than half a million confronting starvation, following 19 months of conflict, mass displacement, severe restrictions on humanitarian access and the collapse of the food system. The lack of food, medicine and clean water is contributing to the spread of disease and rising

mortality, especially in overcrowded and unsanitary camps for internally displaced persons. Children and the most vulnerable continue to be disproportionately affected, malnourished, traumatized and exposed. The postponement of the fourth round of polio vaccinations is deeply concerning and increases the risk of an outbreak. Beyond that, the continued blockade severely limits the delivery of medical supplies and care.

The scale of human loss, displacement and destruction is unprecedented. As the Secretary-General has stated, “Gaza is becoming a graveyard for children”, describing the situation as “a moral outrage and a humanitarian catastrophe” and warning that “we are facing a severe risk of collapse of the humanitarian system”. Those words, grounded in fact, must compel urgent and unified global action. As a Council and as an international community, we must not allow that immense suffering to become normalized. We must act with urgency, clarity and compassion. The cost of inaction or of selective engagement is measured not only in the rising death toll, but also in the erosion of global trust in the multilateral system.

The ongoing hostilities, coupled with the blockade on humanitarian and commercial goods and the widespread displacement of civilians, continue to obstruct humanitarian operations and deepen the suffering of the population. Sierra Leone affirms that the parties must strictly adhere to international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Under the Fourth Geneva Convention, the State of Israel, as the occupying Power, bears the primary responsibility for the safety and well-being of the civilian population under its effective control. That includes the obligation to facilitate humanitarian relief, safeguard civilian infrastructure and uphold the principle of non-discrimination in aid provision.

We stress that all humanitarian activities within the Gaza Strip and the West Bank must be conducted in accordance with the humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence, with the protection and welfare of civilians as the central focus. That includes the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, mandated by the General Assembly to assist Palestinian refugees pending a just and lasting political solution. Furthermore, we must note that the right to self-defence must not be interpreted in ways that nullify the core principles of international law, not least in the situation of occupation. As the Secretary-General reminded the Council,

“While [the State of] Israel has legitimate security concerns, the manner in which it is pursuing its military operations is causing massive civilian casualties and destruction.”

The principle of proportionality must be upheld. Civilians and civilian objects are not lawful targets. We also reiterate that non-State actors, including Hamas and other armed groups, have obligations under international humanitarian law. Attacks targeting civilians, the taking of hostages and the use of civilian areas for military operations are unlawful and must cease.

More generally, Sierra Leone is increasingly alarmed by the erosion of respect for international legal norms in the context of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory. The provision of military assistance without adequate regard for humanitarian law may amount to the facilitation of violations of international law. International law must therefore be applied consistently and impartially; otherwise, impunity will prevail. In that regard, Sierra Leone notes the provisional measures ordered by the International Court of Justice in the case *Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip (South Africa v. Israel)*. The Court ordered Israel to “take all measures within its power to prevent the commission of all acts” prohibited under article II of the Convention, including “deliberately inflicting” on the Palestinian people “conditions of life calculated to

bring about its physical destruction". The Court also ordered that Israel must "ensure with immediate effect that its military forces do not commit any of the above-described acts," and to "take effective measures to enable the provision of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance." Those are binding legal obligations. Sierra Leone urgently calls for full compliance with those measures and notes that continued obstruction of humanitarian access or the imposition of life-threatening conditions may give rise to international legal responsibility.

The humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza is inseparable from its broader political and historical context. The protracted occupation of Palestinian territory, now in its seventy-sixth year, combined with the absence of a credible political process and the continued denial of the Palestinian right to self-determination, lies at the root of the repeated cycles of violence, including the tragedy that occurred on, and has been unfolding since, 7 October 2023. Sierra Leone believes that, unless the root causes of occupation, settlement expansion and political exclusion are addressed, the prospects for durable peace will remain out of reach. Therefore, the persistent resort to measures amounting to collective punishment is contrary to international humanitarian law and a key driver of instability. Impunity and exclusion only perpetuate the cycle of violence. Sustainable peace must be anchored in law, justice and political will. We therefore join others in calling for an immediate and sustained ceasefire, unimpeded humanitarian access through all available channels, the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure and the release of all hostages.

