



Security Council

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Letter dated 18 May 2021 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council

I have the honour to enclose herewith a copy of the briefings provided by the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. António Guterres; and Mr. Tor Wennesland, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General, as well as the statements delivered by Their Excellencies Mr. Wang Yi, State Councillor and Minister for Foreign Affairs of China; Mr. Othman Jerandi, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Migration and Tunisians Abroad of Tunisia; Ms. Ine Eriksen Søreide, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Norway; Mr. Simon Coveney, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Defence of Ireland; Ms. Linda Thomas-Greenfield, Permanent Representative of the United States and Member of President Biden's Cabinet; and Mr. Sergey Vershinin, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, as well as by the representatives of Estonia, Viet Nam, Mexico, Kenya, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, India, the Niger, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and France in connection with the video-teleconference on "The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question" convened on Sunday, 16 May 2021.

Statements were also delivered by Their Excellencies Mr. Riad Al-Malki, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Observer State of Palestine; Mr. Ayman Safadi, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of Jordan; and Mr. Sameh Shoukry, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Egypt, as well as by the representatives of Israel, Algeria and the Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States to the United Nations.

In accordance with the understanding reached among Council members for this video-teleconference, the following delegations and entities submitted written statements, copies of which are also enclosed: Australia, Bangladesh, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, the European Union, Finland, Iceland, Indonesia, Iraq, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Liechtenstein, Malaysia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Peru, the Republic of Korea, South Africa, Switzerland, the Syrian Arab Republic, Turkey and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

In accordance with the procedure set out in the letter dated 7 May 2020 from the President of the Security Council addressed to Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council (S/2020/372), which was agreed in the light of



the extraordinary circumstances caused by the coronavirus disease pandemic, these briefings and statements will be issued as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) **Zhang Jun**
President of the Security Council

Annex 1**Briefing by the Secretary-General**

I thank the Chinese presidency for organizing this open meeting.

We meet today amid the most serious escalation in Gaza and Israel in years. The current hostilities are utterly appalling. This latest round of violence only perpetuates the cycles of death, destruction and despair and pushes farther to the horizon any hopes of coexistence and peace. The fighting must stop. It must stop immediately. The rockets and mortars on one side and the aerial and artillery bombardments on the other must stop. I appeal to all parties to heed this call.

The United Nations is actively engaging all sides towards an immediate ceasefire. The hostilities have already caused unconscionable death, immense suffering and damage to vital infrastructure. I am appalled by the increasingly large number of Palestinian civilian casualties, including many women and children, from Israeli strikes in Gaza. I also deplore Israeli fatalities from rockets launched from Gaza. I am also deeply concerned by the violent clashes between Israeli security forces and Palestinians across the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, where some Palestinian families are under threat of eviction.

In Israel, violence by vigilante-style groups and mobs has added a further horrendous dimension to an already deteriorating crisis. Leaders on all sides have a responsibility to curb inflammatory rhetoric and calm the rising tensions. The fighting risks dragging Israelis and Palestinians into a spiral of violence, with devastating consequences for both communities and the entire region. It has the potential to unleash an uncontrollable security and humanitarian crisis and to further foster extremism, not only in the occupied Palestinian territory and Israel but also in the region as a whole, potentially creating a new locus of dangerous instability.

The hostilities have forced thousands of Palestinians to leave their homes in Gaza and take shelter in schools, mosques and other places with limited access to water, food, hygiene or health services. Hospitals are already overstretched due to the coronavirus disease pandemic. Meanwhile, Israeli civilians live in fear of rockets launched from Gaza. I am appalled by the attack on a refugee camp in Gaza, in which 10 members of one family were killed. Humanitarian installations must be protected. Journalists must be allowed to work free of fear and harassment. The destruction of media offices in Gaza is extremely concerning. This senseless cycle of bloodshed, terror and destruction must stop immediately. All parties must respect international humanitarian law and international human rights law. The status quo at the holy sites must be upheld and respected.

My Special Coordinator will brief you today on the latest developments on the ground and our efforts to de-escalate the situation. Let me reiterate that the United Nations remains deeply committed to working with Israelis and Palestinians and with our international and regional partners, including the Middle East Quartet, to realize a lasting and just peace. We are in contact with many relevant interlocutors and I again call on the parties to allow mediation efforts to intensify and succeed.

The only way forward is to return to negotiations with the goal of a two-State solution, with two States living side-by-side in peace, security and mutual recognition, with Jerusalem as the capital of both States, based on relevant United Nations resolutions, international law and prior agreements. The longer this cycle of violence continues, the more challenging it will be to reach that ultimate goal. Only a negotiated sustainable political solution will end these devastating cycles of violence once and for all and lead to a peaceful future for Palestinians and Israelis alike.

Annex 2**Briefing by the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General, Tor Wennesland**

The past week has seen a deadly escalation between Israeli military forces and Palestinian armed groups in Gaza that is the most serious we have seen in years. We have also witnessed dramatic scenes of violence across the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

Tensions have been ongoing for weeks. In the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood of East Jerusalem, there have been protests and clashes over the threat of Palestinian evictions commenced by settler organizations. In the Old City, including the Holy Esplanade, there have been violent clashes between Palestinians and Israeli civilians and police. Police deployed a heavy presence in the area in the context of a large number of visitors for Ramadan prayers, protests and Israeli extremist demonstrations, leading to clashes.

With some 181 Palestinians and nine Israelis killed as a result of Israeli air strikes and Palestinian militant rockets, based on preliminary figures, the toll of this deadly confrontation is already too high. I extend my sincere condolences to the families of all those who have lost loved ones to the violence.

According to Israeli official sources, since 10 May Hamas, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad and other militants have launched more than 2,900 indiscriminate rockets from the Gaza Strip towards Israel. According to Israel's Office of the Prime Minister, nine Israelis, including five women and two children, and one Indian national were killed, while more than 250 were injured, 23 of whom were severely wounded. Civilians across the south and the centre of the country have been repeatedly sent to shelters. An anti-tank missile fired at a vehicle near the Gaza perimeter fence killed one Israeli soldier and injured two others.

Rockets have reached as far as the outskirts of Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and its suburbs and Ben Gurion airport. While a significant number of rockets were intercepted by the Iron Dome, some 450 fell short inside Gaza, accounting for some Palestinian casualties according to the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). Direct hits have been reported in multiple locations, causing damage to residential and commercial property, as well as schools and a crude oil pipeline.

In Gaza, the humanitarian and security situation is more dire by the day. In response to the Palestinian militant rocket attacks that began on 10 May, the IDF has conducted over 950 strikes against what it said were militant targets, including weapons factories and depots, tunnel networks, Hamas training facilities, intelligence and security headquarters and offices and the homes of senior Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad operatives. Those strikes have killed more than 100 operatives, including senior commanders, according to the IDF. Nevertheless, the civilian death toll, including children, continues to mount.

As of this afternoon local time, health authorities in Gaza report that 181 Palestinians, including at least 52 children, 31 women and one person with disabilities, have been killed and 1,200 injured in these strikes. The population must repeatedly try to find cover from the strikes in the absence of proper shelters and more than 34,000 people have been displaced from their homes. More than 40 United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) schools are now open in Gaza as shelters, with limited access to water and no access to health care or food and serve for protection purposes only. The dense and closed context of Gaza makes seeking shelter all the more difficult. As a result of

the military operations, seven factories, 40 schools and at least four hospitals have sustained complete or partial damage. At least 18 buildings, including four high-rise towers, including one hosting international media outlets, have been destroyed, and more than 350 buildings damaged. According to the IDF, these buildings contained Hamas military installations.

Reports continue of families — women, children and infants — being killed in their homes by the air strikes. Early this morning, several houses were struck while residents were inside, killing 12 people and injuring more than 50 others. I also note the deaths yesterday of nine family members — two women and seven children — in the Al-Shati camp, among so many others. In Israel, a 5-year-old boy was killed by a rocket in Sderot and a 16-year-old girl and her father were killed in Lod. Such tragedies are unacceptable and cannot be justified or measured.

This escalation has already produced tragic results. A further intensification of hostilities will have devastating consequences for both Palestinians and Israelis. The United Nations is working tirelessly with all sides to restore calm. I reiterate the Secretary-General's urgent call for Israeli and Palestinian armed groups to take immediate and decisive steps to de-escalate the situation and prevent any further loss of life.

