



# Security Council

Eightieth year

**9923**<sup>rd</sup> meeting

Wednesday, 28 May 2025, 10 a.m.

New York

*Provisional*

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<i>President:</i>	Mr. Sekeris/Mr. Thanopoulos . . . . .	(Greece)
<i>Members:</i>	Algeria. . . . .	Mr. Bendjama
	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. Sangjin Kim
	Russian Federation . . . . .	Mr. Nebenzia
	Sierra Leone . . . . .	Mr. Kanu
	Slovenia. . . . .	Mr. Žbogar
	Somalia . . . . .	Mr. Osman
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Kariuki
	United States of America. . . . .	Mr. Kelley

## Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.05 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: Ms. Sigrid Kaag, Special Coordinator ad interim for the Middle East Peace Process; and Dr. Feroze Sidhwa.

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

I now give the floor to Ms. Kaag.

**Ms. Kaag:** The Middle East region is undergoing a seismic transformation, marked by volatility but also by opportunity if seized and supported. Its people demand a future of justice, dignity, rights and peace. There can, however, be no sustainable peace in the Middle East without a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. There are no shortcuts. The region's future will remain bound to its unresolved past unless bold political will and decisions break the cycle. The two-State solution is on life support. Reviving it requires decisive action. Peace cannot be a transaction or a partial, temporary arrangement. It needs to be built on international consensus and legitimacy, moving from managing the conflict to ending it.

Israel has the right to live in peace and security. This was undeniably shaken by the horrific terror attacks and taking of hostages on 7 October 2023 by Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups. The suffering of the hostages and their families is immense and profound, affecting the entire country. The release of Edan Alexander on 12 May was a welcome but all-too-brief moment of relief. The hostages need to be released unconditionally, and an immediate ceasefire needs to come into effect. Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups must stop launching rockets towards Israel. Durable security cannot be achieved solely through force. It must be built on mutual recognition, justice and rights for all. A better path exists that resolves this conflict, de-escalates regional tensions and achieves a shared vision for peace.

The upcoming high-level international conference to be held in June, co-chaired by France and Saudi Arabia, presents a critical opportunity. It must not be another rhetorical exercise. It must launch a concrete path towards ending the occupation and realizing the two-State solution, based on international law, United Nations resolutions and previous agreements — a path that unifies the West Bank and Gaza and results in a Palestinian State existing in peace and security alongside Israel, with Jerusalem as the capital of both States. We need to pivot from declarations to decisions. We need to implement rather than adopt new texts.

Since the resumption of hostilities in Gaza, the already horrific situation of civilians has only sunk further into the abyss. This is man-made. When speaking of our fellow human beings in Gaza, words such as empathy, solidarity and support have lost their meaning. We should not become accustomed to the number of people killed or injured. These are daughters, mothers and young children whose lives have

been shattered. All have a name, all had a future, all had dreams and aspirations. Since the collapse of the ceasefire in March, civilians have constantly come under fire, confined to ever-shrinking spaces and deprived of lifesaving relief. Israel must halt its devastating strikes on civilian life and infrastructure.

The entire population of Gaza is facing the risk of famine. As the Secretary-General has said, families are being starved and denied the very basics. On 18 May, the United Nations was informed by Israeli authorities of the approval for the resumption of limited aid entry into Gaza. Since then, very limited numbers of goods have entered and have been distributed by the United Nations and its partners. But this is comparable to a lifeboat after the ship has sunk.

The United Nations, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), will continue to provide humanitarian assistance based on the principles of impartiality and neutrality. We have a plan, in line with international humanitarian law and resolution 2720 (2023). We remain committed to engaging with all parties to implement it. As has been often stated, we cannot participate in any mechanism that violates humanitarian principles. Allow me to reiterate that aid cannot be negotiable, and there can be no question of forced displacement.

Civilians in Gaza have lost hope. Instead of saying “goodbye, see you tomorrow”, Palestinians now say “see you in heaven”. Death is their companion. It is not life, it is not hope. Palestinians in Gaza deserve more than survival. They deserve a viable and vibrant future.

Ultimately, any sustainable solution for Gaza is political. Agreements and work on post-war arrangements for security and governance should not wait any longer. This includes support for a reformed, revitalized and empowered Palestinian Government to govern Gaza and the West Bank. And Israel’s legitimate security concerns must be met. The region has a vital role to play, with active engagement by the international community.

While Gaza rightly captures the world’s attention, the West Bank is on a dangerous trajectory. Developments are best described as accelerating *de facto* annexation through settlement expansion, land seizures and settler violence. If not reversed, these will make the two-State solution physically impossible. Israeli security operations in the northern West Bank, in particular in refugee camps, and ensuing armed exchanges have resulted in many Palestinians killed, including children, thousands displaced and many without homes. Attacks by Palestinian militants have also continued, resulting in Israeli civilian casualties, including the death of a pregnant woman. Violence against civilians from any side is never justified.

When talking about the occupied Palestinian territory, it is time for the Palestinian leadership to overcome internal divisions and focus on effective and inclusive governance. The Palestinian Authority embodies decades of investment in State-building by this very same international community. And the international community must continue to support and protect Palestinian institutions. Reforms must continue to ensure the Palestinian Authority’s viability, its legitimacy with its own population and its ability to resume its responsibilities in the Gaza Strip. The Palestinian Authority must rise to this historic challenge. However, the absence of a political process to end the conflict, coupled with stalled reforms and Israeli economic, administrative and security measures, significantly hamper real-time progress.

In conclusion, I would like to reinforce the following points. First, humanitarian aid and assistance must urgently reach all civilians across Gaza in accordance with international humanitarian law. The United Nations position and plan are well known. Secondly, the people of Gaza cannot afford to wait for the resumption of essential services. Livelihoods and human dignity must be restored. Early recovery

efforts must resume immediately. Thirdly, forced displacement of civilians must be unequivocally rejected and prevented per international law. Palestinians should be supported to stay on their land. Fourthly, post-war Palestinian governance and appropriate security arrangements in Gaza are needed that address the needs and rights of the Palestinians and the legitimate security concerns of Israel. Fifthly, the territorial and political unity of Gaza and the West Bank must be preserved. Fragmentation undermines the prospects for peace and a viable two-State solution. And of course, sixthly — and this could also be point number one — I would like to reiterate the need for the unconditional release of hostages and the return of the remains to their families. They must come home.

International engagement and alignment are critical. In the spirit of the 1996 sculpture — well-known to some — entitled *Palestine Disappearing* by Palestinian artist Suleiman Mansour — and I invite members to look it up — we need to act before it is too late. The responsibility lies with the parties and with us, the international community. We must act now to reverse the current trajectory. A well-defined, widely supported and time-bound political process, accompanied by safeguards and guarantees, is essential. Statehood is a right, not a reward. Let us not be remembered as the generation that let the two-State solution disappear. Let us be the generation that chose courage over caution, justice over inertia and peace over politics. Let us be part of the generation that makes this happen.

**The President:** I thank Ms. Kaag for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Dr. Sidhwa.

**Dr. Sidhwa:** My name is Dr. Feroze Sidhwa. I am an American trauma and critical care surgeon based in Stockton, California. I come before the Security Council today to speak about the Gaza Strip, where I have volunteered twice since 7 October 2023 — first at European Hospital from 25 March to 8 April 2024, and most recently at Nasser Medical Complex, from 6 March to 1 April 2025. Both are in the city of Khan Younis.

I am not here as a policymaker or politician. I am a physician bearing witness to the deliberate destruction of a healthcare system, the targeting of my colleagues and the erasure of a people. The Constitution of the World Health Organization states that the health of all peoples is fundamental to the attainment of peace and security and is dependent on the fullest cooperation of individuals and States. I have taken this to heart, and it is the reason I volunteer in conflict zones from Haiti to Ukraine to Gaza.

In Gaza, I operated in hospitals without sterile conditions, electricity or anaesthetics. Surgeries took place on crowded and filthy floors. Children died, not because their injuries were unsurvivable, but because we lacked blood, antibiotics and the most basic supplies, which are readily available in any large hospital anywhere else in the world. I did not see or treat a single combatant during my five weeks in Gaza. My patients were 6-year-olds with shrapnel through their hearts and bullets in their brains and pregnant women, whose pelvises had been obliterated and whose fetuses had been cut in two while still in the womb. Mothers sheltering in the hospital cooked bread on hot plates in the emergency department during mass casualty events as we dealt with the rain of fire and death falling around us everywhere.

The foundations of life in Gaza — family, health and community — have been shattered. The medical system has not failed — it has been systematically dismantled through a sustained military campaign that has wilfully violated international humanitarian law. Civilians are now dying not just as a result of the constant air strikes but from acute malnutrition, sepsis, exposure and despair. Between my two visits to Gaza, I witnessed a sharp decline in patients' health, driven not just by

injury but by worsening hunger and malnutrition that have left their bodies weaker, their wounds slower to heal and their survival far less certain.

Let us not forget that this is a human-made catastrophe. It is entirely preventable. Participating in it or allowing it to happen is a choice. It is the deliberate denial of the conditions necessary for life — food, shelter, water and medicine. Preventing genocide means refusing to normalize those atrocities. It means refusing to dehumanize the Palestinians and refusing to see them as calories counted or numbers of trucks moved. We see now that that way of thinking has brought about a human dignity crisis, with an entire people on the edge of survival.

On 18 March, the ceasefire was violated by Israel. That day, I witnessed the most extreme mass casualty event of my career at Nasser medical complex. A total of 221 trauma patients arrived in one morning — 90 were dead on arrival, and nearly half were severely injured children. No health system on Earth could cope with that, least of all one that is besieged and starved of supplies. Hospitals are meant to be sanctuaries. Healthcare workers and first responders are supposed to be protected. Children are supposed to be protected. In Gaza, those protections are simply gone. Every day, the distinction between combatant and civilian is erased. Most of my patients were pre-teen children, their bodies shattered by explosives and torn by flying metal. Many died, and those who lived often awoke to find their entire families gone.

Last year, I published in *The New York Times* a survey of 65 American healthcare workers who had served in Gaza. Eighty-three per cent of them reported seeing children shot in the head or chest. Personally, I treated 13 such cases in my two weeks at the European Hospital. According to the War Child Alliance, nearly half of Gaza's children are suicidal. They ask why they did not die with their sister, their mother, their father — not out of extremism but out of unbearable grief. I wonder if any Council member has ever met a 5-year-old child who no longer wants to live, let alone imagines a society in which so many young children feel that way. What astonishes me is not that some children in Gaza have lost the will to live, but that any still cling to hope. My Palestinian friends — mostly healthcare workers — no longer speak of resilience or even survival. Parents memorize their children's clothing in case they have to identify their remains later. They pray for one piece of bread to give their children before they sleep, so that they might die a little less hungry if they are killed at night. Meanwhile, my Israeli and American friends express horror at what is being done in their names. Many of us cannot understand how our Governments continue to arm this senseless destruction. But members in this Chamber have the power to stop it.

I am here because I have witnessed what is happening in Gaza with my own eyes, especially to children, and I cannot pretend not to have seen it. Members, too, cannot claim ignorance. I urge the Council — and especially my own Government — to act with urgency on the following enforceable measures.

First, it must demand an immediate and permanent ceasefire, including a halt to all arms transfers to all parties to the conflict, alongside targeted and lawful sanctions on Israel.

Second, it must demand the reopening of all of Gaza's crossings and guarantee unrestricted medical evacuations, including to hospitals in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, where Palestinian patients can be treated by Palestinian doctors, with safe return to Gaza assured.

Third, it must guarantee sustained humanitarian access throughout Gaza, allowing all essential supplies — shelter, food, water, fuel and medical supplies — to reach all people in need.

Fourth, it must strongly and explicitly reject the weaponization and politicization of aid embodied by the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, whose Executive Director — a veteran of the United States Marine Corps — publicly resigned on Sunday, citing the Foundation's lack of adherence to humanitarian principles. We must affirm support for existing United Nations mechanisms, back the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and ensure that non-governmental organizations with expertise in reaching, and providing specialized care for, those in need have full and unimpeded access.

Fifth, it must ensure the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages.

Sixth, it must ensure the immediate and unconditional release of all healthcare workers, including Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya, who has now been held in Israeli detention for more than 150 days.