Sustained diplomatic engagement is essential to consolidate any ceasefire and address outstanding political and humanitarian concerns. We welcome the release of one of the remaining 59 hostages and reiterate our demand for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages held since 7 October 2023. Sierra Leone reaffirms its unwavering support for a negotiated, just and lasting solution, based on the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, resulting in two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security within internationally recognized borders.

Mr. Fu Cong (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank the United Kingdom, France, Denmark, Slovenia and Greece for the initiative of convening today's meeting, and I thank Under-Secretary-General Fletcher and Ms. Jácome for their briefings.

Gaza has become a living hell. Israel's continuous bombing and raids are causing civilian casualties every day. On 7 May alone, more than 100 lives were lost. More than two months of blockade have depleted Gaza's survival supplies. Hunger and disease are spreading rapidly. According to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification report, the population of Gaza is afflicted by severe food shortages, with nearly half a million people in a state of catastrophic hunger. We call on the international community to pool all efforts and to take urgent action to bring an end to the humanitarian tragedy in Gaza. I will make three points.

First, it is imperative to resume humanitarian assistance. Israel, as the occupying Power, must fulfil its obligations under international humanitarian law by immediately lifting the blockade and restoring full access to supplies. Gaza has become the most dangerous place for humanitarian workers, with more than 400 humanitarian workers having been killed in the current conflict. We express our condolences at the loss of all the lives of humanitarian workers and call for a thorough investigation and full accountability. The dignity, safety and operational efficiency of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East should be respected and guaranteed. Recently, a certain country proposed a so-called humanitarian distribution plan. We note that the United Nations categorically rejected that so-called plan. Humanitarian assistance must not be weaponized, and the principles of impartiality, independence and neutrality must be upheld at all times.

Secondly, the realization of a durable ceasefire is a top priority. Military means will not solve the problem. Prolonging the fighting will lead only to further killings and deaths, rather than to conditions conducive to rescuing the hostages. China urges Israel to immediately cease its military attack on Gaza. We welcome the release of an American hostage yesterday. We hope that the United States, as a country with significant influence on the party concerned, will adopt a fair and responsible attitude and contribute to efforts to bring about a ceasefire in Gaza.

Thirdly, the implementation of the two-State solution is the only way forward. The international community should collectively reject any unilateral actions that erode the basis of the two-State solution and should step up efforts to provide support and guarantees for the political process of promoting that solution. As mandated by the General Assembly in resolution ES-10/24, a high-level conference on the two-State solution is to be held in June. It is hoped that that gathering will give fresh impetus to the building of a broad consensus within the international community and the taking of concrete action towards the implementation of the two-State solution.

China will continue to work with the international community and to make unremitting efforts towards ending the war in Gaza, alleviating the humanitarian disaster, realizing the two-State solution and ultimately achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Greece.

I also wish to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian affairs, Mr. Fletcher, and the Director of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations office in New York, Ms. Jácome, for their briefings today.

No humanitarian aid has reached the people of Gaza in more than two months. Their needs cannot wait, especially those of the most vulnerable groups, including children, at a time when the World Food Programme's food stocks are depleted and community kitchens continue to shut down. Children are also in need of routine vaccinations, at a time when the danger of waterborne diseases and infections still lurks. Water, sanitation and hygiene insecurity, partial or complete shutdowns of clinics, the extremely limited access to fuel and increasing incidents of robbery and looting paint a bleak picture.

While the hostilities have regrettably resumed and the negotiations are continuing, the issue of the distribution of aid needs to be properly addressed. We call for the safe, unconditional, massive and unhindered delivery of humanitarian aid at scale and the restoration of access to electricity and water. The next steps should be determined on the basis of dialogue and cooperation. The United Nations has repeatedly asserted its readiness to scale up the delivery of critical supplies and services, once the blockade is lifted. It is crucial, though, to ensure that any proposed scheme adheres to the core principles of international humanitarian law, namely, humanity, impartiality, independence and neutrality.