Israelis and Palestinians have a legitimate right to safety and security. The violence we are now witnessing is unacceptable and unjustifiable. Hamas and other militants' indiscriminate launching of rockets and mortars from highly populated civilian neighbourhoods into civilian population centres in Israel violates international humanitarian law and must cease immediately. Civilian areas must never be used for military purposes. The Israeli authorities must abide by the international humanitarian law principles governing armed conflict, including the proportional use of force and exercising maximum restraint to spare civilians and civilian objects in the conduct of military operations. I reiterate that children should not be the target of violence or put in harm's way.

Turning briefly to the ongoing regional dynamics, on 13 May the IDF reported that three rockets were fired from Lebanon into the sea off the coast of northern Israel. The Lebanese Armed Forces confirmed that firing and reported finding materiel close to a Palestinian refugee camp in Rashidiyeh. On 14 May, up to 100 individuals protested north of the Blue Line, some waving Palestinian and Hizbullah flags. The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon observed several protesters crossing the Blue Line close to the town of Metula. IDF personnel fired multiple warning shots, reportedly injuring two. According to Lebanese authorities, a Lebanese citizen later died. The Lebanese Armed Forces arrested several protesters following the incident.

In addition, three rockets were launched from Syria. There were no reports of damage or injuries. Mass protests in solidarity with Palestinians also occurred at Israeli borders with Jordan, where thousands of Jordanians marched towards the bridge connecting Jordan to the occupied West Bank but were reportedly stopped short by the Jordanian security forces.

Violence in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, continues to increase. Since 10 May, 19 Palestinians have been killed, including two children, and some 1,844 Palestinians have been injured in the West Bank by the Israeli security forces, either in clashes or other incidents, 444 of them by live ammunition. At least eight Israelis were injured in these incidents, according to Israeli Government sources.

On 10 May, amid heavy presence of the Israeli security forces ahead of planned Jerusalem Day marches, thousands of Palestinians clashed with police in and around the Holy Esplanade and other parts of the Old City. The Israeli security forces reportedly shot and injured more than 650 Palestinians with rubber-coated

metal bullets and other crowd-control means. Thirty-two personnel from the Israeli security forces were injured in the clashes. Although the Israeli authorities took steps to re-route the Jerusalem Day marches, leading to their cancellation, tensions continued, particularly within the Holy Esplanade. In Sheikh Jarrah, the Israeli security forces dispersed demonstrators using skunk water, sponge-tipped bullets and stun grenades. One Palestinian was killed and another shot and injured in separate incidents after they attempted to attack Israeli soldiers.

On 14 May, violence escalated as Palestinians held a “Day of Rage” in support of Gaza, with clashes between Palestinians and Israeli security forces in Qalqilya, Ramallah, Nablus, Bethlehem, Hebron and dozens of other locations. Ten Palestinians were killed by Israeli forces, in addition to one Palestinian killed near Ofra settlement in an alleged stabbing attack against the Israeli security forces. That is the highest number of Palestinian fatalities recorded in a single day in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, since the United Nations began recording fatalities in 2008.

Turning again to Gaza, the damage to infrastructure in the Gaza Strip has been substantial and a humanitarian emergency is unfolding. The Gaza power plant is operating at reduced capacity due to Israel’s closure of the Kerem Shalom crossing. Reports from Gaza suggest rolling daily power cuts of 5 to 6 hours in some areas. With current stocks, it will be able to operate at reduced capacity for another four days only. The lack of electricity has resulted in a decrease of clean water and sewage treatment, affecting hundreds of thousands of people. The health system, which is already overwhelmed by chronic medicine shortages, inadequate equipment and the coronavirus disease pandemic, will likely be unable to meet the needs of those injured during the violence, particularly as hospitals face equipment and electricity shortages.

Since 10 May, Israeli authorities have kept Gaza crossings for people and goods closed, including for humanitarian personnel and critical aid, such as fuel and medical supplies. The fishing zone off the coast of Gaza also remains closed. The Rafah crossing was closed on 12 May and reopened this morning.

It is vital that, mindful of its security concerns, Israel open the crossings for the movement of critical staff in and out of Gaza and for the entry of fuel for the Gaza power plant. The United Nations must also be able to bring in key items needed for trauma care and to adequately supply shelters, given the huge influx of internally displaced persons. That will require a pause in the fighting to allow limited movement for supplies to be restocked and to assess needs and damages, including to electricity infrastructure.

I remind all sides that the United Nations and its partners have nearly completed a massive multibillion-dollar reconstruction effort following the 2014 conflict. Given the range of current global challenges, an outpouring of international support on the same scale is highly unlikely. All sides should be mindful of that as the fighting and destruction continue.

We cannot allow the situation to slide further into chaos. The hostilities must stop. I reiterate the appeal just given by the Secretary-General for an immediate cessation of hostilities and his dire warning that this conflict will increase radicalization and extremism in the whole region. The international community has a crucial role to play. It must take action now to enable the parties to step back from the brink.

I welcome the statements from members of the Security Council, the League of Arab States and others aimed at finding a diplomatic solution to the immediate crisis. I also appreciate the efforts of leaders across the international community in

recent days urging all parties to exercise restraint, de-escalate tensions and prevent further civilian casualties.

We are once again witnessing the tragic results of the failure to address the core issues that have driven the conflict for decades. Palestinian and Israeli civilians continue to endure the suffering that accompanies repeated cycles of violence and conflict. These cycles of violence will stop only with a political resolution of the conflict, including addressing the status of Jerusalem and other final-status issues; putting an end to the occupation; and the realization of a two-State solution on the basis of the 1967 lines, United Nations resolutions, international law and mutual agreements, with Jerusalem as capital of both Israel and Palestine.

I reiterate my call to the members of the Middle East Quartet, key Arab and international partners and the Israeli and Palestinian leadership to strengthen efforts to return to meaningful negotiations towards a viable two-State solution.

Annex 3**Statement by the State Councilor and Minister for Foreign Affairs of China, Wang Yi**

[Original: Chinese and English]

I thank Secretary-General António Guterres and the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Tor Wennesland, for their briefings. I listened attentively to the statements delivered by the Palestinian Foreign Minister, the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations and the Foreign Ministers of Egypt and Jordan, respectively. I welcome the representatives of Algeria and the League of Arab States to today's open debate.

The conflict between Israel and Palestine has continued to escalate in recent days. It has caused heavy casualties, including among women and children. The situation is dangerous and urgent, and it calls for an immediate ceasefire and an end to the violence. The international community must take action right away and make every effort to avert a further deterioration of the situation, prevent the region from backsliding into turbulence and protect lives in local communities.

The Palestinian question remains at the heart of the Middle East issue. Without stability in the Middle East, there can hardly be tranquillity in the world. Only when the Palestinian question is resolved in a comprehensive, just and durable manner can lasting peace and common security be truly realized in the Middle East. In the light of the current tensions, China would like to propose the following.

First, agreeing a ceasefire and putting an end the violence are the most pressing tasks. The use of force cannot bring peace or tranquillity and violence only sows more seeds of hatred. China strongly condemns violence against civilians and we once again urge the parties to the conflict to immediately cease military actions and hostilities and stop actions such as air strikes, ground offensives and rocket launches, which aggravate the situation. It is important that Israel exercise restraint; earnestly observe the relevant United Nations resolutions; stop the demolition of Palestinian homes and the eviction of the Palestinian people; discontinue its settlement expansion; put an end to the violence, threats and provocations against Muslims; and maintain and respect the historical status quo of the holy sites in Jerusalem. Meanwhile, Palestine needs to avoid taking steps that may further escalate the situation; avoid civilian casualties; and work with other parties for an immediate de-escalation of the situation.

Secondly, humanitarian assistance is urgently needed. The concurrence of the coronavirus disease pandemic and the current conflict and disorder has made the humanitarian crisis all the more challenging for the region. The situation in the Gaza Strip is particularly worrisome. We urge Israel to earnestly fulfil its obligations under international law; promptly and fully lift the blockade on and besiege of Gaza; ensure the safety and rights of the civilians in the occupied Palestinian territory; and facilitate the access of humanitarian assistance. The international community should extend humanitarian aid to Palestine via multiple channels and continue to support the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East in an effort to improve the humanitarian situation in Palestine. The United Nations needs to coordinate the planning of international humanitarian emergency relief and make the utmost efforts to prevent a humanitarian disaster from happening.