Seven, without delay, it must uphold the Charter of the United Nations and act now to prevent genocide.

One day, Gaza's survivors may create a record of the empty promises made by the members of the Council as their wounds deepened and lives were lost. If the Council remains silent and fails to act now, that record will stand as a testament to a global failure to provide urgent care and to the collapse of our collective conscience. I am pleading with members to do what they were entrusted to do, namely, to protect international peace and security and prevent irreversible harm. The steps mentioned I mentioned are the very least that is needed. I am asking my own Government's representative to hear the voices of the majority of Americans, who are calling for the same. If this continues, there will be no Palestinian doctors left — no one to care for the sick and wounded. There will be no Palestinians left to rebuild the healthcare system. We are losing a generation before our eyes, condemning people to die of hunger, disease and despair — deaths that could be easily prevented.

**The President:** I thank Dr. Sidhwa for his briefing.

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

**Mr. Kelley** (United States of America): I thank Special Coordinator Kaag and Dr. Sidhwa for their briefings.

First, let me express my condolences following the tragic murders of Israeli Embassy officials Yaron Lischinsky and Sarah Milgrim — an American citizen — at a Jewish community event last week in Washington, D.C. Yaron and Sarah were murdered for no other reason than the fact that the assailant wanted to kill Jews. It is horrific and shameful. We can, and must, do better to combat the sickening rise of antisemitism around the world. May their memories be a blessing.

I think that it is worth noting that Yaron's final post on the social media platform X before his murder addressed antisemitism at the United Nations. Specifically, it condemned Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Tom Fletcher for spreading antisemitic lies. When he addressed the Security Council on 13 May (see S/PV.9914), Under-Secretary-General Fletcher used language invoking the charge of genocide against Israel. Last week, he claimed that 14,000 babies were about to die within 48 hours — an abject falsehood. Those kinds of remarks are absolutely unacceptable for an official in his position.

Last week, Yaron and Sarah were murdered simply for attending an event for young Jews. The irony is that the event discussed finding ways to bring aid to Gaza, but that did not matter — they were targeted because of who they were. The United States has been working tirelessly to free the hostages and bring this war — one that Hamas brutally started it — to an end. Yet in the most delicate of moments, some



Member States remain unwilling to condemn the terror group responsible. Forget that those actions endanger hostages, the actual outcome is condemning civilians in Gaza to remain under Hamas' control for another generation. For its part, the United States will continue its effort to bring about a diplomatic agreement that will free the hostages. Hamas continues to reject proposals from the United States, Qatar and Egypt that would release the 58 remaining hostages — who have now been cruelly held for 600 days — and bring calm to Gaza. Every day, Hamas demonstrates its lack of regard for the Palestinians it claims to represent, all while it violently suppresses protests against its barbaric rule and diverts aid meant for civilians.

The United States stands fully behind Israel and its right to defend itself. In order to move forward, Hamas must be defeated. As Secretary Rubio has said, if an ember survives, it will spark again into a fire. There can be no peaceful or prosperous Gaza as long as Hamas governs it by force. The Council should apply pressure on Hamas to disarm, leave and free Palestinians in Gaza from Hamas' tyranny. Shielding Hamas from accountability only undermines Israel's security and prolongs Palestinian anguish. Hamas must release the hostages immediately, including the bodies of the four murdered Americans it continues to hold: Itay Chen, Gadi Haggai, Judi Weinstein Haggai and Omer Neutra. We will not rest until every hostage has been returned from Gaza.

Let us be clear: the Council should be supporting the work of the negotiators. The United States supports getting assistance to civilians in Gaza in a way that does not allow Hamas to benefit. We support the new initiative to resume the flow of aid through pre-existing mechanisms in advance of the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation's mechanism becoming fully operational. The Gaza Humanitarian Foundation is an independent entity established to provide a secure mechanism for the delivery of aid directly to those in need. We call on the United Nations to work with the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation and Israel to reach agreements on how to operationalize the system in a way that works for all — one that provides the opportunity to deliver aid directly to civilians without diversion by Hamas or other terrorist and criminal groups.

The United States will support a future for the people of Gaza that is free of Hamas and full of opportunity. As President Trump emphasized during his recent visit, before our eyes, a new generation of leaders is transcending the ancient conflicts and tired divisions of the past and forging a future where the Middle East is defined by commerce, not chaos; where it exports technology, not terrorism; and where people of different nations, religions and creeds are building cities together.

The United States will do its part to help to forge that new reality alongside Israel and our Arab partners. However, at the same time, the United States stands with Israel in unequivocally rejecting any effort to unilaterally recognize a Palestinian State or impose conditions on Israel, which would be an unconscionable reward for the heinous Hamas attack on Israel that massacred and brutally kidnapped Israelis and Americans.

**Mr. Bendjama** (Algeria): At the outset, I would like to thank Ms. Sigrid Kaag and Dr. Feroze Sidhwa for their briefings.

I want to seize this opportunity to express to Mr. Tom Fletcher our support for his briefing last week on the suffering of the Palestinian people in Gaza (see S/PV.9921).

On the morning of Friday 23 May, Dr. Alaa Al-Najjar left her home for her shift at Nasser Hospital. She did not know that it would be the last time that she would say goodbye to nine of her 10 children. The paediatrician who had spent her life saving children's lives became a grieving mother, forced to identify the burnt bodies of her own sons and daughters. The bodies were delivered to the emergency

room by her colleagues, in the very corridors where she once gave hope to others. Dr. Al-Najjar's children had names — Yahya, Rakan, Ruslan, Jubran, Eve, Revan, Saydeen, Luqman and Sidra. All of them were killed. The eldest was 12 years old; the youngest, just 6 months. These are her children. They were not members of a Hamas command and control centre. As Dr. Al-Najjar buries her children — this is Dr. Al-Najjar — her husband Hamdi is still lying in a deep coma, and her 10-year-old son Adam is critically wounded in hospital. We hope that he will survive. If Hamdi finally awakes, what will she tell him? And when Adam asks about his brothers and sisters, what story can she tell him?

In another horrifying scene, young Ward Sheikh Khalil, a 6-year-old girl, tried to flee the flames engulfing her school — her shelter after an Israeli air strike. That shelter — meant to protect displaced civilians — became a crematory oven. Her mother and siblings were killed. Her father now clings to life. No one in Gaza is spared — not doctors, not women, not children, not the displaced, not even hope itself.

Figures have lost their meaning. What is the worth of saying that 18,000 children have died? They are not only numbers — they are lives, dreams, voices, playtimes and lullabies that have been extinguished. They were the warmth of homes, the joy of classrooms and the pulse of neighbourhoods. The Israeli army killed them deliberately, in their mothers' arms, in classrooms, in hospitals, in breadlines, under staircases and in tents. Their deaths were not collateral damage — they were the consequence of a system that sees Palestinian lives not as human lives but as being disposable. That is not a fading echo — it is a scream, and these horrors must end. The remaining survivors must be allowed to live. The world must see these children — the Palestinian children, the children of Gaza — as its own children. For Ward, for Alaa and for the 18,000 who never got a chance to say goodbye, we must act.

Words of condemnation are no longer enough. We must act now. Since 7 October 2023, Israel, the occupying Power, has killed more than 54,000 people. It is no longer 53,000 people — today it is 54,000 people. Israel has wounded more than 123,000. Since 18 March alone, more than 3,900 have been killed and more than 11,000 wounded. How many more must die before action is taken by the Security Council? How many orphans must roam the ruins of Gaza? How much more blood must be spilled before the Council acknowledges that enough is enough? My country, Algeria, bears its responsibility and is determined to push the Council to act. The time for indecision is over.

The Palestinian people were promised a sovereign State, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, by the General Assembly, the Security Council and the international community. Yet three decades after the Oslo Accords, the dream of a Palestinian State is vanishing under the boots of the Israeli occupation and the silence of the international community. The Israeli occupation persists, emboldened by impunity and immunity. Settler violence surges, and settlement spreads. Palestinian land is being swallowed up inch by inch, and holy sites are being desecrated while the world looks on. The global system, meant to uphold justice, has become paralysed. We therefore ask: what is expected of the Palestinians? Must they continue to offer their children on the altar of global inaction? Does the international community still believe in a two-State solution?

Palestinians, like all human beings, have the right to life, dignity and a homeland. They are not an exception. We must resolve this conflict at its root — no just and lasting peace can exist without the realization of the Palestinian people's right to an independent State. As President Abdelmadjid Tebboune stated:

“We must act decisively to end the ongoing historical injustice inflicted on the Palestinian people. We must urgently revive the peace process, which is currently



facing an unprecedented deadlock. It is imperative to compel the occupying Power to comply with the relevant United Nations resolutions and to adhere to its obligations”.

The solution is well known. It is time for its implementation.

**Ms. Lassen** (Denmark): Let me thank Special Coordinator Kaag and Dr. Sidhwa for their important and thought-provoking briefings this morning.

The Security Council has continuously discussed the immediate devastating effects of a number of concerning recent developments in the occupied Palestinian territory. We have discussed the disastrous humanitarian situation in Gaza, with more than 53,000 dead, more than 100,000 injured and the entire population on the brink of human-made famine. As part of an overwhelming majority of voices in the Council, Denmark reiterates once again that humanitarian aid must flow into Gaza freely and at scale in line with international humanitarian law and humanitarian principles. We have opposed an expanded Israeli military offensive, and we have called for an immediate end to the war, along with the immediate and unconditional release of the hostages. In the West Bank, we have called for an end to settler violence and illegal settlements, which have recently accelerated at unprecedented speed. Yet we continue to witness forced displacement, demolitions and movement restrictions being imposed on Palestinians.

While we condemn the immediate effects of those developments, the Council has a responsibility to address their long-term impact on international peace and security. Let me make three points in that regard.

First, the people of Gaza are starving. Starvation can cause irreversible harm, especially to children, which could affect the rest of their lives. The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification warns that 71,000 children under 5 years of age and 17,000 pregnant and breastfeeding women are threatened by acute malnutrition. We stress the need for Israel to take immediate action to protect the human right to life. All parties to the conflict are bound to comply with international humanitarian law and the obligation to protect civilians, including Palestinian children, from harm. We also recall that the right to food is a fundamental human right.

Secondly, the war in Gaza has caused major destruction to civilian infrastructure, with devastating effects on children’s education. More than 95 per cent of all schools in Gaza have sustained damage, and 660,000 children have been pushed out of school and have lost as much as 19 months of education. In occupied East Jerusalem, another 800 students were forced out of their classrooms earlier this month, after Israeli forces forced the closure of six United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East schools. Losing access to education risks leading to long-term consequences for children’s well-being and learning. Education is critical for coping with the trauma of war — we heard this morning Dr. Sidhwa’s assessment that half of Gaza’s children are suicidal — and for building the relevant skills needed to rebuild their country once the conflict is over. We reiterate that civilian infrastructure, such as schools, must be protected, including by refraining from their use for military purposes. We call for the protection of Palestinian children’s right to safe education.

Thirdly, in the West Bank, Israel is taking control of record amounts of Palestinian land, displacing Palestinians into isolated enclaves and making it virtually impossible to form a contiguous and viable future Palestinian State. We recall that the European Union has adopted sanctions against violent extremist settlers, and we encourage other Council members to do the same. Recently, we also took note of the Israeli Government’s disturbing decision to initiate land registration in Area C and register it to private Israelis. Denmark reiterates that any attempt by Israel to annex Palestinian land would be unacceptable and would violate international law.

In Israel, Hamas' heinous terrorist attack has caused extreme and lasting trauma and has pushed Israelis and Palestinians further apart. We continue to condemn the brutal terrorist attack and the ruthless hostage taking by Hamas, and we reiterate our demand that all hostages must be immediately and unconditionally released. Taken together, those developments do nothing to serve the long-term interest of peace and security for Palestinians and Israelis. Denmark remains firmly committed to Israel's security. However, that cannot come at the cost of Palestinian civilians and their right to live in peace and dignity. I therefore reiterate Denmark's urgent calls on Israel to halt the ongoing and intensified military offensive and immediately allow for the full resumption of humanitarian aid. The United Nations and humanitarian organizations must be allowed to work independently and impartially to save innocent lives now. We cannot ignore the devastating immediate effects of the current developments or their long-term impact on future generations of Palestinians and the viability of the two-State solution. Denmark maintains that the two-State solution is the only viable path to achieving permanent peace and stability in the Middle East. We look forward to the upcoming High-level International Conference for the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution.