Furthermore, any plan should include all parts of Gaza, taking into account the needs of the less mobile and most vulnerable parts of its population. Its role should be complementary to, and support, existing humanitarian operations within the Strip. Last but not least, certain security standards should be applied so as to avoid any further instability and prevent Hamas from continuing to instrumentalize humanitarian aid at the expense of the civilian population. The protection of civilians and unimpeded access to humanitarian aid and services must remain non-negotiable, absolute principles at all times, as proclaimed by international law, specifically the Geneva Conventions. The same principles apply to humanitarian workers, whose safety and security is being jeopardized on a daily basis. Humanitarian operations continue to be subjected to severe movement restrictions, military activity and

attacks. Those actions not only disrupt aid operations, but they also endanger the lives of aid workers.

We join fellow Member States in welcoming the release of Edan Alexander yesterday. All hostages must be treated humanely and released immediately and unconditionally. Members of the Security Council have been consistently clear about that since the 7 October 2023 terrorist attacks perpetrated by Hamas — attacks that Greece has repeatedly condemned.

The humanitarian situation in the rest of the occupied Palestinian territories is also worsening. We are very much concerned about the recent closure orders against six schools of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) in East Jerusalem and the continued attacks on schools sheltering displaced people, including the recent attack on an UNRWA school in Al-Bureij, in which dozens of people were reportedly killed, including women and children. Education is not a privilege: it is a basic human right and must be protected at all times. UNRWA's role remains pivotal and indispensable in that regard. We also express concern about reports of continuous settler violence in the West Bank, where more than 40,000 people remain displaced, Palestinian-owned properties have been demolished and seized and settlement activities have significantly increased.

We urge the parties to the conflict to make a sincere effort to negotiate and achieve a permanent ceasefire. We also reiterate our call for the immediate release of all hostages. Our goal remains a two-State solution in accordance with Security Council resolutions, whereby Palestine and Israel can live in peace and security. We repeat our position that the Arab plan for Gaza, as presented by Egypt, constitutes a good starting point towards planning reconstruction. Any day-after scenario should ensure a leading role for a reformed Palestinian Authority. Hamas can have no role in the day after in Gaza and in the region, and neither should it be in a position to threaten Israel. We commend Egypt, Qatar and the United States for their persistent mediation efforts. We also look forward to the upcoming June conference to be co-chaired by France and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia — a potentially critical milestone in promoting the two-State solution and enduring peace in the region. After all, peace can be achieved only through dialogue, diplomacy and mutual understanding.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the Permanent Observer of the observer State of Palestine.

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): Allow me at the outset to thank the United Kingdom, France, Denmark, Greece and Slovenia, as well as Algeria and Guyana, for calling for this meeting regarding the horrific humanitarian situation in Gaza, and to thank you, Mr. President, for convening it in a timely manner.

Allow me also to thank Under-Secretary-General Tom Fletcher for his distressing briefing, for his relentless appeals for humanity in the face of persistent horrors and for his efforts, together with those of the United Nations system as a whole, at a time of grave crisis. Allow me further to thank Director Angélica Jácome of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations for the briefing on the latest Integrated Food Security Phase Classification report, which stressed that

“[g]oods indispensable for people's survival are either depleted or expected to run out in the coming weeks. The entire population is facing high levels of acute food insecurity”.

Starvation is the fate imminently faced by at least half a million people.

Ninety-three per cent of Gaza's children — 930,000 children — are at critical risk of famine. That is not because there is no food — food is there, a few metres away, rotting instead of reaching those who desperately need it — but because

Israel has been openly and brazenly blocking humanitarian aid for more than two months now. That is engineered starvation. It is the most inhumane form of torture and killing. In total, 2.1 million people are at risk of famine, with half a million faced with a catastrophic situation of hunger and starvation, illness and death. If the situation persists, nearly 71,000 children under the age of 5 are expected to be acutely malnourished. Israel is weaponizing aid, unleashing famine, the impact of which is felt most by the smallest children. If ever more proof was needed of the intention to destroy the Palestinian people in Gaza, this manufactured famine is the ultimate proof.