Thirdly, international support is an urgent obligation. The Security Council, shouldering the primary responsibility for safeguarding international peace and security, must take strong actions on the Palestine-Israel conflict, reiterate its firm

support for the two-State solution and do more to de-escalate the situation as soon as possible. China has been working with the relevant countries to draft a Security Council press statement. Regrettably, however, the Security Council has not been able to speak with one voice until today because of the obstruction of a single country. We call on the United States to shoulder its responsibilities, take a just position and, together with the majority of the international community, support the Security Council in easing the situation, rebuilding trust and advancing a political settlement. We also support a more active role by the United Nations, the League of Arab States, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and countries with important influence in the region so as to help galvanize more broad-based and effective efforts to achieve peace.

Fourthly, the two-State solution is the fundamental way forward. Recent years have seen a derailment of the Middle East peace process. The relevant United Nations resolutions have not been effectively implemented. In particular, Palestine's right to establish an independent State has been persistently undermined and the suffering of the Palestinian people further deepened, leading to the crisis we see today. Everything that has happened proves once again that an enduring settlement can be achieved only on the basis of the two-State solution. The Palestine-Israel issue has been on the agenda of the United Nations for more than 70 years. Generations of Palestinians have waited, year after year, for the restoration of their legitimate national right, the realization of which remains elusive. Justice is already running late, but it must not be forever absent. China supports a resumption of peace talks between Palestine and Israel on the basis of the two-State solution as soon as possible. China supports the early establishment of an independent state of Palestine that enjoys full sovereignty on the basis of the 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital. This is the way to fundamentally achieve peaceful coexistence between Palestine and Israel, harmony between the Arab and Jewish peoples and enduring peace in the Middle East.

China is a sincere friend of the Palestinian people. From the outset, we have followed the Middle East peace process with concern and remained a staunch force for justice and fairness and for all efforts conducive to de-escalation. The current situation has further highlighted the significance of the four-point proposal on the Palestinian question put forward by the President of China, Xi Jinping, in 2017. Since assuming the rotating presidency of the Security Council, China has attached particular importance to the current tensions in the Middle East and has facilitated multiple rounds of deliberations on the Palestinian question. China will double down on our efforts to promote peace talks and earnestly perform our duty as President of the Security Council. We reaffirm our invitation to Palestinian and Israeli peace advocates to continue their dialogue in China, and we invite representatives of the two sides to come to China for direct negotiations.

Every instance of turbulence in Palestine-Israel relations sounds the alarm for the international rule of law, tests multilateral cooperation and weighs on the human conscience. Will the United Nations and the Security Council step forward and do what they should? People across the world are watching, and history is taking stock. We should and must stand in solidarity for peace and justice, for equity and conscience and on the right side of history. We must practice true multilateralism and strive for an early, comprehensive, just and enduring settlement of the Palestinian question.

Annex 4**Statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Migration and Tunisians Abroad, Othman Jerandi**

[Original: Arabic]

We are meeting today for the third time as a matter of urgency to discuss the dangerous escalation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, which represents a grave threat to international peace and security.

Some 174 unarmed Palestinian civilians, among them 47 children, have fallen victim to the blatant aggression of the occupying Power in yet another round in its series of practices of repression, intimidation and aggression against the Palestinian people. These practices have been going on for more than seven decades, almost the entire lifetime of the Security Council, the main body charged under the Charter with responsibility for maintaining world peace and security, which all downtrodden peoples rely on to protect them from aggression.

Tunisia, which shall never deviate from its unshakeable historical position of support for the just Palestinian cause, today reaffirms its vigorous condemnation of the practices of the occupying Power. Not content with flouting international law, international humanitarian law, international human rights law and the resolutions of this Council and other bodies of the United Nations, the occupying Power is contemptuous of all humanitarian values and charters and disrespects even religious sites.

Nothing indicates this more clearly than the provocations and attacks against worshippers in and around the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the defilement of its sanctity in the holy month of Ramadan, alongside the relentless persistence of Israel in its expansionist policies, settlement and annexation schemes, house demolitions, land seizures, evictions and uprooting from the land of its Palestinian inhabitants, as well as attempts to change the historical and legal status of Jerusalem and erase its historical, cultural and demographic features.

For 47 Palestinian children to fall victim to Israeli bullets and bombs is not without precedent. It is merely a repetition of what the Palestinian people as a whole have endured for decades, which has taken the lives of thousands of innocents and kept the entire region in a state of tension and instability.

Despite all the repressive practices and aggressive policies of the occupation authorities and their history of ignoring United Nations resolutions and all legal and humanitarian considerations, Israel persists in escalating its repressive practices and military operations against the Palestinian people throughout the territories, relying upon the silence of this Council.

Accordingly, it has become a political, legal and ethical duty to determine responsibility and hold to account those who have caused such a grave deterioration in the situation, in terms of loss of life, destruction of property and threat to security and stability in the region, at a time when the world was looking forward to a resumption of the trajectory of peace.

The current escalation is a direct result of the unjust decision of the occupation authorities to evict Palestinian families from their homes in the Shaykh Jarrah and Silwan neighbourhoods in East Jerusalem as part of their ongoing plans to Judaize the city and empty it of its Palestinian inhabitants, the violation of the sanctity of the Haram Al-Sharif, the repeated attacks on the Aqsa Mosque and harassment of Muslim worshippers, preventing them from performing their religious rites, and the

repression of Palestinians in East Jerusalem during the holy month of Ramadan in an act of blatant aggression against all Muslims worldwide.

Tunisia calls upon the international community and the Security Council to shoulder their responsibilities to halt this dangerous escalation, prevent a repetition in the future by addressing the underlying and immediate causes, provide essential protection for the Palestinian people and uphold the historical and legal status of East Jerusalem.

Tunisia further calls upon the Security Council to intervene swiftly and effectively and to adopt a clear and unambiguous position compelling the occupying Power to put an immediate end to its attacks on the Palestinian people and halt the escalation before more civilians lose their lives.

However, this will be possible only by acknowledging that the Palestinians, like all other peoples, have the right to self-determination and to live in freedom and dignity, and by refraining from equating the victim with the executioner and making excuses for the aggressor.

While expressing our appreciation for the diplomatic efforts of several international and regional parties to bring about de-escalation and calm the situation, we stress that, although important, this can only be an interim solution that will return the situation to the status quo ante of continuing occupation, settlement projects, land seizures, house demolitions, blockades and various other forms of collective punishment imposed on the Palestinian people.

Today, we call upon the international community to shoulder its responsibilities in full and compel Israel, as the occupying Power, to end the occupation, respect United Nations resolutions and international legitimacy and submit to the will of peace, which must inevitably triumph over the will of no-peace.

Before concluding, I should like to stress once more that Tunisia, the non-permanent Arab member of the Security Council shall, at the instructions of our President Kaïs Saïed, continue to work with other members of the Security Council to put an immediate end to the blatant aggression against the Palestinian people and halt escalation before there are more civilian deaths.

We further stress that security and stability will not be restored to the region unless a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the just Palestinian issue is reached, based on United Nations resolutions, internationally agreed terms of reference and the Arab Peace Initiative. Such a settlement must restore the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, which shall not lapse with the passage of time and which include the right to self-determination and the right to establish an independent, sovereign State within the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

I should like to affirm once more that that right is acknowledged by all United Nations conventions and international law, while the occupation continues to be rejected.

In conclusion, I should like to re-affirm Tunisia's firm commitment to participating actively in all constructive endeavours and initiatives designed to achieve a settlement as soon as possible, thereby promoting peace and security in the region and the world.

Annex 5**Statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Norway, Ine Eriksen Søreide**

I thank both Secretary-General Guterres and Special Coordinator Wennesland for their briefings.

Since the Council last met on Wednesday, 12 May, the situation on the ground has deteriorated significantly. As the Secretary-General reported, civilian losses are increasing. As previously noted at two meetings held earlier this week, Norway is deeply worried about the situation, including the risks of further escalation.

We call again for de-escalation. We continue to condemn the rocket attacks by Hamas and other groups against the civilian population in Israel. They are completely unacceptable, and we recognize Israel's right to self-defence. At the same time, we urge Israel to ensure proportionality in its response and to show the utmost restraint in order to protect civilians in line with international humanitarian law.

Norway has repeatedly condemned all attacks against civilians. We are appalled by the deaths of a large number of children. Children are never a legitimate target and must be protected from harm. In addition, there is tremendous psychosocial stress. Hundreds of families are being forced to flee their homes. Furthermore, 35 schools in Gaza and three schools in Israel have been damaged in the violence. All parties have a duty to protect children.