**Mr. Žbogar** (Slovenia): I want to thank Special Coordinator Kaag for her briefing today and for her requests. I also want to thank Dr. Sidhwa for his testimony and for his work in Gaza.

We have said that we are lost for words many times, but we cannot repeat such phrases over and over again. Early on in our Security Council term, I instructed my team to avoid lengthy explanations of the situation on the ground in our statements. That is for the briefers, who, usually on a weekly basis or even more often, inform us about the state of affairs, and here at the United Nations and in the Security Council, I think that we are very lucky, privileged and honoured to have the best briefers on the situation on the ground, from Special Coordinator Kaag to Under-Secretary-General Fletcher and civil society briefers such as Dr. Sidhwa today. Our role is not to challenge the briefers or the message but rather to address the message. Our role is to take positions and be the ones who take the briefings into account and can carefully examine the positions of others and find possibilities for the Council to react to threats to international peace and security.

My statement can be summarized in one word and one sentence. The word is "responsibility", and the sentence is "we have a responsibility to protect civilians in Gaza". Burning tents, striking schools-turned-shelters, continuously displacing civilians, causing hunger, shutting down hospitals, cutting essential services — those grave violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law have pushed thousands of civilians to the brink of survival. As the task of listing every single cruelty has become impossible, our responsibility not to remain silent has become clearer, as has our responsibility to act.

We have a clear responsibility to protect civilians. With the alarm bells sounded by the most recent Integrated Food Security Phase Classification report and the information circulating on the hunger in Gaza, we continue to call for an immediate lifting of the blockade on Gaza. As the full blockade has surpassed two months, we must be clear that the current volume of aid reaching Gaza is not enough and that entry at scale of aid and its safe and unhindered distribution are urgently needed. Crossings must be open, all possible corridors must be used and facilitation must be granted. Safe passage for medical personnel and humanitarian workers must be guaranteed. Time is of the essence. We repeat that any actor delivering humanitarian assistance must adhere to international humanitarian law and the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. We repeat our deep concerns about the new model of the distribution of aid. We welcome the United Nations-coordinated plan to resume humanitarian aid deliveries to Gaza, and, as clearly

underlined in today's statement by European Union High Representative Kallas, we recall the indispensable role of the United Nations in distributing humanitarian assistance. During the ceasefire, the United Nations proved that it can deliver if allowed to do so.

We have a clear responsibility to act. That is why Slovenia fully supports the ongoing efforts of Egypt, Qatar and the United States to find a negotiated solution for a ceasefire in Gaza. We call on all parties to engage in good faith. Slovenia therefore strongly supports 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 under the chairmanship of France and Saudi Arabia. But we do believe that those efforts should be made hand in hand with the action of the Security Council. Time is of the essence. The Council should be clear in its unambiguous demand for unimpeded humanitarian access, and that is why we support the Council taking urgent action. We hope that the Council will show unity when voting on the humanitarian draft resolution that is now being discussed among the elected members.

Remaining silent is not an option.

**Mr. Bonnafont** (France) (*spoke in French*): France thanks Special Coordinator Sigrid Kaag and Dr. Feroze Sidhwa for their briefings, which remind us of the ordeal of the civilian population in Gaza.

France will never forget the heinous terrorist attacks of 7 October 2023. The hostages still in Gaza being held by Hamas and other terrorist groups must be released. As the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of France reiterated here (see S/PV.9907), Hamas is not, and cannot be, part of the solution in Gaza. It must be disarmed, and it must be politically neutralized. However, civilians in Gaza are not Hamas, and they are enduring a devastating humanitarian situation, which the Security Council must address by continuing to demand that Israel meet its obligations under international humanitarian law. The Council must act and adopt a humanitarian resolution.

First, all obstacles to the entry and delivery of humanitarian aid and all restrictions on its quantity and composition must be lifted. The extremely limited quantities that have entered in the past few days are not enough to meet the needs of the population, particularly after 11 long weeks of total blockade. The images of starving people storming trucks and aid distribution points are a tragic illustration of that. Dozens of tons of assistance financed by France and other countries cannot be delivered to Gaza. That is unacceptable.

Secondly, we reiterate our full support for the United Nations and its humanitarian partners, which have demonstrated their ability to deliver assistance fully in line with humanitarian principles. We welcome the plan announced on 16 May, which strengthens the safeguards against the risk of aid diversion. In that regard, we call on Israel to allow full access to Gaza for United Nations personnel to verify the delivery of humanitarian assistance, as stipulated in resolution 2720 (2023). I reiterate our support the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, Under-Secretary-General Tom Fletcher and his services and all those agencies, funds, programmes and organizations of the United Nations system working on the ground seeking to provide honest and impartial testimony and act with humanity.

We call on Israel to allow the United Nations and its humanitarian partners to operate in complete safety. The establishment of an alternative system that does not respect international law or its humanitarian principles and would engender the forced displacement of people is unacceptable. Yesterday was a stark illustration of the limitations of the mechanisms established by Israel. France also reiterates its

firm opposition to any plan for permanent occupation of the Gaza Strip by Israel and the forced displacement of people. Those grave violations of international law would lead to a complete stalemate. Furthermore, the protection of civilian populations and infrastructure is an integral part of Israel's obligations under the Geneva Conventions. Recurrent strikes on schools, hospitals and civilian homes are unacceptable and must end.

It is urgent that Israel cease its military operations and that a permanent ceasefire be established in Gaza. France calls on the parties to return to full respect for the ceasefire agreement and supports the efforts of the United States, Qatar and Egypt to facilitate negotiations. I reiterate that we stand firmly in solidarity with the families of all the hostages, who must be released without delay. We reaffirm the right of Israelis to live in security and condemn the recent Houthi attacks.

However, there is an urgent need to find an alternative to war for Palestinians and Israelis — an alternative based on the two-State solution and meeting the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian and Israeli peoples to have a State and live in peace and security. France thanks the Member States for their engagement during the preparatory meeting on 23 May, in particular those who have accepted responsibility within the working groups. We must now make concrete political, financial and material commitments in order to preserve the two-State solution ahead of the conference that France will co-chair with Saudi Arabia from 17 to 20 June — an international conference convened at the request of the General Assembly in support of the two-State solution here in New York City. As the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs has reiterated, France hopes that the conference will facilitate joint progress on peace and security in Israel and Palestine, the recognition of Palestine as a State, regional normalization and integration, the disarmament of Hamas and the revitalization of Palestinian governance.

**Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett** (Guyana): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's meeting. I also thank Special Coordinator Kaag for her comprehensive briefing, and I listened carefully to the moving testimony of Dr. Sidhwa.

Approximately two weeks ago, we received a sobering briefing from Under-Secretary-General Tom Fletcher as he appealed to us to seriously examine the legacy the Security Council would leave in relation to what is currently taking place in Gaza (see S/PV.9914). Today we again heard similar appeals from Special Coordinator Kaag and Dr. Sidhwa, even as the situation continues to worsen in unimaginable ways. No one should be made to live in the horrific circumstances that Palestinians in Gaza have been experiencing since 7 October 2023. The Council must take principled and urgent action in response to the grave situation that has been foisted on the Palestinian people in Gaza.

As efforts continue towards achieving a return to the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, Guyana is of the view that any peace deal reached should have at least three guarantees.

First, Palestinians should not be forced to give up any of their rights in exchange for peace. Specifically, they should not be forced to forfeit their homeland. A choice between the continuation of the Israeli offensive and forced displacement is a false choice.

Secondly, any peace deal should comply scrupulously with international law. The war in Gaza has set, or has seen attempts to set, precedents that are plain violations of international law, particularly international humanitarian law. Recall, for example, restrictions imposed on the United Nations and humanitarian workers. The Knesset legislation against the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East is a case in point. Recall also Israel's ongoing

aid blockade and its proposed mechanism for aid delivery under the control of its military.

Thirdly, the protection and well-being of civilians should remain the chief consideration of any peace deal.

The situation in Gaza continues to worsen in unimaginable ways, as described by the Special Coordinator. We are especially concerned by the escalating strikes on tents, residential buildings, schools and crowded hospitals and the methodical destruction of entire neighbourhoods. The constant evacuation orders and the militarization of the majority of the Gaza Strip are equally concerning. There is nothing that can justify that level of violence against civilians, among whom are children, including babies.

The aid blockade, which was imposed on 2 March, seriously crippled the humanitarian efforts that were facilitated by the ceasefire deal. While noting the recent lifting of some restrictions by Israeli officials, we simultaneously noted that certain measures are severely limiting humanitarians' ability to take advantage of that small respite. We noted, for example, the challenges created by insecurity, delays in coordination approvals and inappropriate routes being provided by Israeli forces that are not viable for the movement of cargo. Those are all human-made obstacles. We call on Israel to fulfil its international legal obligations regarding access to essential goods and services by the civilian population of Gaza. The provision of aid must be governed by the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. Guyana expresses its confidence once again in the ability of the United Nations and its partners to deliver aid at the required scale throughout Gaza, if given the relevant facility by the occupying Power. The United Nations has consistently demonstrated its readiness every time there has been an opportunity to get aid into Gaza.

The state of food insecurity in Gaza is also extremely worrisome, with many Palestinians experiencing what they described as a slow death sentence. The testimony of humanitarians in Gaza that "Palestinians prefer to die by an air strike than to go through the suffering of a lack of food and lie to their children about their next meal" is an indictment of those who have created those types of choices for innocent civilians.

It has not escaped us that while negotiations — which we welcome — are ongoing to reach a nuclear deal with the objective of avoiding the potential destruction of another country, different weapons are being employed against the Palestinian people, resulting in their destruction. Regrettably, we are not responding meaningfully to counter the actions of the Israel Defense Forces. What makes that even more concerning is the fact that the visuals of the decimation of Palestinians are live streamed across the globe, yet we are not acting to stop it. The judgment of future generations will be justifiably harsh towards us — we who saw the attempts at obliterating an entire people but did not act. The Council has the opportunity to act now. Enough is enough.

In the light of the that, Guyana is compelled to reiterate the following appeals.

First, we call for an immediate, unconditional and permanent ceasefire in Gaza, in accordance with resolution 2735 (2024). Nothing justifies the collective punishment of the Palestinian people, and it is clear that the military objectives set by Israel cannot be met without severe consequences for civilians.

Secondly, Guyana reiterates its call for the release of all hostages being held in Gaza, as well as all Palestinians detained by Israel without charge. The taking of hostages is a war crime, and all perpetrators must be held accountable.



Thirdly, Guyana appeals to Israel to completely lift the humanitarian aid blockade on Gaza and to allow the United Nations and its partners to carry out their life-saving work. International humanitarian law demands that Israel fulfil its obligations towards civilians, and the International Court of Justice has reaffirmed that.

Finally, Guyana appeals to the Security Council and the international community as a whole to work urgently to revitalize the two-State solution as the only just and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian question.

**Mr. Osman** (Somalia): We thank the presidency for convening this timely meeting in the light of the deepening humanitarian crisis in the occupied Palestinian territories. We thank Ms. Sigrid Kaag for her briefing and for her efforts as the Special Coordinator ad interim for the Middle East Peace Process. We also thank Dr. Feroze Sidhwa for his briefing.

We remain gravely alarmed by the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza, where the continued military escalation has pushed the population to the edge of survival. There is quite simply no safe place to go in Gaza for civilians.

The recent reports of famine risk, forced displacement and destruction of vital infrastructure are deeply distressing. That is a crisis that is entirely human-made and preventable, which is exacerbated by the persistent denial of access to life-saving aid.

Somalia strongly condemns the ongoing restrictions on humanitarian access and calls for the immediate, safe and unhindered delivery of assistance throughout Gaza. All border crossings, including Rafah and Kerem Shalom, must be reopened, and international humanitarian law must be respected without exceptions.

We also express our concern regarding the mounting pressure on the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and reiterate our full support for its critical role in serving Palestinian refugees. Attempts to delegitimize or defund the agency threaten not only the rights of refugees but also the broader stability of the region.