Netanyahu was clear yet again about the goals of this war against our people. He said before the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee of the Israeli Knesset on Sunday:

“we are destroying more and more homes. They have nowhere to return to. The only inevitable outcome will be the wish of Gazans to emigrate outside of the Gaza Strip”.

He is confessing that the destruction and death that Israel is wantonly and deliberately spreading will force Palestinians in Gaza to leave and that it is indeed Israel's intent to forcibly remove them — the destruction of a people by death, displacement and endless atrocities.

The Israeli plan for the so-called distribution of humanitarian aid continues to pursue those same illegal objectives by other means. That plan has been rejected by all United Nations agencies and all humanitarian organizations, as it is just a continuation of the weaponization of aid, by driving desperate civilians and humanitarians into militarized zones to receive or distribute aid at the peril of their lives, by counting calories, denying aid to many — often the most vulnerable — further subjugating the population and entrenching forcible displacement. Any relief scheme must adhere to the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, independence and neutrality. The only reason behind the horrific humanitarian situation is Israel's persistent denial and blocking of aid. That is the problem that must be addressed. Significant humanitarian stocks are available, ready to enter as soon as the blockade is lifted. That makes the situation even more unbearable, even more inhumane and even more revolting.

We hope that, following the release of Edan Alexander thanks to the efforts of the United States, Qatar and Egypt, we will see the mediators succeed in pushing forward an immediate ceasefire that makes it possible to stop the bloodshed, address the catastrophic humanitarian situation, release the hostages and detainees, see the withdrawal of Israeli occupation forces and secure a permanent ceasefire. For now, Israel is continuing to bomb hospitals and shelters and promising more death and destruction. This madness must be stopped.

President Trump declared from Saudi Arabia today that the United States was continuing to work to end the war as quickly as possible. We hope that President Trump's visit to the region will make it possible to achieve such a ceasefire and build a political horizon of freedom for the Palestinian people, security for all and shared prosperity for our region. Let me also seize this opportunity to welcome President's Trump announcement about lifting the sanctions on Syria and reiterate our call for full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria and Lebanon, which, together with ending the illegal Israeli occupation of Palestine, can transform our region. We look forward to the convening of the High-Level International Conference for the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution, to be co-chaired by Saudi Arabia and France in June. We hope that it will mark a turning point from occupation to freedom, from death to life and from conflict to shared peace and security.

We have witnessed aid being completely denied for 10 weeks, in breach of every tenet of international humanitarian law, the Council's resolutions, every call by the General Assembly and the provisional measures ordered by the International Court of Justice. We have seen all supplies being blocked from entering Gaza, even those that are indispensable to the very survival of the civilian population. We have seen bakeries having to shut their doors, community kitchens closing down, warehouses standing empty and children going hungry. Children have died of malnutrition in Gaza. According to the World Health Organization, "without enough nutritious food, clean water and access to healthcare, an entire generation will be permanently affected".

Time is our enemy, especially as hunger eats away at our children, our babies and their mothers — entire families left without food, clean water or shelter, with bombs as their only horizon and their only provision, facing their demise as the genocide continues to crush their bodies one way or another. When faced with such an unbearable and inhumane situation, the international community cannot wait, resign itself or surrender. It must act by any and all means necessary. Members have tools available to them with which to act, if they wish, if they decide to use them collectively as the Council or in their national capacities as countries, if they are truly serious about putting an end to this crime against the Palestinian civilian population, especially in the Gaza Strip. Let me remind members of the concluding words of Under-Secretary-General Tom Fletcher today:

"To those who will not survive what we fear is coming in plain sight, it will be no consolation to know that future generations will hold us, in this Chamber, to account. But they will, and if we have not seriously done all that we could, then we should fear that judgment".