Yesterday's attack that struck the premises of several media outlets in Gaza is deeply troubling. A free and independent press has an important role to play in providing fact-based reporting from conflict zones and has the right to be protected. There is an urgent need for a cessation of hostilities. We welcome all efforts to that end, including by neighbouring countries. We call for rapid, safe and unimpeded access for humanitarian actors to bring in food, health services and other humanitarian relief, including essential goods such as fuel and gas.

Jerusalem is sacred to three religions and two peoples and therefore mobilizes believers across regions and the world. The Israeli authorities have a special duty to safeguard the rights of believers at the holy sites of East Jerusalem and to ensure that the historical status quo at the Holy Esplanade is respected. We expect the rights of all residents of Jerusalem to be upheld in accordance with international law.

The events now unfolding in Gaza are not happening in a vacuum. We must therefore also address the underlying issues of this crisis. The risk of forced evictions in the Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan neighbourhoods in East Jerusalem is fuelling the conflict and contributing to the further escalation of an extremely tense situation. As repeatedly expressed by the Council, most recently in resolution 2334 (2016), all measures aimed at altering the demographic composition, character and status of the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, are illegal under international humanitarian law. That includes forced evictions and the confiscation of Palestinian property. As long as there is no peace — no two-State solution — civilians will continue to suffer. Renewed efforts to restart negotiations towards a two-State solution are urgently needed.

In closing, let me again emphasize the importance of Council action. This is our third Council meeting this week on this matter and we are all fully informed about the developments on the ground. It is now vital that the Council speak with one voice to address the situation. Norway stands ready to work with all Council members to find suitable language to express our deep concern at the situation, call for an immediate cessation of hostilities and reconfirm our support for the two-State solution.

Annex 6**Statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Defence of Ireland, Simon Coveney**

I thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's meeting, which Ireland strongly supported. We have waited too long to express ourselves in an open meeting of the Council; the world is watching and listening to what we say.

I thank the Secretary-General for his presence and important remarks and Special Coordinator Wennesland for his briefing. I would like to thank the Palestinian Foreign Minister and the Israeli Ambassador for their statements. Let me also acknowledge the statements of my colleagues from Jordan and Egypt.

We gather after a week of deadly escalating violence, in which so many innocent Palestinians and Israelis have lost their lives in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and Israel. Our thoughts are with the victims and their families and all those whose lives have been blighted by hatred and violence. Every day we lose in failing to assume our responsibilities here in the Council is a day lost saving lives. Let us send a clear and united message from the Council that the cycle of violence and bloodshed must end now.

I echo the Secretary-General's calls for de-escalation and reiterate his call for an immediate end to violence. This is the latest tragic cycle in a conflict whose recurrence shames all of us in the United Nations and the international community. The terrible events of this week remind us again of the consequences of our collective inertia and enduring failure to achieve a political resolution to this conflict. We in Ireland know that the most intractable conflicts require the greatest collective response. The Council must exercise its responsibility. It should start today by adding its voice to the calls around the world for an end to violence and progress towards a just and lasting peace.

Responsible leadership on all sides must urgently work to reduce tensions and prevent further attacks. We call today on all parties to refrain from violent and provocative acts, including the launching of rockets and incendiary devices from Gaza into Israel, indiscriminately targeting civilian populations and infrastructure.

Israel must abide by the provisions of international humanitarian law, particularly in relation to the protection of civilians, including when exercising the right to self-defence. Ireland calls on Israel to ensure that its security forces act with full respect for the principles of proportionality, distinction and precaution in the conduct of military operations. Accountability must be ensured for the actions of the Israeli security forces.

The plight of children in the conflict is reprehensible. More than 50 children from as young as 6 months old have lost their lives, as confirmed by UNICEF this morning. In addition to the tragedy of those killed and injured, no child anywhere should have to endure the trauma of an onslaught of rockets and missiles. All violations against children must end, including attacks on schools. Children must never be made prisoners of history. Humanitarian access to the Gaza Strip must be ensured, especially through the Erez and Kerem Shalom crossings. Israel, as the occupying Power, is duty-bound to ensure unimpeded access to humanitarian assistance.

The United Nations and humanitarian partners must be permitted to bring in vital fuel, food and medical supplies and to deploy humanitarian personnel. We urge all parties to ensure the safety and security of humanitarian personnel. All parties must adhere to international humanitarian law and respect human rights. The destruction of homes and damage to vital infrastructure, such as roads, electricity networks and water installations, is unacceptable.

I am very concerned that buildings belonging to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) were damaged during military operations in Gaza. UNRWA plays a vital humanitarian role in Gaza and must be protected. I pay tribute today to the dedicated staff of UNRWA and other United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations, who provide critical services and support even in the most harrowing circumstances.

I also emphasize the importance of media freedom and the essential role played by journalists and the press in reporting on the conflict. I condemn in the strongest terms yesterday's strike, which destroyed media outlets. Freedom of expression and information and the work of journalists must be protected without exception.

Ireland remains gravely concerned about the clashes and violence in East Jerusalem, including around the holy sites and across the West Bank. We are deeply disturbed by the reported use of live ammunition by the Israeli security forces in the context of protests and clashes. The right to peaceful protest must be upheld.

This week has also seen tragic incidents of inter-ethnic violence, intimidation, arson and even loss of life in the mixed cities in Israel. Such clashes serve the interests of no one except those bent on exclusion, violence and revenge. We must acknowledge that the current escalation has not happened in isolation. Our focus now is on de-escalation and avoiding civilian casualties, but we must also look beyond and ask ourselves: how do we move past the recurring cycles of violence?

We cannot return to business as usual. That is simply no longer an option. We cannot return to the flouting of international law with the expansion of illegal settlements into occupied Palestinian territory. We cannot return to the evictions of Palestinians from their homes in East Jerusalem and other parts of the West Bank. We cannot return to the demolition of Palestinian property, settler violence and intimidation. We must acknowledge that these actions, occurring at a rate unacknowledged for many years, are a source of legitimate grievance among the Palestinian people and undermine the prospects for peace and reconciliation.

Bridging the divide requires that all sides live up to their commitments and comply with international law. Human rights, including the fundamental rights of freedom of expression and association, must be respected. Serious and sustained efforts are urgently needed to reinvigorate and renew credible negotiations in order to establish a genuine political horizon leading to a two-State solution, in line with United Nations resolutions and international law. The Council must play its part in that effort.

The 2 million people living in the Gaza Strip cannot endure another war. They have suffered far too much for far too long already. Years of illegal blockade have resulted in extreme hardship, including poverty and food insecurity. The cycles of violence and now the coronavirus disease pandemic have further eroded coping mechanisms, leading to a mental health crisis that particularly impacts women and children. Civilians in Gaza have nowhere to flee. They are a population under siege — not just now, in the midst of this cycle of violence, but consistently. That must end.

For their sake and for the sake of all Palestinians and Israelis alike, we demand an immediate end to the violence that poisons their future. We have a collective responsibility here today to say that with one voice.

Annex 7

Statement by the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations, Linda Thomas-Greenfield

I thank Secretary-General Guterres for joining us today. I would also like to thank Special Coordinator Wennesland and his team for briefing the Council for the third time in a week on the tragic situation in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza.

The human toll of the past week has been devastating. Hundreds have been killed and injured by rockets and air strikes, including children. Sadly, these are numbers that may grow even before the end of today's meeting. We are seeing neighbour turn against neighbour and reports of extrajudicial killings. We have also been alarmed by the violence impacting journalists and medical personnel, whose roles are crucial and must be protected and respected.

The United States calls on all parties to ensure the protection of civilians and to respect international humanitarian law. We also urge all parties to protect medical and other humanitarian facilities, as well as journalists and media organizations. We are particularly concerned about protecting United Nations facilities, as civilians seek shelter in approximately two dozen of them.

In the hours since the Council last met on this issue, the United States has been working tirelessly through diplomatic channels to try to bring an end to this conflict. President Biden spoke to Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Abbas yesterday. Secretary Blinken has spoken with senior Israeli, Palestinian and regional leaders. The United States remains intensively engaged with Israeli, Egyptian and Qatari officials, as well as the Special Coordinator and his team, all of whom are working to define and establish conditions for a sustainable calm.

In all these engagements with Israeli officials, the Palestinian Authority and all regional partners, the United States has made clear that we are prepared to lend our support and good offices should the parties seek to establish a ceasefire, because we believe that Israelis and Palestinians equally have a right to live in safety and security. The current violence has deprived both communities of that basic right. It is time to end the cycle of violence.