We are further troubled by continued settlement activity and settlement violence against civilians in the West Bank and the erosion of the legal and historical status quo of Jerusalem. The rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination, return to their homeland and statehood, are not subject to negotiation or delay.

The blatant disregard for binding decisions of the International Court of Justice, including the provisional measures issued in January and March, is a direct challenge to the international legal order. Israel, as the occupying Power, bears legal responsibilities under international humanitarian law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention. Those obligations are not optional; they are binding, and they must be enforced. Attacks on civilians, the obstruction of humanitarian aid, the targeting of medical facilities and the use of starvation as a weapon of war all demand independent investigations and credible judicial redress.

The consequences of the prolonged conflict are not limited to Gaza. The crisis has triggered widespread regional instability, increasing tensions across the Middle East. The situation risks spiralling into a broader confrontation with serious implications for international peace and security.

The Council cannot remain silent as innocent lives are lost and humanitarian norms are violated. We call for an immediate, unconditional and permanent ceasefire and the full restoration of humanitarian access across Gaza.

Somalia supports all credible diplomatic efforts aimed at de-escalation and conflict resolution, including the upcoming international peace conference co-hosted by Saudi Arabia and France.



We urge the international community to seize this moment and relaunch a serious political process towards a just and lasting peace — one that guarantees the establishment of an independent and sovereign Palestinian State, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, in line with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

In conclusion, my delegation reaffirms its commitment to working alongside fellow Council members and regional partners to uphold international law, defend humanitarian principles and advance the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.

**Mr. Kariuki** (United Kingdom): I thank Special Coordinator Kaag and Dr. Sidhwa for their briefings today, which painted a catastrophic picture. I pay tribute to them and to their humanitarian and health worker colleagues, who are working tirelessly to alleviate human suffering.

I will make three points in that regard.

First, the United Kingdom has always supported Israel's right to defend itself. It suffered a heinous attack by Hamas on 7 October, and the hostages have been through an unimaginable ordeal. We reiterate our call for their immediate and unconditional release and for accountability for those responsible. But as my Prime Minister has said, we strongly oppose the Israeli Government's escalating military action in Gaza, which is wholly disproportionate. An immediate ceasefire, not more bloodshed, is the way to secure the release of the hostages and stop the endless cycle of violence.

Secondly, as we heard again today, the level of human suffering in Gaza is intolerable. Civilians face starvation, displacement and trauma. The United Nations warned of the risks from the Israeli Government's plan for aid delivery. In Rafah yesterday, we saw that warning become a reality as the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation lost control of its distribution centre, with multiple casualties reported and great distress for those desperately seeking aid. In contrast, the United Nations has a clear plan to deliver life-saving aid, at scale. It contains robust mitigations against aid diversion. Brave humanitarians stand ready to do their jobs, and 9,000 trucks wait at the border.

Our message to Prime Minister Netanyahu is clear: let aid in and enable the United Nations to operate, now. We reiterate our support for the United Nations, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and all its aid agencies. We also reject the Israeli Government's unacceptable intention to take control of the Gaza Strip. Permanent forced displacement is a breach of international humanitarian law.

Thirdly, in the West Bank, violent settlers continue to assault and abuse Palestinians, forcing entire communities to flee. In Jerusalem, provocative visits to holy sites and inflammatory language by Israeli ministers are adding to the tensions. On 20 May, the United Kingdom announced further sanctions on individuals and entities promoting violence against Palestinian communities in the West Bank. We will continue to act against those committing these abuses.

The United Kingdom will not give up on a two-State solution. We will continue to work closely with France, Saudi Arabia and all our partners towards a successful conference in June, which will move us towards this goal.

Finally, let me finish by condemning the horrific murders of Yaron Lischinsky and Sarah Milgrim in Washington D.C. last week and offering condolences to their families and to their colleagues.

**Mr. Alfaro de Alba** (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): Panama is grateful for the convening of this meeting and thanks Ms. Sigrid Kaag, Special Coordinator ad interim for the Middle East Peace Process and Dr. Feroze Sidhwa for their briefings.

We recognize the representatives of Israel, United Arab Emirates and the Observer State of Palestine, who honour us with their participation in this meeting. We thank them for their moving statements.

Panama listens with deep concern to the testimonies and images that every day show that Gaza and the West Bank are experiencing a humanitarian catastrophe of devastating proportions. We reiterate our urgent call for the re-establishment of an immediate ceasefire in order to facilitate the safe access of vital humanitarian aid and the immediate, dignified and unconditional release of all hostages.

The day of 7 October 2023 marked a turning point. That day, which should have been like any other, turned into a nightmare for hundreds of Israeli families, with far-reaching consequences. The attacks were carried out on Israeli kibbutzes, in their cities and at the Nova music festival, in which 1,200 innocent Israeli civilians — many of them young people — were viciously murdered, with premeditation and unjustifiable intentional cruelty, on Israeli soil. In addition to those killed, another 251 people were kidnapped and taken to dark tunnels in Gaza. That was the result of the massacre. These people were torn from their homes and the environment that kept them safe. Terror erupted without distinction, leaving a wound that still remains open.

We would also like to highlight the silent drama of disappearances. There are still Israeli hostages whose fate is uncertain and numerous Palestinians, including children, who remain under the rubble or are being detained without clear information, whose whereabouts remain unclear. For both sides, the uncertainty of these disappearances prevents closure and perpetuates the anguish. We reiterate our support and solidarity with all the families.

The horror unleashed by Hamas on 7 October was not an isolated episode, but the beginning of a spiral of violence that still continues and whose greatest suffering has been borne by civilians. Since then, the Palestinian population has also lived under constant threat, caught in the crossfire and the consequences of political and military decisions that disregard human dignity.

From the sky above Gaza, hope no longer descends, but the incendiary roar of a bomb. That same sky that our children, nieces, nephews and grandchildren watch with wonder and joy — when they fly a kite or see a bird fly by — has become, for millions of people, a warning sign, a warning that death lurks and may come at any moment. And on the ground, where once there were schools full of voices of children, who deserve a future, and dignified homes with the smell of freshly baked bread, today there is only rubble, hunger and the imposing shadow of a tank.

What should have been people's happiest years has become a field of ruins marked by sirens, explosions and a constant threat, generating fears that no person should experience. More than 53,000 Palestinians have been killed and tens of thousands injured during the conflict. More than 1.9 million people have been displaced in Gaza, some of them more than 10 times. Eighty-one per cent of the territory has been declared a militarized zone or subject to displacement orders. In the West Bank, restrictions on movement, demolitions and violence have further aggravated an already untenable situation.

The situation of children in Gaza is particularly alarming. UNICEF has warned that more than 70,000 children under 5 years of age could be acutely malnourished, including 14,000 with severe malnutrition. Many of those children are already dying from entirely preventable causes.

We are concerned about the near-total collapse of essential services. According to the World Health Organization, only 19 of the 36 hospitals in the Strip are still operational, and at least some 94 per cent of them are inoperative, damaged or partially and totally destroyed. Kamal Adwan Hospital, a centre treating severe malnutrition

in northern Gaza, suspended operations on 20 May. Across the territory, only 2,000 hospital beds remain for more than 2 million people.

According to the United Nations, community kitchens are barely managing to distribute 300,000 rations a day, when more than 2 million are needed. Limited and fragmented access to basic inputs — food, medicine and clean water — cannot continue to be the norm.

We note with deep concern the incidents yesterday, when the chaos caused by a desperately hungry Palestinian population overwhelmed the capacities of a distribution centre that had been set up. Those events highlight the limitations of such a solution and underline the urgent need for better coordination, with the involvement of United Nations agencies, to ensure safe access and more effective and wider distribution of humanitarian aid. Any humanitarian effort must be governed by the principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence, to ensure that aid reaches those who need it most, without interference or conditions.

Panama expresses its appreciation and tribute to the United Nations humanitarian workers and health personnel who, amid the horror, continue to provide relief with courage and dedication. Their work represents a beacon of hope in the midst of suffering.

Panama reiterates its urgent appeal for an end to the spiral of suffering of Israelis and Palestinians. Now is the time to save lives, to allow humanitarian aid to arrive unimpeded, and to achieve the dignified, immediate and unconditional release of those still in captivity.

We are not just talking about a cessation of hostilities, but a moral awakening, of recovering the basic notion that every human life counts.

The future of Gaza cannot continue to be held hostage by Hamas' extremism, nor by its declared intention to terrorize the Israeli people in order to hold them hostage to its threats. The future of Palestine and Israel cannot remain a hostage to fear, hatred and hopelessness.

Only political courage, compassion, genuine willingness to reconcile and comprehensive reconstruction efforts can pave the way for a lasting peace, in which Israelis and Palestinians can live side by side, in peace, with secure, recognized and mutually respected borders.

Peace is not the absence of war; it is the presence of dignity.

**Mr. Kanu** (Sierra Leone): I thank Ms. Sigrid Kaag, Special Coordinator ad interim for the Middle East Peace Process, for her detailed and sobering briefing on the situation in the Middle East, particularly with reference to the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. I also acknowledge the compelling briefing of Dr. Feroze Sidhwa.

While Sierra Leone acknowledges the fragile but incremental progress in Syria and Lebanon, the unfolding catastrophe in Gaza and the persistent violence in the West Bank remain matters of grave and urgent concern.

The past months have witnessed one of the darkest moments for civilians in Gaza. The persistent obstruction of life-saving humanitarian aid, systematic destruction of civilian infrastructure and widespread loss of innocent life have breached not only the bounds of humanitarian concern but also raise serious questions of accountability under international law.

The prolonged blockade and military operations by the Israel Defense Forces have rendered more than 80 per cent of the territory either under evacuation orders or de facto inaccessible. Those actions have created catastrophic conditions that

imperil the survival of the civilian population and heighten the risk of starvation, malnutrition and lawlessness.

The month of May alone has seen hospitals, such as the Indonesian and European facilities in Gaza, struck by attacks, further diminishing access to urgent care. The repeated targeting of healthcare infrastructure and personnel is a clear violation of international humanitarian law and must cease immediately. Civilian objects must never be used for military purposes, nor civilians used as human shields. The protection of civilian life must remain a cardinal principle for all parties to the conflict.

In the West Bank, the upsurge in settler violence, forced displacement and destruction of property, particularly in Tulkarm, Jenin and Tubas, is deeply concerning. We deplore all such acts, including the killing of civilians by any actor.

The toll on civilians in Gaza, especially women and children, continues to shock the global conscience. Sierra Leone stands firm in its commitment to the Charter of the United Nations and to the fundamental principles of peace, justice and human dignity. Accordingly, we must collectively recognize that the situation unfolding in Gaza now bears many of the hallmarks of mass atrocity crimes. The risk is not theoretical, it is real, credible and escalating.

Given our own experience, we understand too well the consequences of delayed international action, or inaction. We also recall with painful clarity the global failure to prevent the mass atrocities in Rwanda and Srebrenica, subsequently declared as genocides by competent international courts.

The International Court of Justice, in its landmark decisions, has underscored the legal and moral duty to act to prevent genocide. The obligation to prevent genocide is not discretionary. It is a peremptory norm of international law, binding on all States. It imposes duties not only to refrain from committing such crimes, but to take active, timely measures to avert them.

Presently, we face a moment no less consequential. We are deeply alarmed by the consistent reports of indiscriminate bombardments, destruction of vital infrastructure, deprivation of humanitarian assistance and inflammatory rhetoric. Those patterns may contribute to creating conditions of life calculated to bring about the destruction of a group, in whole or in part, which is explicitly prohibited under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, which codifies customary international law.

We therefore call for immediate and unimpeded humanitarian access, and for urgent international action to forestall further deterioration of the situation. The closure of crossings and the obstruction of aid are unacceptable and must be reversed without delay. The complicity of the international community must not be repeated.

Further, the provision of humanitarian aid must be fully aligned with the established humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. Those principles are not only foundational to the effectiveness of aid delivery but also essential to ensuring that assistance reaches those in greatest need. Aid must never be instrumentalized as a tool of war or subjected to conditionalities that compromise the dignity or survival of affected populations. The integrity of humanitarian operations must be protected at all times, and all parties must allow for safe, timely and unhindered access for humanitarian actors, in accordance with international humanitarian law.