We salute him for all the things that he said in his statement today. It is a challenge to the Security Council, to all those in the Chamber in their national capacity and to the rest of the world watching us and all the countries not represented in the Security Council Chamber.

We call on the States represented around this table, on the Security Council as a body, on the General Assembly and on all the States represented within the United Nations to consider as a matter of urgency all possible steps, barring none, to break the inhumane siege imposed on more than 2 million people and to end the violent, forced famine. That cannot be left to the whims of an Israeli Government obsessed with dispossessing, displacing and destroying our people. It is our collective obligation to find a way forward in the next few days, if the situation persists, to save the millions of lives that hang in the balance.

The famine must end. The inhumanity must end. The genocide must end. The occupation must end. The Palestinian people must be allowed to live in freedom and dignity. All peoples in our region must be allowed to live in peace.

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

Mr. Danon (Israel): Before I begin, I want to express Israel's relief in seeing Edan Alexander return home after almost 600 days of Hamas captivity. We were honoured to welcome his parents, Adi and Yael, to the United Nations just a few months ago. Their strength moved us all. We thank the United States for its role in securing Edan's release. We also reaffirmed that Israel will not rest until every last one of the 58 remaining hostages is brought home.

The reports emerging from Edan's time in captivity are deeply disturbing. Edan was subjected to constant torture, tied in a cage by his hands and feet and starved. That is the reality of Hamas' treatment of hostages. That is why we must bring them all back.

I listened carefully to all the statements delivered today. But when I saw the video of Edan's mother embracing him after almost 600 days apart, I was reminded what this is really about — mothers reuniting with their children. That is what we are fighting for.

Less than two months ago, a man stood before the Council. His name was Eli Sharabi. He was frail, traumatized and still mourning the murder of his wife and two daughters and brother by Hamas terrorists. He somehow found the strength to testify about his experience as a hostage in the hands of Hamas (see S/PV.9882). He spoke for truth and justice. In that testimony, I want to remind the Security Council, he revealed what we have been saying for years and what many in this Chamber have ignored: Hamas steals humanitarian aid. He told Council members that. He had seen with his own eyes United Nations aid packages carried into Hamas' tunnels. He watched as the terrorists ate like kings while he and his fellow hostages were left to starve. Let that image sink in. The aid Member States sent, the aid their taxpayers funded, the aid they believed would help civilians, the aid marked by emblems of the United Nations and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, was used to feed terrorists to massacre women and children. Israel will not allow that to continue. We will not allow the old, broken system to remain in place. We will not accept a humanitarian mechanism that props up the terror organization that butchered our people. We will not sit idly by as food, fuel and funds meant for civilians are funnelled into the Hamas terror machine. We will never allow our morality to be weaponized against us again.

We appreciate the efforts to build a new mechanism, one grounded in accountability, one that ensures aid reaches civilians, not terrorists. Simply put, we will not allow the mistakes of the past to repeat themselves.

However, I have been in this building for many years. It was shocking to see that even before the proposal had been finalized or made public, the United Nations and the Secretary-General had already dismissed it. How many meetings did we have about that proposal? The Secretary-General said he refused to engage in, "any scheme", that is how he called it, that in his view does not meet the principles of "impartiality, humanity, independence and neutrality". The irony is unbelievable, as the previous mechanism made a mockery of every one of those principles. That is not diplomacy. That is not neutrality. That is sabotage disguised as principle. It is outrageous that the United Nations, an Organization built upon global cooperation and dialogue, refuses to engage with States offering real solutions. Rather than fix our broken system, senior United Nations officials, including Secretary-General Guterres, are refusing to admit the system has failed. We can only reach one conclusion: the United Nations wants to preserve a humanitarian framework that serves Hamas — a system that feeds terrorists while civilians and hostages starve, a system that failed the people of Gaza and failed the hostages all because of optics and politics.

To Secretary-General Guterres I say this: the aid that ended up in Hamas' hands did not bring hope; it did not bring progress. It brought death. That path leads nowhere. Mr. Guterres is invited to return to the table. If he comes with open eyes and open ears, something can be achieved.