The United States calls on Hamas and other Palestinian groups in Gaza to immediately halt rocket attacks and other provocations. We are also deeply concerned about the ongoing intercommunal violence within mixed communities in Israel. We urge all parties to refrain from actions that undermine a peaceful future, such as incitement, violent attacks and terrorist acts, as well as evictions — including in East Jerusalem — demolitions and settlement construction east of the 1967 lines. And, critically, all parties need to uphold and respect the historic status quo at the holy sites.

At the end of this latest round of fighting, we will face familiar, difficult questions. How do we rebuild communities that have been scarred by violence? How do we alleviate the suffering of civilians in Gaza and ensure that Palestinian children can grow up with hope and opportunity instead of trauma? How can we best focus on the people of the region and their need for justice, fairness, security and opportunity?

Those are all hard challenges but prolonging the current cycle of violence will only make those challenges more complex and difficult to solve and put a negotiated two-State solution further out of our reach. So, the current cycle of violence must end. It is critical that all parties return to working in good faith towards the vision of Israel and a Palestinian State living side by side in peace, within secure and recognized borders, in which both Israelis and Palestinians enjoy equal measures of freedom, security, prosperity and democracy.

But right now, children are terrified. We need to do everything we can to move closer to a day when both Israeli and Palestinian children wake up every morning without fearing for their lives. Because that is the future we all want — one where Palestinians and Israelis live in dignity and prosperity, where everyone has the freedom to pursue their dreams. We are committed to working with everyone in the region to make that future a reality.

Annex 8**Statement by the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Sergey Vershinin**

[Original: Russian]

We thank the Chinese delegation for having convened today's meeting of the Security Council in order to consider the grave crisis in Palestinian-Israeli relations. The danger that it poses extends far beyond the borders of the region.

The rapid deterioration of the situation in the zone of conflict, which has resulted in armed confrontation and numerous human casualties, is a source of deep concern to Moscow. We express our sincere condolences to the families of those killed or injured. We strongly condemn the use of force and violence against civilians in both Israel and Palestine.

It is necessary to immediately end the armed confrontation, which has already led to the death or injury of dozens of people, including women and children. The efforts of Russia's leadership and of its diplomacy are aimed at achieving that goal. Practical steps to end the conflict were the subject of a targeted discussion during Secretary-General Guterres's visit to Moscow, as well as during numerous ongoing high-level contacts with regional and international partners.

The latest escalation of the situation resulted from a combination of factors, the main one being the absence of a direct negotiations process. It is through such negotiations that Palestinians and Israelis are meant to work out solutions to all fundamental final-status issues. In the meantime, it is necessary to strictly respect the status quo of the holy sites; ensure the rights and freedom of worshippers to engage in religious observances in East Jerusalem, which is the cradle of three monotheistic religions; and take into account the highly sensitive nature of the problem. In that regard, we consider any attempt to change the geographical, demographic or historical character and status of East Jerusalem to be null and void.

This new cycle of the crisis proves that the normalization of Israel's relations with Arab States, as beneficial as it may be, cannot lead to a comprehensive stabilization of the situation in the Middle East if the Palestinian-Israeli question is ignored. The priority now is to cease fire and to stop the bloodshed. We call on the parties to comply with the norms of international humanitarian law and prevent harm to the civilian population and the infrastructure used by journalists and the mass media. The issue of protecting medical personnel requires particular attention.

We underscore that there is no alternative to a political settlement of existing disputes. The parties must recognize their responsibility for the fate of millions of Israelis and Palestinians and for preserving domestic national unity. Appropriate conditions must be established as soon as possible for relaunching a peaceful Palestinian-Israeli dialogue on the basis of well-known decisions of the Security Council and the General Assembly and the principle of two States, Palestine and Israel, living side by side in peace and security.

That requires a rejection of any unilateral steps, including settlement activity, the destruction of Palestinian housing, the eviction of the Arab population from their ancestral homes, provocations and incitement to violence. The practice of creating irreversible developments on the ground that might prejudice a final solution must stop. Russia strongly reaffirms its commitment to the aforementioned international legal framework, which meets the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people to their own independent State and Israel's legitimate interests in ensuring its security.

In the interest of de-escalating the situation and instilling an atmosphere of trust, we believe that it is important to urgently hold a meeting of the Middle East Quartet of international mediators at the ministerial level. In order to ensure coordination between the Quartet and key regional players, we also propose the convening of a ministerial meeting in an extended format with the involvement of the leading States of the region. Our proposal to arrange meetings in Moscow between the heads of Israel and Palestine remains in force.

Another integral component of the Palestinian-Israeli settlement process is overcoming the split in the Palestinian ranks. The Russian Federation, in cooperation with the leadership of Egypt and other interested stakeholders, will continue to provide assistance to Palestinian political forces in order to restore national unity on the basis of the Palestine Liberation Organization platform.

Moscow believes that it is important for the Security Council to articulate a concerted response to the current severe crisis. There is a basis for this because all members of the Security Council, as we have seen today, advocate ending the forceful confrontation. Members are united regarding the need to strictly observe international humanitarian law, as well as the inadmissibility of inflicting harm on civilians. All Security Council members are in favour of relaunching the political process between Palestinians and Israelis and achieving a two-State solution. We also believe that direct dialogue between the parties should be carried out with the active assistance of the international Quartet of mediators, as the only internationally recognized mechanism for supporting the Palestinian-Israeli settlement.

Annex 9**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Estonia to the United Nations, Sven Jürgenson**

I welcome Secretary-General António Guterres and thank him for his briefing. I also thank Special Coordinator Wennesland for his briefing.

Estonia is deeply concerned about the ongoing escalation of violence in Israel and in the occupied Palestinian territory. We join the Secretary-General's urgent appeal for all parties to immediately cease the fighting. We strongly condemn the indiscriminate firing of approximately 3,000 rockets from Gaza by Hamas and other militant groups against the Israeli civilian population. There can be no justification for such indiscriminate violence; it must stop immediately.

Israel has a legitimate right to self-defence against such attacks. However, it is essential to ensure proportionality in these actions, in line with international humanitarian law. The increasing number of civilian casualties on both sides is highly alarming. All parties have an obligation to protect civilians, especially children.

We join the Secretary-General in reminding all sides that any indiscriminate targeting of civilian and media structures violates international law and must be avoided at all costs. Estonia expresses support for the independent journalists and news agencies covering the conflict. Their work is vital and often plays an important role in the protection of civilians.

It is also important to calm the volatile situation and incitement around the Temple Mount/Haram Al-Sharif. The status quo of the holy sites must be respected. The continuing clashes in other parts of the occupied West Bank as well as the upsurge of communal violence in several Israeli cities are also of utmost concern. We call on the political, community and religious leaders of both sides to make all efforts to calm the situation, which has the potential to escalate into full-scale war. All parties need to exercise maximum restraint and refrain from further provocation and incitement.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has already lasted too long, and I would like to reiterate that the solution to it can be through meaningful negotiations only. Estonia will remain committed to supporting all efforts, especially by the Middle East Quartet, to resume direct negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians in order to achieve a two-State solution, based on international law, the relevant Security Council resolutions and internationally agreed parameters.

We reiterate our call on all parties to refrain from any unilateral steps that undermine the viability of the two-State solution. We welcome the mediating efforts and strong calls by the United Nations and other international and regional actors to de-escalate the situation. We also welcome the convening of this open debate, and we call for the continuing active engagement of the Council to address this situation.

Annex 10**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Viet Nam to the United Nations, Dang Dinh Quy**

I express my great appreciation to Secretary-General António Guterres for his strong commitment to peace in the Middle East. I thank Special Coordinator Tor Wennesland for his very informative briefing.

I welcome the presence of the representatives of Palestine, Israel, Jordan, Egypt, Algeria and the League of Arab States at our meeting today.

This is the third time in a week that Security Council members are convening to discuss the ongoing crisis. Viet Nam joins other members in expressing our grave concern about the escalation of tensions between Israelis and Palestinians, the rising number of casualties on both sides and the massive destruction of objects that are indispensable to the survival of the civilian population. We condemn the indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks on civilians and civilian objects. Those serious violations of international humanitarian law are unacceptable.

While it is important to address both the immediate and root causes of the situation, the number-one priority is now to stop the violence. We urge all parties to immediately agree to a ceasefire, put an end to all acts of violence and refrain from any action or rhetoric that could further complicate the situation. Provocation and incitement will only add fuel to the fire and ignite further violence. It is in the security interests of all sides to de-escalate and not to issue ultimatums or threats of war. Again, we call on Israel to stop the use of excessive force and all unilateral activities. It is equally imperative that the status quo of the holy sites in East Jerusalem be upheld and respected.