In January 2024, the International Court of Justice issued provisional measures 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)*, directing the State of Israel to take all necessary steps to prevent acts prohibited under the Genocide

Convention. On 24 May 2024, those measures were expanded to include halting the military offensive in Rafah and allowing humanitarian access. Sierra Leone underscores that those orders are binding. Compliance is not a matter of political discretion, but rather a legal imperative. Failure to do so threatens the legitimacy of the International Court of Justice and undermines the credibility of the rules-based international system.

At the core of the current catastrophe lies a crisis of accountability. The scale of suffering endured by civilians in Gaza and in the State of Israel must not go unaddressed. The perpetrators of grave violations of international law must be held responsible. Sierra Leone believes that upholding international law is indispensable to restoring justice and preventing further atrocities. Therefore, the Council cannot remain silent. It must act with the clarity and conviction that this moment demands. The credibility of the Council and the lives of thousands of civilians depend on it. Sierra Leone urges a renewed commitment to the Council's responsibilities under the Charter, particularly in preventing atrocity crimes and upholding international humanitarian law.

In the Secretary-General's *Our Common Agenda* (A/75/982) and in the Pact for the Future (General Assembly resolution 79/1), calls have been made for a more predictable and principled approach to early warning, prevention and accountability. Those frameworks must be operationalized through consistent Council engagement and action, including through veto restraint initiatives, in particular in contexts in which the risk of mass atrocities is acute.

As we call for urgent action on mass atrocity risk, Sierra Leone reaffirms that only a political solution can bring sustainable peace. We reiterate our support for the two-State solution, with an independent State of Palestine living side by side with the State of Israel in peace and security. While humanitarian actions are vital, they are no substitute for a sustained diplomatic process. A ceasefire, the release of hostages and the lifting of humanitarian blockades must be the starting point. We commend the diplomatic efforts of Egypt, Qatar and the United States, and we urgently call for continued mediation. We call on the parties to act with urgency and in good faith.

Sierra Leone believes that unless the root causes of occupation, settlement expansion and political exclusion are addressed, durable peace will remain elusive. We reaffirm our full support for a negotiated, just and lasting political solution grounded in international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions. This conflict has inflicted immense suffering, claimed countless lives and seen too many missed opportunities for peace. The collapse of the ceasefire in March alone resulted in more than 3,500 additional civilian deaths, with more than 50 hostages still held in captivity. The international community bears a collective responsibility not only to halt the mayhem, but to foster the conditions for lasting coexistence and peace.

We therefore conclude by urging the Security Council to act. We also urge the Council to ensure full respect for international law, accountability for all serious violations and protection for all civilians, regardless of identity. Let us not allow this moment to pass with inaction or equivocation. The credibility of the Council — and the lives of thousands — depend on what we choose to do now.

**Mr. Nebenzia** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank the Special Coordinator ad interim for the Middle East Peace Process, Ms. Sigrid Kaag, for the briefing on the situation in Gaza. We are also grateful to Dr. Feroze Sidhwa for his testimony. We wish to take this opportunity to express our solidarity with the Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Tom Fletcher, in connection with the attacks that he faced after his most recent briefing in the Security Council (see S/PV.9914).

Every new day brings with it tragic news from the Palestine-Israel conflict zone. Headlines broadcast reports of grim new record numbers of dead children, women,



journalists and humanitarian workers. Strikes targeting schools and hospitals are no longer shocking to anybody. They have long since become the living nightmare of the inhabitants of the Gaza Strip, and one can only guess how such conditions can be endured by those who stand ready to selflessly discharge their humanitarian duty to help the Palestinian people.

Despite that, we had some glimmers of hope for a peaceful resolution to the conflict and the restoration of the January deal, a hope kindled by reports of the intensive efforts undertaken by mediators. However, that hope was not fated to come to fruition. On 16 May, Israel launched Operation Gideon's Chariots, which has further exacerbated the suffering of peaceful Palestinian civilians. The biblical name of the operation belies its brutal aim, that of gaining control over all of Gaza, cleansing the north of the enclave of its inhabitants and forcibly displacing them to the south. Already today, the Israel Defense Forces control 77 per cent of the territory of the Gaza Strip. Since the resumption of hostilities in March, nearly 4,000 Palestinians have been killed, and since October 2023, nearly 54,000 have been killed and 123,000 have been wounded.

To date, the military operation has in no way helped to resolve the issue of the hostages. The only hostage who was released recently, the United States-Israeli citizen Edan Alexander, was handed over by Hamas representatives as a gesture of goodwill. Another 33 hostages were able to return home and reunite with their loved ones as a result of a deal that was reached in January, and the fate of the remaining hostages remains uncertain, given the active hostilities in the Strip.

Also causing the Palestinian population and the remaining hostages untold suffering is the humanitarian blockade on Gaza imposed by Israel on 2 March. Despite the sporadic easing of the blockade by the Israeli side — resulting, for instance, in the permission granted last week for the entry of 400 trucks carrying assistance — the blockade is effectively ongoing. The aid that was authorized to enter is merely a drop in the bucket given the staggering needs. Let us recall that even before the blockade, there was a need to bring in a minimum of 600 trucks per day into the Strip in order to address the humanitarian situation there. Today the situation is far more catastrophic. Food supplies are dwindling, most medical supplies have been depleted, and there is an acute shortage of fuel to enable the operation of basic infrastructure. People are desperate. We saw what happened at the distribution point of the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation.

Humanitarian agencies working on the ground are unanimous in stating that they are ready and, most importantly, able to provide Gazans with all basic goods and services as soon as Israel lifts the blockade and removes the new obstacles to the delivery and distribution of aid, to which the United Nations Secretariat has categorically objected, as have most members of the Council, Russia included. The proposed Israeli plan flies in the face of humanitarian principles, disregards the needs of certain categories of citizens, including those living in remote areas, and generally imperils the lives of Palestinians and humanitarian workers.

No less worrisome are the ongoing Operation Iron Wall of the Israel Defense Forces in the West Bank and the clashes between the Israeli military, settlers and the local population. Hostilities have extended to Burqin, Jenin, Tulkarem, Husan and the vicinity of Nablus and Hebron. At the same time, Israelis are destroying Palestinian property and making mass arrests among the local population. Only recently, at least 40 Palestinians were detained. The provocative actions of the Israeli leadership, including the visit of approximately 1,500 radical right-wing Israelis accompanied by Israeli National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir to the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, are fomenting inter-religious hatred. West Jerusalem's attempts to violate the legal and historical status quo of the holy sites in the Old City are illegal and unacceptable.



We are now witnessing a clash between two realities, which are becoming increasingly irreconcilable. On the one hand are the loud calls from the international community for compliance with international humanitarian law, a ceasefire, the release of detainees and the implementation of a two-State solution. On the other is the Israeli side's focus on achieving every political goal through military means alone — with no qualms about the methods it chooses or civilian losses — until Gaza is completely razed to the ground. This state of affairs leaves room only for war and Old Testament cruelty.

What can we do to reconcile the reality on the ground with that prevailing in the lofty forums of the United Nations? To that end, the international community must make genuine efforts to help to resolve the root cause of the long-standing conflict, namely, the failure to fulfil the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to establish their own independent State within 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, coexisting in peace and security with Israel. That will be possible only with a swift return to the peace process on a universally recognized international legal basis, at the heart of which has been and remains the cornerstone formula of “two States for two peoples”. The most urgent step on that path should be for the Security Council to send a clear message to the parties about an unconditional cessation of hostilities and to secure Israel's lifting of the humanitarian blockade, which would foster conditions conducive to the release of the remaining hostages and prisoners and help to revive the Palestinian-Israeli peace process.

The tragedy unfolding before our eyes in Gaza is also a consequence of the international community's lack of resolve to give effect to its own decisions on the establishment of two States — Israel and Palestine. Notwithstanding the exceedingly difficult context, the mutual grievances and the intense emotions, we are convinced that we must strive for the two peoples to overcome decades of hostility and achieve a peace that will lead to stability, security and prosperity throughout the Middle East region. Any other scenario is fraught with grave risk, not only for the region but also for humankind as a whole.

**Mr. Ahmad** (Pakistan): Let me begin by thanking Special Coordinator Sigrid Kaag for her comprehensive briefing today, and we are also grateful to Dr. Feroze Sidhwa for his sobering remarks.

Those were harrowing details — unimaginable, so difficult to listen to and to grasp. One shudders to think of how all those on the ground — all those women, children, doctors and humanitarian workers — are coping with that situation on a daily basis. My delegation would, at the outset, recall and reaffirm its complete support for the briefings and the objective, truthful and responsible statements by senior United Nations officials, including Under-Secretary-General Tom Fletcher, before the Council. In our view, any undue criticism of their work is unacceptable.

We meet, yet again, under the shadow of a deepening yet preventable tragedy in Gaza — one that tests not only our conscience but the very credibility of the Council. This is not a natural disaster. It is a man-made catastrophe. As we heard from both briefers today and from many other Council members, this is a man-made catastrophe, driven by the unrelenting illegal blockade of Gaza by Israel, the occupying Power, the careless bombardment and the deliberate killings carried out with full impunity. The numbers are staggering. More than 54,000 Palestinians have been killed — the majority of them children and women. More than 122,000 have been injured. Gaza's people face continuous indiscriminate assault from land, air and sea. The psychological and societal trauma is beyond measure, beyond imagination. This is without question one of the gravest humanitarian crises of our times.

How many more atrocities must be committed before the Council does what is right, morally, legally and under the Charter of the United Nations? Words of

concern are no longer enough. The time to act — the time to prevent genocide — is now. As Dr. Sidhwa said, we must not allow those atrocities to be normalized, for that would be an affront to international law and human dignity. To grasp the scale of the catastrophe, let me highlight four urgent dimensions of the suffering in Gaza.

First, the health and medical system has collapsed. It has, in fact, been systematically destroyed and dismantled. Hospitals are overwhelmed, operating without fuel, without sanitation, without essential supplies. More than 800 health facilities and assets have been attacked. Medical workers have been killed, ambulances destroyed. This is the systematic erasure of the right to health and to life.

Secondly, famine is no longer a threat; it is here, in Gaza. At least 57 children have already died of hunger. One in five Gazans could face starvation. Humanitarian convoys are being blocked or attacked. Relief workers are being targeted. Starvation is being weaponized, flagrantly and illegally.

Thirdly, Gaza's civilian infrastructure lies in ruins. Water systems are destroyed. Electricity is cut. Communications are blacked out. More than 80 per cent of homes have been destroyed. Most of Gaza now lies within a militarized zone. This is not collateral damage. It is deliberate, orchestrated destruction, designed to break the will of the Palestinian people to survive.

Fourthly, the toll on women and children is unspeakable. According to UN-Women, more than 28,000 women and girls have been killed — one every hour since October. There are 50,000 pregnant women. Next month, more than 5,000 will give birth — many in tents, on the street, without electricity, clean water or medical care.

And while Gaza is being decimated, the West Bank remains under siege. Displacement is rising. Movement is restricted. Violence by settlers continues unchecked. In just the past four months, Israeli occupying forces have killed more than 130 Palestinians. Homes are being demolished. Arbitrary arrests continue.

We also strongly condemn the provocative visits by Israeli officials to the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound — violations of the legal and historical status quo. Those inflammatory actions threaten to ignite wider regional tensions. The sanctity of Al-Aqsa must be upheld in line with international law and United Nations resolutions.

Against that grim background, we call for four urgent steps.

First, we call for an immediate, unconditional and permanent ceasefire. Resolution 2735 (2024) must be implemented in full. All attacks on civilians must end. We support all continuing efforts to restore the ceasefire.

Secondly, we call for the full and immediate lifting of the Gaza blockade. Humanitarian teams must operate safely and without obstruction. The current trickle of aid is wholly inadequate and unjustifiable. The Council must demand the immediate and unconditional removal of all restrictions on the entry of humanitarian aid into Gaza and its safe and unhindered distribution at scale, including by the United Nations and humanitarian partners, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, throughout the Gaza Strip, in full compliance with international humanitarian law.

Thirdly, any forced displacement of the Palestinians from the Palestinian lands must be firmly rejected.