Hamas was allowed to seize aid and take control over the population of Gaza. The Council saw the consequences of that mistake on 7 October 2023. It cannot be unseen. The old system fed terrorists while civilians suffered, and Israelis were burned alive. That cannot and will not be repeated.

Every day we hear baseless and outrageous accusations directed at Israel — that we are committing war crimes, that we are starving civilians, that we are deliberately obstructing aid — but it is a test. If the officials making those accusations truly believed them, they would be doing everything in their power to make a change, to

contribute. They would be engaging in constructive dialogue to ensure aid gets to civilians, not to terrorists. Instead, they have chosen slander over solutions.

We have, as all Council members know, facilitated in the past the entry into Gaza of more than 1.7 million metric tons of humanitarian assistance — food, water, medicine, fuel and shelter equipment. We have worked with international partners to get aid to those in need. Despite all of that, the misinformation continues. Just yesterday, the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) once again released a report claiming that Gaza is facing — facing — famine. That is a new terminology. We have heard that before. The IPC has made the same claim multiple times throughout the conflict in the past 18 months. Every time it has proven to be completely false. Even the IPC's own analysis confirms there is no famine in Gaza, but they continue to use exaggerated language, based purely on flawed assumptions and scenarios that have not happened.

The IPC does not collect its own data. It relies only on United Nations sources that reflected only one-third of the actual aid that entered Gaza during the ceasefire. That is deliberate manipulation. The IPC ignored the massive volumes of food and supplies that entered Gaza during the pause in fighting. They ignored our detailed assessments and our warnings of their failures. But most of all, they refused to respond to the evidence we presented because it just did not fit the narrative.

The reality is that Hamas made the previous aid system impossible. Not only do they steal the aid, loot the convoys and execute their own people, but I remind the Council that Hamas continues to hold 58 innocent hostages as we speak. They do not receive aid. Therefore, when the United Nations insists on returning to the old framework, it is not choosing neutrality, it is choosing denial.

We are grateful to the United States for its leadership in the new effort. We welcome the constructive engagement of other Member States and non-governmental organizations that have recognized the need for reform.

To those who denounce us, I say this. If they demand that Israel facilitate aid while ignoring how that aid has been used by terrorists, then they are not defending international law. They are destroying it. They should direct their outrage and frustration at the terrorist organization that steals the aid they pay for.

Hostages are still being held underground. We will defend our people. We will bring our hostages home. And we will not contribute to any mechanism that enables the enemy that brought war to our doorstep on 7 October 2023.

The Secretary-General, the United Nations leadership and every Member State at this table are invited to help build something better, to let go of the broken past and embrace a more accountable, more secure future for all.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the United Arab Emirates.

Mr. Abushahab (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your presidency of the Security Council this month. I would also like to thank Mr. Tom Fletcher and Ms. Angélica Jácome for their valuable briefings.

It is my pleasure to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of Arab States. The Arab Group appreciates the convening of this emergency meeting, especially amid Israel's ongoing devastating war against Gaza, and its attempts to establish its lasting control over the Gaza Strip.

Israel has maintained its full blockade over the Gaza Strip for more than 10 weeks, prohibiting the entry of any supplies into the Strip, including life-saving humanitarian aid. That has led to a worsening of the already dire famine. As we

heard a short while ago, the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification report confirmed that the entire population of the Gaza Strip, 2.1 million people, is at risk of famine, including half a million people suffering from catastrophic hunger. That is the fifth and most severe phase of the classification. More than 71,000 children are in need of urgent treatment for severe malnutrition.

In that regard, the Arab Group reiterates its rejection of the humanitarian aid mechanism proposed by Israel, as it contradicts the principles of humanitarian action and aims to compel the United Nations and other humanitarian organizations to enter and distribute aid into Gaza through five designated points. That mechanism runs counter to Israel's obligations under international humanitarian law and disregards the provisional measures ordered by the International Court of Justice, calling for the unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance. It also deprives thousands of civilians, particularly women, the elderly and the injured, of access to life-saving aid and increases the security risks facing humanitarian workers. It clearly demonstrates Israel's intent to manipulate humanitarian action as an instrument of political and military control.