On the humanitarian front, the 2 million people in Gaza had been living in dire conditions even before the first round of bombardment. Thousands of people are fleeing their homes to find shelter in United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) schools, amid soaring cases of the coronavirus disease. Gaza's health-care system, which has long been plagued with shortages of medical supplies, doctors and electricity, is now facing the impossible task of tending to the people wounded in the attacks. The fact that Gaza is running out of fuel for its electricity generators is very worrisome in every aspect. Hospitals and access to water and sanitation services depend on electricity. Our thoughts are also with the aid workers on the ground who are risking their lives to help the people in need. We appreciate UNRWA and aid organizations in Gaza for their hard work in the context of the ongoing deadly conflict. We call on all parties to ensure unimpeded humanitarian access for people in need.

We urge all parties, especially Israel, to respect international humanitarian law and to exercise maximum restraint. Gaza is one of the most densely populated places in the world. All necessary measures must be taken to ensure the security, safety and legitimate interests of civilians and to avoid attacking civilian objects and objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, as provided for in international law and relevant resolutions of the Security Council, including resolution 2573 (2021).

Now that the situation is on the brink of all-out war, we call on all international and regional actors, especially the Middle East Quartet, to redouble their efforts in order to avert the scenario of a recurrence of the catastrophic war of 2014. In that regard, we strongly welcome the engagement of international and regional partners over the past few days to foster de-escalation. We reiterate our strong support for the Special Coordinator in discharging his heavy duties at this time and encourage all parties to support and work with him.

The ongoing crisis once again underscores the urgent need for a just, comprehensive and sustainable settlement of the longest-running conflict in the world's contemporary history. We once again emphasize that conflicts must be resolved through peaceful means. We reiterate our position that the only viable way forward is the two-State solution, including the establishment of the State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, peacefully coexisting alongside the State of Israel, with secure and internationally recognized borders on the basis of the pre-1967 lines and a negotiated settlement, in accordance with international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

Lastly, we reiterate our position that it is time to end the cycle of violence and for the Security Council to have one, strong voice on the issue.

Annex 11**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations, Juan Ramón de la Fuente Ramírez**

[Original: Spanish]

Mexico expresses its deep concern at the rapid deterioration of the situation in the Middle East and thanks the Chinese presidency for having convened this indispensable meeting. The increase in civilian casualties both in Israel and in the occupied Palestinian territory, particularly in Gaza, has made today's meeting absolutely necessary.

My delegation regrets the deaths of civilians, many of them children, as a result of recent clashes. We reject any act that endangers the security of the civilian population, be it Palestinian or Israeli. Indiscriminate attacks, inflammatory rhetoric and provocations only fuel the spiral of violence. Despite the fact that the situation on the ground is worsening day by day, the Council has not yet been able to speak out. The Secretary-General, the Middle East Quartet, various international entities and several States have done so, some of them in a very clear and, in all cases, timely manner.

It is regrettable that the Security Council is not assuming its role as one of the main guarantors of international peace and security. It is imperative for the Council to speak out in a united voice to try to put an end to the violence seen in recent days and to call for the urgent protection of the civilian population, unhindered respect for international humanitarian law and dialogue between the parties as the only possible solution. Bilateral and multilateral efforts are not mutually exclusive measures; rather, they complement and reinforce each other. The Security Council must express its unequivocal support for the work of the Special Coordinator and the Quartet while supporting bilateral mediation efforts.

Nothing justifies the violent interruption of religious services. Attacks on churches, synagogues, mosques and other places of worship are deplorable under any circumstances. Jerusalem must be a space for the harmonious coexistence of the three monotheistic religions. We urge the Israeli authorities to protect and respect the freedoms of worship, association and movement, in accordance with the respective resolutions of both the General Assembly and the Security Council.

We reiterate our condemnation of the disproportionate use of force by Israeli forces in the Gaza Strip against civilian and media infrastructure, and we urgently call for respect for international humanitarian law. We also strongly condemn the rocket and incendiary attacks launched by Hamas and other organizations from Gaza against Israel. The increase in tension and intercommunal violence in various locations in Israel is very worrisome. Mexico calls on political, religious and social leaders, both Israeli and Palestinian, to refrain from inciting communities to violence. We need those leaders to bring about détente.

My country takes a stand against all measures that seek to alter the character and demographic composition of East Jerusalem. Its special character must be respected, in accordance with United Nations resolutions. While the announcement by the Israeli Supreme Court to postpone the decision on evictions in Sheikh Jarrah is positive, it should be remembered that together with Silwan, Al-Issawiya and other neighbourhoods in East Jerusalem, it is part of the occupied Palestinian territory and governed by international law.

Population transfer, property seizure, demolitions, forced evictions and settlement expansion activities constitute violations of international law and

United Nations resolutions, including resolution 2334 (2016). That is why they are inadmissible.

Mexico calls for addressing the historical and underlying causes of the conflict and reiterates its firm commitment to a comprehensive and definitive two-State solution that addresses Israel's legitimate security concerns and allows the consolidation of a political and economically viable Palestinian State. We call for two States that coexist in peace with secure and internationally recognized borders and that preserve the special status of Jerusalem, in accordance with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions on the subject.

Although the direct responsibility for resuming the peace process lies with the parties to the conflict, the international community must promote and facilitate that process. It is therefore urgent that the Security Council act and speak out as soon as possible, in an unequivocal and balanced manner.

Annex 12**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Kenya to the United Nations, Martin Kimani**

I thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this open debate. The fact that we are holding the third discussion on this matter in a week is an indication of its importance to the international community.

Kenya thanks the Secretary-General for his efforts to urge de-escalation and focus on the impact of the violence on civilians. I also thank Mr. Wennesland for his briefings and efforts. I further welcome the contributions of the representatives of Israel and the Observer State of Palestine, as well as Jordan and Egypt. Kenya has consistently supported diplomatic negotiations conducted in an environment of peace with a view to achieving a two-State solution in which Israel and Palestine live within secure and recognized borders in line with the June 1967 borders.

Beyond its high human costs, the escalation of violence in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip is reversing any progress towards the ultimate aim of a permanent and secure peace. Kenya sends its condolences to the families and communities that have lost their loved ones. We are concerned that the violence, and in particular its impact on religious sites, will fan extremism and hatred and that this will lead to the further erosion of the moderate middle ground on which the compromises required for peace can be made.

Kenya condemns violent rioting and the exploitation of popular anger by extremist groups. We strongly condemn Hamas rocket launches from Gaza against civilian targets in Israel, as no cause can justify the deliberate targeting of civilians. In highly emotive situations such as this one, police and military authorities should embrace de-escalation, protect lives and refrain from the demolition of civilian infrastructure.

To give peace and dialogue a chance, Kenya is opposed to illegal settlement activity in the occupied Palestinian territory. That runs counter to established agreements and resolutions and inflames passions that run counter to successful negotiations for peace. It is also important that the agreed status quo in Jerusalem be respected. The enmity that produces the kind of violence occurring today only begets more violence and more generations born into ancient enmities too deeply entrenched to uproot.

This dark moment calls for a renewed vision of peace built on the insight that the present course leads only to the further destruction of lives and hope. The people of Israel and Palestine deserve to live in peace, security and dignity. They hold so much in common and will forever be bound to one another. Kenya therefore calls for an immediate ceasefire and cessation of violence as the first step towards a renewed push for peace.

We strongly encourage constructive steps by the respective national authorities to engage with the Special Coordinator and the Special Envoys of the Middle East Quartet. We also commend all regional and bilateral efforts for peace and urge all neighbouring and nearby States to join this cause. As such, we appreciate the participation of Egypt and Jordan in today's discussion. We also look forward to the contribution of Algeria as Chair of the Arab Group and the League of Arab States later this morning. We call for community leaders, the business community and civil society in Israel and Palestine to be heard speaking in favour of a ceasefire and dialogue. In many countries, the powerful insistence on peaceful coexistence has often come from those groups.

There will be an end to this bout of violence; hopefully sooner rather than later. When that moment comes and dialogue and negotiations resume, we expect that they will be guided by the agreed international mechanisms, including resolution 2334 (2016). I reiterate Kenya's call for an immediate ceasefire and cessation of violence, in the interest of the safety and security of Israelis and Palestinians alike.

In conclusion, Kenya continues to support the efforts of China, Norway and Tunisia for the issuance of a timely, clear and balanced statement by the Security Council that can help de-escalate the violence and support a push for a return to peace mediation.