Fourthly, we must address the root cause: the prolonged occupation and denial of the Palestinians' right to self-determination and statehood. A just peace demands a two-State solution based on pre-1967 borders, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as the capital of a sovereign Palestinian State. The conference next month, to be co-chaired by France and Saudi Arabia, offers a unique opportunity to move concretely and irreversibly in

that direction — an objective that is clearly supported by the overwhelming majority of the international community.

While that action will take place in the General Assembly, the Council cannot remain a bystander. It must act in accordance with its mandate — to protect civilians under siege, to uphold international law and to speak on behalf of and be on the side of the oppressed. The time for equivocation is over. There is no justification whatsoever for the human suffering of the Palestinian people. We agree — enough is enough. The cries from Gaza cannot continue to be met with silence. The world cannot afford another day of inaction. History will surely not absolve us of our responsibility.

The sense around the table is clear. The urgent requests are so evident: a ceasefire, the release of hostages, humanitarian action and the protection of innocent civilians. All of that is doable. We call on all Council members to come together and to act through a resolution to promote that objective in the immediate term and to help create an environment conducive to the success of the June conference and ultimately towards a just and lasting settlement of the Palestinian question.

**Mr. Fu Cong** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Special Coordinator ad interim Sigrid Kaag and Dr. Feroze Sidhwa for the briefings.

Since 16 May, Israel has continued to intensify its military offensive in Gaza, which has completely destroyed large densely populated areas and caused the deaths of more than 1,000 Gazans in the past two weeks alone.

The question has been repeatedly asked: When will the conflict end? Over the past 600 days, northern, central and southern Gaza have been ravaged by war, claiming the lives of more than 54,000 people. The population of Gaza has been forcefully displaced time and again. The Security Council and the General Assembly have adopted multiple resolutions calling for an immediate ceasefire, but the conflict has not yet subsided, and the engine of war is still roaring. Continued prolongation of the fighting will not lead to the release of hostages, but only to more deaths and hatred.

The question has been repeatedly asked: Are there no limits to the means of the conflict? Even wars have rules. Compliance with international humanitarian law is an undeniable obligation of all parties. In Gaza, however, we have witnessed the red lines of international law and the bottom line of human morality being repeatedly violated and breached. Humanitarian assistance has been weaponized, with 2 million people plunged into extreme hunger as a result of the prolonged blockade. Schools, hospitals, refugee camps and United Nations facilities have been targeted. Journalists and humanitarian workers have been mercilessly killed. Securing humanitarian assistance is an obligation of the occupying Power under international law. All assistance must adhere to the principles of impartiality, independence and neutrality. The safety and security of civilian facilities and humanitarian workers must be guaranteed. All attacks must be strictly investigated and the perpetrators held accountable.

The question has been repeatedly asked: Will the Palestinian people be forced to lose their homes once again? Gaza is in ruins with living conditions severely jeopardized. Recently, there have been repeated calls by the Israeli side for the complete destruction and capture of Gaza. The Israeli army already controls more than 70 per cent of Gaza. At the same time, continued expansion of settlements in the West Bank and intensified settler violence gravely limit the space for the Palestinian people to survive. Measures aimed at altering the demographic and territorial composition of Gaza, as well as settlement activities, are in violation of Security Council resolutions and international law. The annexation of Gaza and the West Bank will completely eliminate the prospects for peace in the Middle East.

In the face of such questions, China firmly reiterates that a durable ceasefire in Gaza cannot be delayed, and that Israel must immediately cease all military operations. Alleviating the humanitarian catastrophe is an immediate priority. Israel must lift the blockade, fully restore humanitarian access and support the United Nations and other international humanitarian organizations in their efforts to provide assistance. China appreciates and will continue to support the work of Under-Secretary-General Fletcher.

Gaza and the West Bank are inalienable parts of the State of Palestine. The international community must firmly oppose any attempt to annex the territories of Gaza or the West Bank and oppose the forced displacement of the population of Gaza. As a country with significant influence over the parties concerned, the United States should adopt a fair and responsible attitude and take effective and forceful actions. The Security Council bears the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. Algeria and other Council members are currently preparing a new draft resolution. China supports the Council's efforts to take effective action to promote a lasting ceasefire and alleviate the humanitarian disaster.

The implementation of the two-State solution is the only viable way to resolve the Palestinian issue. The international community must step up efforts to advance the political process of the two-State solution. We look forward to the high-level meeting on the implementation of the two-State solution, to be held in June, and hope it will provide new impetus for the prospects of realizing the two-State solution. China will continue to work with the international community to end the fighting in Gaza, alleviate the humanitarian disaster, achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the question of Palestinian and restore peace and stability in the Middle East.

**Mr. Sangjin Kim** (Republic of Korea): I thank Special Coordinator Sigrid Kaag for her important briefing. I also thank Dr. Feroze Sidhwa for his compelling testimony and dedication on the ground.

The current violence and suffering unfolding in Gaza over the past 19 months makes us doubt that we are now living in the twenty-first century. The recent killing of Yaqeen Hammad, an 11-year-old girl bravely helping to deliver humanitarian aid to her neighbours and reporting her survival on social media, exemplifies again the urgent need to immediately end this conflict.

As we demand the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages held by Hamas and other militant groups, we urge Israel to stop its bombing, which is indiscriminately killing scores of Palestinian civilians and destroying the entire Gaza Strip.

The Republic of Korea also reiterates its firm support for the efforts by mediating countries — namely, Egypt, Qatar and the United States — to secure a desperately needed resumption of the ceasefire. We appeal to both Hamas and Israel to faithfully engage with the mediators for an immediate ceasefire and release of all remaining hostages.

We remain deeply concerned about the new modalities of humanitarian aid in Gaza, which reportedly started operations at a severely limited number of militarized locations earlier this week. We reiterate our fundamental position that Israel has a legal obligation to allow the swift and unimpeded flow of aid throughout Gaza, with full respect for the humanitarian principles and in full cooperation with trusted humanitarian agencies, including the United Nations.

In that regard, we call on Israel to listen to the principled voices of humanitarian workers, including the former Executive Director of the Gaza Humanitarian

Foundation, who tendered his resignation because, “it could not adhere to the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence”.

It is not only food, but also other necessities, including medicine and medical equipment, water, sanitation, shelters and fuel that are in desperate need. Such aid, severely limited in terms of quantity and access, cannot provide adequate relief to the 2 million people in Gaza. Innocent civilians do not deserve such inhumane treatment. Also concerning is that Israel’s humanitarian aid plan would lead to the forcible displacements of hungry Palestinian civilians in Gaza by coercing them directly, through the promise of withheld food and humanitarian aid, to move to areas by distribution sites.

Also unjustifiable is using civilians and civilian infrastructure, by both State and non-State actors, as human shields. While we demand an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, we also strongly demand that all parties to the conflict adhere to their obligations under international humanitarian law and hold responsible those who violate them.

Turning to the worsening situation in the West Bank, we reiterate our call for an immediate de-escalation and full respect for international law and the relevant Security Council resolutions. Last week’s incident, where Israeli soldiers fired warning shots at dozens of diplomats visiting the city of Jenin in the northern West Bank, clearly shows that, under the current occupation, with severe military operations, no one — not even foreign diplomats — are safe.

Under international humanitarian law, the occupying Power must maintain the status quo. As detailed in resolution 2334 (2016), Israel should cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, and any incitement and inflammatory rhetoric, especially vis-à-vis holy sites in Jerusalem, must stop.

The Republic of Korea expresses its deep concern about Israel’s recent approvals for the construction of new settlements in the West Bank. Since the construction of settlements runs counter to international law and undermines the viability of the two-State solution, the Republic of Korea calls on Israel to reverse the relevant decisions.

In addition, we express concern about the repeated incendiary remarks and acts by senior Israeli officials, including the recent visits to holy sites. Unilateral actions and incitement against the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, the United Nations-mandated Agency, must also stop.

We share the international community’s concern about the eroding vision of the two-State solution. Perpetuating violence and agony and denying the existence or future of neighbours undermines the realization of a just and durable peace. Sadly, the reality today, seen in the harrowing video of a little girl walking, in flames, after Israeli air strikes targeting a shelter-turned school, is the opposite. The Republic of Korea therefore reiterates its call for an end to the bloodshed and for the release of hostages and reaffirms its steadfast support for the two-State solution, with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace, security and dignity. As a Security Council member, the Republic of Korea will actively participate in discussions, including the high-level conference in June, to secure peace and revive a viable path towards the resumption of a political horizon based on the two-State solution.

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

I wish to thank Special Coordinator Kaag for her detailed briefing today, as well as Dr. Sidhwa.

It has been only a week since our most recent discussion at the open debate on the protection of civilians in armed conflict (see S/PV.9921), where Member States emphatically referred to the unacceptable humanitarian situation in Gaza, with the most vulnerable groups — women and children — suffering the most.

A child never starts a war. Nevertheless, as Sophocles reminds us, “War loves to seek its victims in the young”. Thousands of children have been killed, wounded, separated from their families, deprived of their basic right to grow up healthy and stripped of their dreams for a better future.

With each passing day, more Palestinians are at risk of dying, following thousands. The latest Integrated Food Security Phase Classification report clearly warns of an entire population at critical risk of famine. Hundreds face the risk of succumbing to their injuries, as hospitals have either suspended their operations or have been shut down.

All that suffering could end with a ceasefire and full access to humanitarian assistance. While we welcome the partial resumption of aid delivery into the Strip, it is hardly sufficient. Much more is needed, as the population has been denied access to food, medicine and other critical supplies for almost three months now.

Blocking aid as leverage is unacceptable. Expanded military operations in Gaza worsen the humanitarian situation. Those actions will only prolong the suffering of the Palestinians, while doing nothing to serve the long-term interests of peace and security in the region.

We urge Israel to allow the immediate, full and unhindered flow of humanitarian aid at scale into all parts of the Strip, as is clearly dictated by international law. Access to electricity and water must be fully restored as well. Dialogue and coordination with the United Nations and its agencies remains critical in that regard.

We share the concerns expressed by our United Nations colleagues at proposals to establish a new mechanism for the delivery of aid, which would not meet basic humanitarian principles. We cannot support a scheme that does not prioritize the needs of civilians, undermines the United Nations’ ability to operate independently, excludes specific parts of Gaza and increases further instability and insecurity.

At the same time, we are gravely concerned by the attacks on humanitarian aid workers. Those people have chosen to serve humankind at the risk of their own lives. Therefore, their safety and security must be guaranteed at all times, in accordance with international humanitarian law.

We strongly condemn incidents of antisemitism, including the recent deadly shooting in Washington D.C., which claimed the lives of two Embassy staff members. We extend our condolences and solidarity to their families and to the State of Israel.

Turning to the West Bank, we strongly condemn the incident with shots fired during a visit of foreign diplomats in Jenin, and we expect that incident to be fully investigated and accountability to be clearly assigned.

We also deplore the increase in settlement activity and violence.

Hostages are still suffering at the hands of Hamas. We reiterate our strong condemnation of the cruel treatment of the hostages and our position that all hostages must be released immediately and unconditionally.

Peace cannot be kept by force; it can only be achieved through understanding. Both parties need to strive for a permanent and sustainable ceasefire, and to revitalize the political process with the ultimate goal of achieving a two-State solution, in accordance with relevant Security Council resolutions. In that way, both Palestinians and Israelis will finally be able to live side by side, in peace and security.



In that regard, we look forward to the upcoming June High-level International Conference for the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution, under the co-chairmanship of France and Saudi Arabia, as an important contribution towards the ultimate goal of a two-State solution.

We also welcome the Arab plan for the reconstruction of Gaza, as presented by Egypt, reconfirming that the leading role of a reformed Palestinian Authority is essential in planning the day after. There is no alternative partner for peace than a reformed and empowered Palestinian Authority, capable of exerting effective governance over the West Bank and eventually Gaza, in which Hamas will have no role in security or governance and will no longer be in a position to threaten Israel.

In conclusion, it is evident that no good can come out of violence. It is crucial to break the vicious circle of violence that has plagued the region for decades and give voice, through dialogue, to peace, stability and prosperity.

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): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting, and I thank Special Coordinator Sigrid Kaag for her important briefing and her efforts. I also express our deep appreciation to Dr. Feroze Sidhwa for his compelling briefing, for his service to save wounded Palestinians, especially children, in Gaza and for his appeals for an end to that brutal war on our people.