On the other hand, the Arab Group appreciates the mediation efforts of the Arab Republic of Egypt, the State of Qatar and the United States, which led to the ceasefire agreement reached last January and helped to alleviate humanitarian suffering. Those mediation efforts remain ongoing, and aim to secure a permanent ceasefire and resume the delivery of humanitarian aid and the exchange of prisoners and detainees. In that context, the Group welcomes the release of the American hostage, Edan Alexander, as a positive step towards reaching a permanent ceasefire.

The Arab Group renews its demand for ending Israel's aggression against Gaza, resuming the ceasefire in accordance with resolution 2735 (2024), and ceasing all violations against civilians, civilian infrastructure and humanitarian workers, including medical staff. We also demand the release of all prisoners and detainees and emphasize the need to hold accountable those responsible for all serious violations, while ensuring respect for international law, including international humanitarian law.

The Arab Group also demands that Israel allow the immediate, unhindered and full entry of humanitarian aid, open all crossings and fulfil its responsibilities as an occupying Power, including its obligations related to the presence and activities of the United Nations and other international organizations, as well as third party States, in the occupied Palestinian territories. That was emphasized by the speakers at the recent hearing of the International Court of Justice concerning the Court's advisory opinion, requested on the matter.

In that vein, we condemn the arbitrary restrictions imposed by Israel on the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and the illegitimate decisions aimed at prohibiting the Agency's operations, whose goal is to undermine the two-State solution and liquidate the cause of Palestinian refugees. They also contravene the mandate, entrusted to UNRWA by the United Nations General Assembly, to deliver humanitarian and development assistance to Palestinian refugees across all its areas of operation. We call on the international community to enhance both political and financial support for the Agency to enable it to continue its vital role. We further emphasize the right of return of Palestinian refugees and their right to receive compensation, in line with relevant United Nations resolutions.

The Arab Group affirms its unequivocal rejection of all attempts aimed at forcibly displacing the Palestinian people and seizing their land and heritage. We condemn Israel's statements regarding the expansion of its military campaign in

Gaza, which would include the mass displacement of the majority of the Palestinian population. That constitutes a clear violation of international law.

On the other hand, the Arab Group underscores the importance of the Arab-Islamic plan for the early recovery, reconstruction and development of Gaza, put forward by Egypt in coordination with the State of Palestine. That plan garnered broad international support. In that context, we urge the international community and regional and international partners to provide the necessary political and financial support for implementing that plan and to actively participate in the upcoming conference, to be hosted in Cairo, to discuss ways to rebuild the Strip.

The Arab Group expresses its strong condemnation of Israeli escalation in the West Bank and occupied East Jerusalem, as demonstrated by Israel's military incursions, settlement expansion, home demolitions, land annexation and entrenchment of the occupation. That includes the repeated incursions by settlers and extremist ministers in the Israeli Government, with the protection of the occupying forces, into the holy Al-Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram Al-Sharif. The Group stresses the need to respect the legal and historical status quo of the Islamic and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem.

The Council, which was entrusted by the United Nations membership with the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, must take a decisive stance against those inhumane actions in order to bring about a definitive and comprehensive end to this war, secure the release of prisoners and detainees, lift the blockade, facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid and stop forced displacement.

In parallel with the ceasefire process, we have an important and historic opportunity to revive the two-State solution through the High-Level International Conference for the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution, co-chaired by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and France, which will be held in New York next June. We call on the international community and the relevant stakeholders to intensify their efforts to ensure that the conference yields tangible results and serves as a foundation for launching a meaningful and effective political process — a process that leads to a just and lasting settlement of the conflict based on the two-State solution and internationally recognized resolutions, and one that ensures the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with Al Quds Al-Sharif as its capital and achieves just and lasting stability and peace in the region.

The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.