Annex 13**Statement by the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations, Barbara Woodward**

The ongoing violence across Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories is deeply concerning and must stop. This week has seen the worst violence that Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories have experienced for several years. I repeat my Prime Minister's call for both sides to step back from the brink and show restraint. This cycle of violence must end. The United Kingdom offers our deepest condolences to the families of those civilians killed. Each one of those deaths is a tragedy.

We are deeply concerned that the current trajectory in Gaza will lead only to further violence and more civilian casualties. We want to see an urgent cessation of hostilities and calm restored. We value the continued United Nations, Egyptian and Qatari efforts to broker a ceasefire and improve the humanitarian situation. We urge the parties to work with mediators, cease hostilities and prevent further humanitarian impact.

Let me be unequivocal: the United Kingdom condemns the firing of rockets at civilian populations. There is no justification for targeting civilians. The death toll seen in the last week is unacceptable, and the images we have all seen are truly harrowing. We strongly condemn these acts of terrorism by Hamas and other terrorist groups, which must permanently end their incitement and rocket fire against Israel and Israeli civilians.

Israel has a legitimate right to self-defence and the right to defend its citizens from attack. In doing so, it is vital that Israel make every effort to avoid civilian casualties. We are gravely concerned by United Nations reports that medical installations, 23 schools and more than 500 houses in Gaza have been destroyed or seriously damaged. Israel's actions must be proportionate and in line with international humanitarian law. We are also concerned by reports that Hamas is again using civilian infrastructure and populations as cover for its operations.

We are holding this special session of the Council during the holy days of Eid al-Fitr and as we approach the Jewish festival of Shavuot. The United Kingdom is clear that violence against peaceful worshippers is unacceptable and must stop. The right to freedom of worship must be upheld.

The historic status quo in Jerusalem is important at all times, but especially during religious festivals. We continue to support the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan's important role as custodian of the holy sites.

Let me also reiterate that the United Kingdom has made its position on evictions, demolitions and the settlement enterprise clear in the Council, and I will do so again today. We oppose those activities. Settlements are illegal under international law and an obstacle to peace. We urge the Government of Israel to immediately cease its policies related to settlement expansion and instead work towards the establishment of a Palestinian State along the 1967 lines, with its capital in East Jerusalem.

The situation on the ground demonstrates the urgent need to make progress towards peace. The United Kingdom remains committed to the two-State solution as the best way to permanently end the occupation and bring peace and stability to the region. We urge all sides to show maximum restraint and refrain from taking actions that endanger civilians and make peace more difficult.

These coming hours and days are critical. The United Kingdom will continue to do all it can to bring an end to the violence and work towards a more peaceful future for Israelis and Palestinians alike.

Annex 14**Statement by the Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations, T.S. Tirumurti**

I thank Special Coordinator Tor Wennesland for his briefing.

The Security Council held two closed meetings earlier this week regarding developments on this issue. In both of those meetings, we expressed our deep concern about the violence in Jerusalem, especially at Haram Al-Sharif/Temple Mount during the holy month of Ramadan, and about the possible eviction process in the Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan neighbourhoods in East Jerusalem, an area that is part of an arrangement facilitated by the United Nations. We also expressed our apprehension at the spreading of violence to other parts of the West Bank and Gaza.

Today's open debate has been necessitated by the continuing violence that began in East Jerusalem a week ago and is now threatening to spiral out of control. The events of the past several days have resulted in a sharp deterioration of the security situation.

The indiscriminate firing of rockets from Gaza against the civilian population in Israel, which we condemn, and the retaliatory strikes on Gaza have caused immense suffering and resulted in deaths, including of women and children. India has also lost one of its nationals living in Israel in the rocket fire — a caregiver in Ashkelon. We deeply mourn her demise and that of all other civilians who have lost their lives in the current cycle of violence. We reiterate our strong condemnation of all acts of violence, provocation, incitement and destruction.

Immediate de-escalation is needed to arrest any further sliding towards the brink. We urge both sides to show extreme restraint, desist from actions that exacerbate tensions and refrain from attempts to unilaterally change the existing status quo, including in East Jerusalem and its neighbourhoods.

Jerusalem has a special place in the hearts of millions of Indians who visit the city every year. It also houses Al-Zawiyya Al-Hindiyya — the Indian Hospice, which is an historic place associated with a great Indian Sufi saint, Baba Farid, and located inside the Old City. India has restored this Indian Hospice. The historic status quo at the holy places of Jerusalem, including Haram Al-Sharif/Temple Mount, must be respected.

We support the diplomatic efforts of the Middle East Quartet and other members of the international community, in particular the countries of the region, to calm the situation and put an end to the ongoing violence and seek to achieve durable peace.

Those incidents have once again underscored the need for the immediate resumption of dialogue between the Israeli and Palestinian authorities. The absence of direct and meaningful negotiations between the parties is widening the trust deficit between them. That will only increase the likelihood of similar escalation in the future. We believe that every effort should be made to create conducive conditions for the resumption of talks between Israel and Palestine.

In conclusion, I reiterate India's strong support for the just Palestinian cause and our unwavering commitment to the two-State solution.

Annex 15**Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Niger to the United Nations, Abdou Abarry**

[Original: French]

I thank Special Coordinator Tor Wennesland who, for the third time this week, has just delivered an insightful briefing on the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories. I also thank him for his efforts to stop the current violence in Palestine.

I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his tireless efforts and his participation in today's discussion. At the same time, I welcome the presence of the Ministers and representatives of the countries affected by the crisis.

From one meeting to the next, the news reaching us from the occupied Palestinian territories moves us a little further from the prospect of achieving peace based on the consensus of the international community on creating a Palestinian State living alongside Israel in peace and security.

The Niger remains deeply concerned about recent developments, with an upsurge in violence between Israel and the Palestinians as well as the outbreak of intracommunity riots within Israel itself.

It is regrettable to note that since our first meeting this week, the situation has deteriorated day by day, bringing its share of desolation, death and destruction in the occupied Palestinian territories and the Gaza Strip as a result of the Israeli bombardments and retaliatory rocket fire from Palestinian militants. The incidents triggered by the project to evict Palestinian families from the neighbourhoods of Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan, as well as the Israeli police raid at Haram Al-Sharif on 7 May, during the holy month of Ramadan, are likely to plunge the region into a larger conflict.

Our concern is all the greater given the increasing risk of the internationalization of the crisis, with information indicating the imminent threat of a land offensive on Gaza by Israeli troops and missile fire from Lebanon towards Israel.

To date, there have been nearly a dozen Israeli deaths and nearly 140 Palestinian deaths, including 39 children and 22 women, as well as enormous material damage and more than 10,000 people displaced, either due to the destruction of their homes or simply to seek refuge in schools, refugee camps and other United Nations buildings, which, as we have seen, have not been spared. Civilians on all sides must be protected regardless of origin, race or religion, in accordance with international humanitarian law and relevant Security Council resolutions on their protection in times of conflict. The bombing of the Al-Shati refugee camp, leading to the deaths of eight Palestinian children, is nothing short of shocking and unacceptable.

My delegation calls for an immediate cessation of hostilities. We deplore the violence and other violations of human rights and international humanitarian law and call for them to end immediately. In this conflict like elsewhere, it is important that all those who are found guilty of serious abuses answer for their actions.

While the State of Israel has a right to self-protection and self-defence, the Palestinians must also be recognized as having the same right, having suffered occupation and the effects of rampant colonization for more than 54 years. We cannot constantly call for respect for human rights and international humanitarian law everywhere else and refrain from doing so when it comes to Israel. It is only logical that the defenceless population living under the yoke of a ferocious occupation is resigned to being eternally ignored given the inertia of the international community.

Let this be clear: just as a disease cannot be cured by tackling its symptoms, the Israeli-Palestinian crisis cannot be resolved simply by putting a stop to the current violence. That has already been done many times before. The real solution is in leading Israel to end its policy of colonizing the Palestinian territories through its methods of expropriation, eviction, destruction, bullying and humiliation of all kinds. I believe that the real solution is in having the courage to create the conditions for the emergence of an independent and viable Palestinian State within its 1967 borders, living side-by-side with Israel and with East Jerusalem as capital, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly.

In that regard, we welcome the intense diplomatic efforts of the United Nations led by Special Coordinator Tor Wennesland, the Quartet for the Middle East Peace Process and other relevant actors in order to put an end to the hostilities and the bloodshed, provide respite to the civilian population trapped by the latest outbreak of violence and relaunch the peace process.