Let me also reiterate our support and gratitude to the Secretary-General, Mr. Guterres, to Tom Fletcher, to Mr. Lazzarini and many others, including the heroic staff of the United Nations, for defending, serving and saving lives at the expense of theirs.

There is cruelty in the bombardments, cruelty in the wanton destruction, cruelty in the blockade and even cruelty in the distribution of very limited aid.

We will be asked: how can you complain about food finally being delivered after having complained about starvation and famine? Is any aid not better than no aid at all?

Who said those should be our choices, the doomed fate of our people? A full blockade against an entire civilian population, including 1 million children, depriving them of food, water, medicine and shelter, or a system of aid that is degrading, discriminatory, limited to food and limited in quantity, and which is aimed at the forcible displacement of the population and at facilitating the unlawful seizing of land?

Do you know how we know that is the objective: Israeli officials are openly telling the world that it is their intention — statement after statement, threat after threat.

After seeing starvation used as a weapon of war, now we see aid being used as a weapon of war. Should we remain silent because the alternative is worse? Or should we stand up for the humanity of Palestinians, of all civilians in any situation of armed conflict?

The images of hungry, desperate people storming out of the cages they were forced into in order to get aid is gut-wrenching and heartbreaking. Those are people, human beings, deprived of water, food and medicine for so long, and hanging on to life by a thread. That is causing outrage among the Palestinian people, all of them, including me. It is outrageous to see that situation, and still the Council does not act. How much more do Council members want?

Israel wants to appear to be allowing aid in, while continuing to ensure life cannot actually be sustained in Gaza. If Israel wanted aid in, it would open the crossings, and allow humanitarian aid to enter immediately and fully, in coordination with the United Nations, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, which proved during the ceasefire its ability to deliver aid to all those in need throughout the Gaza Strip. The United Nations plan, with its proven capacity on the ground, remains the only viable plan to deliver aid in line with humanitarian obligations and principles, and it has all the necessary safeguards, if that is the true concern.

But the true concern is how to get rid of the Palestinians by killing them, starving them and destroying Gaza so they have no choice but to leave, if they want to live.

In his speech yesterday, Netanyahu said two truths. The first is a Freudian slip: “When you try to target civilians, you invariably hit civilians”. And indeed, Israel has been hitting civilians.

The second truth is: “You always demonize before you annihilate”. He was saying that as a historical lesson for all. What did he say about Gaza? “This is the war of good against evil, the beginning of a determined war that is being waged on the battlefield. It is being waged against the human animals, against the monsters” — meaning us — “that attacked us with hideous brutality 20 months ago, and we will defeat them and annihilate them. They will not remain.” He repeated yesterday: “This is a war of civilization against barbarism”. We have to ask: is it civilized to bomb indiscriminately, to commit daily massacres, to kill entire families, to destroy all the requirements of life and survival for more than 2 million people, including 1 million children? Is it civilized to block aid and to starve a people? If that is civilized, what is barbarism then? Is it civilized to bomb schools that are serving as shelters for displaced civilians?

When you see the images of six-year-old Ward Al-Sheikh Khalil, the first question should be how she found herself amid the flames — the picture of which my brother Mr. Bendjama, the representative of Algeria, showed to the Council. It is because of an Israeli strike on a school turned into a shelter — a strike in which 36 people were killed, most of them women and children. Ward survived, but her mother and five of her siblings did not make it out of the burning building — and again, my brother, the representative of Algeria, showed the Council the pictures. She will forever have to live with that trauma, if we stop this genocide before Ward is killed too. And as our brother, Dr. Sidhwa, told us, 50 per cent of those under five years of age are not looking for life, they are looking for death, because they cannot bear the pain of losing so many dear ones, so many of their family members and siblings.

Dr. Al-Najjar, who was honouring her noble mission as a doctor trying to save lives, saw her children as they arrived at the hospital, their bodies burned and already dead. She lost 9 of her 10 children, in a horror and trauma that the mind cannot comprehend and the heart cannot withstand. Since Israel broke the ceasefire in March, more than 1,300 Palestinian children have been killed, and approximately 4,000 have been injured. Those are children. And still, it is called a war against barbarism. Dozens of children are dying of starvation. The images of mothers embracing their motionless bodies, caressing their hair, talking to them and apologizing to them are unbearable. How could anyone tolerate that horror? I have grandchildren. I know what they mean to their families, and seeing the situation of the Palestinians, without us having hearts to do something about it, is something that goes beyond what any normal human being is able to tolerate. Flames and hunger are devouring Palestinian children. That is why we are so outraged as Palestinians everywhere — the 14 million of us in the occupied territories, in the diaspora, in the refugee camps, in places as far as California and everywhere in between. We

love our children. We love our people. We do not want to see them going through this tragedy and these savage attacks by those who claim the virtues of fighting against barbarism.

But Netanyahu mocks claims of starvation in Gaza despite the overwhelming evidence. And what proof does he rely on? He relies on the fact that Israel takes thousands of prisoners and photographs them half naked and that you can see they are not starving. He is speaking of the prisoners who are parked in trucks by the hundreds, or out in the open last winter and the one before, including children — more inhumane and cruel treatment, more dehumanization, more disregard for basic human decency. Netanyahu claims that Israel is supplying the population with essential requirements: food, water, medicine. “That’s why you didn’t have mass starvation at all”, he says.

That is the same Netanyahu who decided to impose the total blockade that the people in Gaza endured over the past 10 weeks, deliberately denying them water, food, medicine and shelter. That is the same Netanyahu who congratulated Smotrich, who, after the decision of allowing some aid in, declared that “Now we conquer, cleanse and stay. Until Hamas is destroyed. Along the way, what remains of the Gaza Strip is also being wiped out simply because everything there has become one big terror city”.

That is the same Smotrich who spoke of the expansion of Israel’s borders on all fronts. Inciting the crowd of Israeli extremists storming the streets of the Old City of Jerusalem and Al-Haram Al-Sharif, on so-called “Jerusalem Day”, Smotrich shouted, “Are we afraid of the word ‘occupation?’”, referring to the situation there. The crowd answered, “No, we are not afraid.” “Are we settling the land of Israel? Are we liberating Gaza?” The crowd cheered. Netanyahu said that the objective of the distribution mechanism was to have a sterile zone in the south of Gaza, to which the entire population could move, and he has repeatedly said that Israel wants to depopulate Gaza, calling it “voluntary migration” — the code name for ethnic cleansing — and to take control of Gaza.

What should we all do? Pretend that we cannot see and cannot hear? Netanyahu is asking us not to believe his own statements, not to believe that the action that he took did actually take place. He is asking Council members to redefine all of international law to fit Israeli crimes, to enable those atrocities. He is asking members to agree to bargaining away people’s lives, our existence as a nation and peace and security for all in our region. He wants to define the terms at the expense of everybody else. His political survival relies on it. We all know that. We have known it for a long time. Nearly 200,000 casualties — killings and injuries — have been the consequence of that. What should be condemned? Genocidal statements and actions, or statements and actions to prevent the genocide? What should we condemn? There should be no character assassination of those who stand against those brutal policies, while those behind them are never held to account. We should see the truth. We should see clearly.

For our part, our position is clear and unequivocal. Nothing can justify attacking civilians, whether Palestinians or Israelis. No more double standards. We are human beings. We are proud Palestinians. We sit around this table. We should be treated exactly like everybody else. Council members should not see what they want to see in the mirror and ignore the obvious, the huge elephant in the room: the Palestinian people. Be fair. Use one yardstick. We are like everyone else — everyone. Do not have one yardstick for one group and pretend that the others do not exist — we do exist.

Although I love Mansour, the Palestinian artist to whom my sister, Sigrid Kaag, referred, we will never wither away. We, as Palestine, will not go away. Although

he said, in that famous artwork, that he sees Palestine withering away, he probably was referring to settlements and other issues. But I can assure Council members that we are rooted in Palestine — more rooted than the olive trees, the Roman ones, are rooted in Palestine. We will never go away. We will not wither away. We are staying in our homeland, and we will attain our inalienable rights, hopefully sooner rather than later.

For our part, our position is clear and unequivocal. Nothing can justify attacking civilians, whether Palestinians or Israelis. We reject dehumanization and double standards. Palestinian lives are no less important, no less sacred, no less worthy of protection. President Trump, together with Egypt and Qatar, is making every effort towards a permanent ceasefire that could end the killing, release hostages and prisoners, begin to end the horrific humanitarian situation and lead to the withdrawal of Israeli forces. The Palestinian Authority is ready to fully assume its responsibilities in the Gaza Strip, in terms of both governance and security, with international support and an international presence. President Trump said that he wants to see peace prevail in the region. That is the Trump plan — not the distorted version promoted by Netanyahu to pursue the war.

It is time for all States to do what is necessary to end the genocide, break the siege, end the illegal occupation and achieve the independence of the State of Palestine, the two-State solution and peace. That will be for the benefit of all States and all peoples — Palestinians and Israelis — and the entire region. If the Security Council does not act, there is nothing that prevents members from acting in their national capacity. Act in a national capacity. Do something. Stop this crime from continuing against the Palestinian people — this genocide. Let us not try to shift the blame from those who are not acting. Show us true character, commitment to international law, commitment to justice. Council members can act and, by acting in their national capacity, they also might inspire the Security Council to act in its collective, powerful capacity. That is not a so-called “reward” or “gift”. This is the right of the Palestinian people to life, to live as a free people, to live in peace, security and with human dignity in their homeland, side by side in peace and security with Israel. These decisions can no longer be deferred. States must act within these halls, at the national level, collectively and at the upcoming international conference in June. They need to show that their resolve far outweighs the will and the sinister plans of the enemies of peace.

Free Palestine — as hundreds of millions of people are screaming in the streets in every corner of the globe. Free our region from occupation and wars. It has all gone on for far too long. The human toll and the suffering are more unbearable than ever. There must be an immediate ceasefire. There must be unimpeded humanitarian aid and protection for our people. Hostages and detainees must be released. The forced displacement of the Palestinian people and the annexation of Palestinian land must be stopped. Save Gaza. Save Palestine. Save the two-State solution. Save peace.

**The President:** The representative of the United States has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

**Mr. Kelley** (United States of America): I would like to respond, very briefly, to some of the comments that we just heard.

Israel does have the right to defend itself and has taken numerous measures to limit harm to civilians and address humanitarian needs. And, while the loss of civilian life in Gaza is tragic, the responsibility for that rests with Hamas, which could stop the fighting today by freeing the hostages and agreeing to the ceasefire terms already accepted by Israel.

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

**Mr. Danon** (Israel): Mr. Mansour mentioned our Prime Minister many times in his lengthy speech. I would like to remind him of the words of former Prime Minister Golda Meir, who served in that role 50 years ago. She once said, “Peace will come when the Arabs love their children more than they hate us.”

A bright young couple in their twenties — Yaron Lischinsky and Sarah Lynn Milgrim — were in the prime of their lives, dedicated to diplomacy. They were stars in Israel’s foreign service, working on a diplomatic team at the Israeli Embassy in Washington, D.C. They were deeply in love, and Yaron had planned to propose to Sarah this week in Jerusalem. But they never made it to Jerusalem. A week ago, last Wednesday night, as they were leaving an event for young diplomats, hosted by the Capital Jewish Museum, they were shot dead — murdered by a terrorist screaming “Free Palestine”.

This was a targeted antisemitic assassination of two Israeli diplomats on American soil. It was antisemitic terrorism of the most horrific order. It was an act of pure evil. The animal who pulled the trigger was merely the final link in a chain of incitement that stretches across social media, university campuses, valleys and even this very Council Chamber. The blood of Yaron and Sarah is not only on the shooter’s hands. Responsibility lies with every official, influencer, academic, antisemite and so-called expert who have spent the past 19 months portraying Israel as a genocidal regime, and terrorists as freedom fighters.

But we cannot talk about such recklessness without talking about Mr. Tom Fletcher, who sat here a few weeks ago. He has assumed the role of moral preacher. His speeches and statements drip with pomposity and self-righteousness, but not a shred of responsibility. Just a few weeks ago, in this Chamber, he accused Israel of genocide (see S/PV.9914). I have demanded that he retract this baseless and vile accusation, but he has not yet done so. As if that were not outrageous enough, just two days before the murder of Yaron and Sarah, he said that “[t]here are 14,000 babies in Gaza that will die in the next 48 hours”. From the way he spoke, it seemed he had some information that we do not have. That claim was a lie; it had no basis in reality. Yet, it was broadcast across social media, fuelling the already terrible antisemitism.

Of course, as we all know, 14,000 babies did not die in those 48 hours, but two innocent Jews did. Mr. Fletcher was forced to retract that lie after the BBC corrected him, but a retraction cannot put those bullets back into the gun. It cannot bring back Yaron and Sarah. It cannot erase the damage done by those who slander the Jewish State without a second thought, without thinking before speaking. When Mr. Fletcher engages in blood libels, he should not act surprised when blood is spilled in the streets. This is what happens when antisemitic propaganda is filtered through the language of human rights. That is what happens when terms like “genocide” are thrown around like political weapons, stripped of their meaning and used to demonize Jews. The Council has become a megaphone for that hatred — a place where the worst actors in the international system use a banner of justice to justify violence, a place where the representative of Libya can sit, at this very table, and desecrate the memory of the Holocaust by calling Gaza “the Holocaust of the twenty-first century” (see S/PV.9907, Resumption 1). That is not just distortion; it is Holocaust denial. Yet there was no condemnation from most of the Council members sitting here today. He faced no consequences.

At the United Nations, statements like that are tolerated and — sometimes — even applauded. But one should not mistake that applause for morality. Words have consequences. And the murder of two young Israeli diplomats is not disconnected from what happens in the Chamber. It is the logical consequence of the narrative of participants in this Chamber. The people who chant “from the river to the sea” are not separate from those who sit here in suits and ties and accuse Israel of genocide. They are part of the same machine — one provides the lies, the other pulls the trigger.



Unfortunately, Mr. Fletcher is the rule, not the exception. He represents a class of United Nations officials and so-called neutral experts who have built careers out of moral posturing, without accepting responsibility for the consequences of their words. They are very good at it. They speak in sound bites, issue dramatic proclamations and then vanish when those proclamations incite hatred or violence, denying any responsibility for the bloodshed. We will not let them evade responsibility. We will expose them.

Just a day or so ago, Mr. Fletcher made another provocative claim — that 10,000 trucks were waiting to enter Gaza. I do not know if Council members heard that. Lining up that many trucks at the Gazan border would form a line that would stretch all the way to Lebanon. How can one throw numbers around like that? One can certainly say that there are issues and problems, but how can one talk about 14,000 babies and 10,000 trucks, and use the term “genocide” so easily?

While the United Nations spreads panic through declarations detached from reality, the State of Israel is steadily facilitating the entry of aid into Gaza via two methods: first, under the old framework, through trucks, and secondly, under the new distribution mechanism developed in coordination with the United States and key international partners.

As of now, both mechanisms are working simultaneously and will continue to do so for the immediate future. We are not merely allowing aid in, but are ensuring that it reaches the people who need it most. For example, on Monday alone, 170 trucks carrying humanitarian aid entered Gaza through the Kerem Shalom crossing. The trucks delivered food, medical supplies and vaccines. Every single delivery was carefully coordinated to prevent looting by Hamas. Since 19 May, nearly 9,000 tons of aid have entered Gaza, carrying food, medical supplies, flour for bakeries and baby formula. In recent weeks, four new aid distribution centres have been established inside Gaza. They are being operated by international humanitarian organizations and secured by a United States civilian security company. They were created to serve one purpose: to ensure that aid reaches civilians — not terrorists. Two of those centres, located in Tal Al-Sultan, Rafah, in the Morag Corridor, began operations yesterday. They are already distributing food packages to thousands of families in need. That is happening despite attempts by Hamas to block civilians from accessing aid by setting up checkpoints and roadblocks. Hamas knows that losing control over aid means losing control over the people of Gaza. Let us ask ourselves what happened next. Have we heard any condemnation from the United Nations? We have not heard a single word or statement. But that silence is not the end of the story — it gets worse. The United Nations has once again picked the wrong side.

Today I revealed shocking information. Not only has the United Nations refused to condemn Hamas for its efforts to sabotage the new aid centres — and we have seen the pictures of Hamas blocking people — but the United Nations is now actively joining Hamas in trying to block that aid. The United Nations is using threats, intimidation and retaliation against non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that chose to participate in the new humanitarian mechanism. A number of major international NGOs decided to take part in the new aid initiative, ignoring the Organization’s calls for a boycott. They are allowed to do that. They said, “we want to give it a try. We want to help this new mechanism.” They chose to act because they truly care.

The response of the United Nations was brutal — mafia-like. Without any discussion or due process, the United Nations removed those NGOs from the shared aid database. I remind the Council that this database is the central system for tracking aid deliveries into Gaza. It was created and approved under a General Assembly resolution. But those NGOs were frozen out of the database. This is the gravest



violation of the Organization's own principles. It is an extortion of well-meaning NGOs that refuse to kiss the ring. It is a shakedown by United Nations mobsters; how can they do that? I think it is a mistake if they do not want to participate in the new mechanism. I believe that there is room for humanitarian aid from all directions at this stage, but to actually threaten NGOs not to collaborate with this new mechanism is unacceptable. I urge the United Nations to not let egos get in the way and to cooperate with the new mechanism. It has begun and is operational. I ask the United Nations to shift its focus from dramatic press statements and intimidating NGOs to the work that it is supposed to be doing.

Negotiations for the release of our hostages are ongoing as we speak. We accepted the latest offer on the table, but Hamas said no. It is Hamas that has refused every credible offer. It is Hamas that continues to use human beings as hostages, who they have cruelly held for 600 days now — as currency. But international pressure remains focused on Israel, not the terrorists. That pressure only plays into the hands of Hamas. It strengthens the terrorists; it prolongs the war. The pressure does not advance peace; it advances Hamas.

The simple fact remains that there can be no progress until all our hostages are released. No statement, resolution or futile conference at the United Nations will change that. We are committed to bringing them home — through negotiations, if possible, through military pressure, if necessary. But we will not leave them behind. We will not apologize for defending our people from those who destroy us. No matter how many lies are told or how many blood libels are spread, we will continue to fight for the lives of our citizens and the future of our people.

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

**Mr. Abushahab** (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am honoured to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

We would like to thank Ms. Sigrid Kaag for her comprehensive briefing and all United Nations officials, including Mr. Tom Fletcher, for their vital roles in addressing the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip. We also express our deep appreciation to Dr. Feroze Sidhwa for his heartfelt remarks and dedication to providing humanitarian assistance to the people of Gaza.

Since Israel's breach of the ceasefire in March, the systematic destruction of hope and life for more than 2 million Palestinians in Gaza has persisted. The brief period of calm experienced during the first two months of this year was abruptly shattered when Israeli occupation forces resumed their attacks against the Strip, turning the fragile hopes of civilians into haunting nightmares.

The magnitude of this unfolding tragedy is painfully captured in the story of Dr. Alaa Al-Najjar, a paediatrician at Nasser Hospital, who lost nine of her 10 children in an Israeli air strike that hit her home while she was at the hospital treating victims wounded by the ongoing attacks. Regrettably, this heartbreaking incident is just one aspect of Gaza's ongoing tragedy.

In that regard, the Arab Group reiterates its condemnation of Israel's complete blockade of the Gaza Strip and the denial of humanitarian aid for nearly three months. The blockade has severely worsened the humanitarian crisis, driving the population to the brink of famine, with clear warning signs already emerging. With over 160,000 tons of food stalled at border crossings, the deliberate use of starvation as a weapon of war is fully evident, constituting a blatant violation of international humanitarian law.

Although Israel recently allowed 400 aid trucks to enter Gaza via the Kerem Shalom crossing, only 115 delivered aid — a drop in the ocean, given Gaza's

overwhelming humanitarian needs. Notably, none of that aid has reached northern Gaza. The chaos that unfolded at an aid distribution centre in Gaza yesterday underscores the urgent need for the immediate, full, adequate and unhindered delivery of aid to all areas of the Strip, coordinated with the United Nations pursuant to its five-phase plan to reach all those in need. The Arab Group urges Israel to allow the implementation of this plan, without delay, in order to fulfil its responsibilities as an occupying Power. The Group also reiterates its rejection of Israel's proposed aid mechanism, which violates the principles of humanitarian action and its obligations under international humanitarian law.

In that context, the Group welcomes a number of recent statements issued in May concerning Palestine, including the joint declaration of 16 May, issued on behalf of seven European countries — namely, Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, Norway, Slovenia and Spain — as well as the joint statement of 19 May, issued on behalf of the United Kingdom, France, and Canada, and the joint statement of 19 May, issued on behalf of a number of donor countries. The Group also reaffirms the positions expressed during the ministerial committee established by the Joint Arab-Islamic Extraordinary Summit on Gaza, which convened, most recently, on 25 May.

Simultaneously, Israel's military escalation since mid-May, which signals a dangerous shift towards establishing permanent control over the Gaza Strip, alongside its efforts to militarize and further manipulate humanitarian aid, advances its declared objective, namely, to make life in Gaza unliveable, forcibly displace its population and seize Palestinian land, in clear violation of international law.

The Arab Group also condemns Israel's military escalation in the West Bank, along with its ongoing home demolitions, land annexation, settlement expansion and the perpetuation of its occupation. It stresses the need to respect the legal and historical status quo of Islamic and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem.

The Group affirms its strong rejection of any attempts aimed at forcibly displacing the Palestinian people from their homeland. It emphasizes the vital importance of the Arab-Islamic plan for the early recovery, reconstruction and development of Gaza, presented by the Arab Republic of Egypt, in coordination with the State of Palestine and the United Nations. This plan has received widespread international acclaim.

In that regard, the Group calls for the provision of the necessary political and financial support to ensure the plan's successful implementation and strongly encourages active participation in the upcoming conference in Cairo, aimed at exploring pathways to rebuild the Gaza Strip.

Furthermore, the Arab Group calls on Israel to lift all restrictions imposed on the operations of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, underlining that the Agency serves as the cornerstone and backbone of the humanitarian response in the occupied Palestinian territory and embodies the international community's commitment to the rights of Palestinian refugees, including the right to return and the right to reparation, as affirmed by the relevant United Nations resolutions.

The Arab Group reiterates the urgent need to end the Israeli aggression on Gaza. The Group demands that Israel commit to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, lift the blockade and resume the ceasefire, in accordance with resolution 2735 (2024). The Group also calls for an end to all violations against civilians, civilian infrastructure and humanitarian workers, including medical personnel, as well as for the protection of civilians and the release of all prisoners and detainees.

In that context, the Arab Group commends the ongoing mediation efforts by the Arab Republic of Egypt, the State of Qatar and the United States aimed at achieving

a permanent ceasefire, facilitating the resumption of humanitarian aid, enabling the exchange of prisoners and detainees and ensuring the complete withdrawal of Israeli occupation forces from Gaza.

The ongoing cycle of suffering, displacement and loss of life in Gaza for over 19 months is a profound stain on the conscience of humankind. It is imperative that the Council rise to its historic responsibilities and adopt a resolution that decisively and permanently ends this war. Any delay will only exacerbate civilian suffering and cost more lives.

Accordingly, the Arab Group urges the Security Council to engage constructively with the draft resolution presented by Algeria and supported by several Council members. The resolution calls for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire, the removal of all barriers to humanitarian aid and its distribution in accordance with established humanitarian principles.

As we look ahead to the High-level International Conference for the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution, scheduled for June, to be co-chaired by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and France, we stress that the success of any diplomatic effort hinges on genuine political will and clear commitments from all parties to achieve peace.

Accordingly, the Arab Group calls upon States that have not yet recognized the State of Palestine to do so and to provide political and financial support to the Palestinian people, the State of Palestine and to recognize its sovereignty over the entire occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem. The Group also calls for an end to violations of international law and all attempts at annexation and displacement. We call for support for the Arab-Islamic reconstruction plan and for international protection for the Palestinian people.

In conclusion, the Arab Group reaffirms its unwavering commitment to working with all partners towards a comprehensive settlement of the conflict based on the two-State solution and relevant international resolutions. That settlement must ensure an end to the occupation and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital — paving the way towards a just and lasting peace, as well as security and stability across the region.

*The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.*