With regard to the humanitarian situation in the occupied territories, it is feared that the recent violence and the destruction of buildings housing public services, including schools and hospitals, will affect the provision of basic services to the population and complicate or delay the fight against the coronavirus disease pandemic and the vaccination campaign underway in those territories. There are also fears of an increase in cases of the virus due to the population being more concerned with seeking physical protection against the bombardments than observing the prevention measures to halt the spread of the disease.

My delegation also calls for greater support for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East to enable it to meet the needs of those affected by the fighting and to continue to provide its usual assistance to those most in need in the occupied territories. We call on Israel and Egypt to open the border crossings in Gaza to allow the delivery of emergency humanitarian aid to particularly vulnerable populations.

In conclusion, the Security Council must live up to its primary responsibility under the Charter of the United Nations by ensuring the implementation of the two-State solution, in accordance with its resolution 2334 (2016). It is time to act, because if we allow the establishment of fragmented Palestinian enclaves, or Bantustans, instead of a viable and independent Palestinian State, we will have sown the seeds for the perpetuation of hatred, violence and human suffering in this wonderful region — the cradle of the three monotheistic religions.

This time, it is a real test of the credibility and authority of the Council. We must all redouble our efforts and imagination in unity in order to support and encourage the parties to embark resolutely on the path to peace. We must therefore continue to steadfastly support the Special Coordinator and all other actors working tirelessly to advance the peace process in the Middle East.

Annex 16

Statement by the Permanent Representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the United Nations, Inga Rhonda King

I thank you, Mr. President, for having organized this open debate today.

I also thank Secretary-General António Guterres, Special Coordinator Tor Wennesland and the speakers from the affected countries, including the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, for their contributions to today's debate.

The painstaking quest for peace in the Middle East is gravely imperilled by the Israeli military campaign against the State of Palestine. At this critical juncture, we must show a common resolve to ease tensions and assist both Israel and the State of Palestine on the path towards a two-State solution based on the principles of international law and the parameters laid out in Security Council and General Assembly resolutions.

In recent days, we have witnessed the most severe outbreak of violence in Gaza since the 2014 war. Given our responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, the Security Council must not, as a matter of principle, morality and international law, remain silent on this issue. We must do all that we can, in accordance with our Charter mandate, to find a solution to this issue in the hope that future generations of Palestinians and Israelis can be unshackled from this painful cycle of occupation and violence. We welcome the efforts of individual States, in particular the members of the Middle East Quartet, to de-escalate tensions, and we urge all members of the international community to spare no effort in facilitating peaceful dialogue between the parties.

We join the Secretary-General's call for an immediate ceasefire. The recent air strikes targeting the civilian population in the Gaza Strip, which have killed more than 180 Palestinians, including children, and injured some 1,200 others, are unacceptable. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines unequivocally condemns those actions, and we reiterate our call for the occupying Power to cease its military aggression against Palestinians. We also sympathize with the families of those who have died in Israel.

We also believe that international law against the targeting of civilians must be upheld and that those responsible for breaches of said law should be held accountable for their crimes. The right to self-defence cannot cloak the wrongs of a party that fired the first shots and is using military capabilities far beyond that of the weaker party. Let us remember that Palestinians do not have shelters or protection to wait out the hail of air strikes. The Security Council is their only protection; international law is their only protection, and we are failing them.

We are alarmed by the escalating attacks, provocations and incitement by Israeli forces against various holy sites in Jerusalem, including the Al-Aqsa Mosque in the Al-Haram Al-Sharif compound, where hundreds of Palestinian worshippers have been injured. We call on all sides to desist from violence, incitement and inflammatory rhetoric and act in a responsible manner. We also reaffirm that Jerusalem remains the Holy City of the three monotheistic religions, to be treasured by all of humankind, and we reject any unilateral attempts to change its historic status.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines remains deeply concerned about the potential eviction of Palestinians from their homes in occupied East Jerusalem, including families in the Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan neighbourhoods of the city. The ongoing occupation of Palestinian territory constitutes a flagrant violation of international law and remains a significant threat to lasting and comprehensive peace. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines once again calls on Israel to cease all

settlement activities and to abide by its legal obligations and responsibilities under international humanitarian law and the Fourth Geneva Convention. Furthermore, as reinforced by resolution 2334 (2016), we condemn all measures aimed at altering the demographic composition, character and status of the Palestinian territory. The international community must be candid and upright regarding those illegal actions. Do the lives and dignity of Palestinians not matter too?

In conclusion, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines reaffirms that an internationally agreed two-State solution based on pre-1967 borders remains the most credible path to resolving this issue. Only through dialogue and good-faith negotiations, respectful of the bedrock principles of international law, can security be assured for Israel and the State of Palestine, and only in this way can Palestinian claims to dignity, equality and human rights be honoured. The international community must deepen its commitment to taking the political, diplomatic and legal steps necessary to de-escalate tensions. The imperative is clear: we must stand together, firmly and resolutely, and demand peace and justice for all. It is time.

Annex 17**Statement by the Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations, Nicolas de Rivière**

[Original: French]

I welcome the presence of the Secretary-General and the several Ministers among us, and I thank Special Coordinator Tor Wennesland for his briefing.

France is extremely concerned about the gravity of the situation in the Middle East. As we are all aware, this situation is the result of a lack of political perspective in a scenario that has gone on for too long. It will continue to produce suffering and violence if the willpower is not there to move resolutely towards the establishment of two States living in peace and security within secure and recognized borders along the lines of 4 June 1967 and with Jerusalem as capital of both States, within the framework of international law and Security Council resolutions.

France expressed its concern at a very early stage regarding the tensions that arose in the Old City of Jerusalem and Sheikh Jarrah in April, and the risks associated with the acceleration of colonization activities in the occupied territories, including in East Jerusalem. Today, the continuing escalation of violence in the Middle East poses the risk of a major conflict, with serious consequences in the Palestinian territories and in Israel and with incalculable regional repercussions. We must do everything we can to put an end to this cycle of violence. The cessation of hostilities is therefore an urgent priority.

We are particularly concerned about the high number of civilian casualties on both sides, especially children. Our hearts go out today to their families and loved ones. We strongly condemn the firing of rockets into Israel claimed by Hamas and other terrorist groups. They are unacceptable and must stop immediately. The rocket attacks are not only more frequent, but they are also more sophisticated and longer range. These indiscriminate attacks, which run counter to international humanitarian law, are putting the Israeli population in serious danger. And I once again reiterate that France will never compromise on Israel's security.

France recognizes Israel's right to self-defence but calls on the Israeli authorities to exercise the utmost restraint and act proportionately and with all the necessary precautions, in strict compliance with international law and international humanitarian law. In that regard, we are very concerned about the fate of the civilian population in Gaza, which has already been severely affected by a blockade that has gone on for too long. We call on all actors to ensure rapid and unhindered access to aid and to protect humanitarian and medical personnel, as well as ambulances. We echo UNICEF's call to act to protect children.

The continuing clashes in East Jerusalem and the West Bank as well as clashes in Israel are of great concern. All provocative statements and calls for violence and hatred are unacceptable and must completely desist, and we call for restraint on all sides. Appeasement measures must continue in Jerusalem. This requires full respect for the 1967 status quo at the holy sites and putting an end to all settlement activities, including the eviction of Palestinian families from East Jerusalem, including Sheikh Jarrah, which runs contrary to international humanitarian law. We condemn colonization in all its forms.

The firing of rockets from southern Lebanon and Syria is a particularly worrisome development. We would warn of the regional consequences of an escalation in northern Israel. We have stepped up our efforts with the relevant stakeholders over the past few days.

France will continue to actively strive for peace. To that end, the President of France held talks with the Prime Minister of Israel and the President of the State of Palestine to facilitate a return to a ceasefire in Gaza and a return to calm in Israel and the Palestinian territories. He will also meet with President Al-Sisi of Egypt in the coming days. Our Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs is also stepping up contact with his counterparts on this subject. He has spoken to his Israeli, Palestinian, Jordanian and Egyptian counterparts over the past few days. France intends to continue those interactions over the coming days.

Faced with the risk of a major security and humanitarian crisis, we also give our full support to the Special Coordinator and to all ongoing mediation efforts, in particular those of Egypt.

The priority is to return to a ceasefire. And ultimately, the escalation we are witnessing once again underscores the urgency of relaunching the peace process by promoting the resumption of negotiations between the parties. Only the two-State solution can make it possible to meet the aspirations of both parties and ensure lasting peace and stability in the region. It is time to work towards implementing that solution, rebuilding trust between the parties. That is the objective of France's efforts with its German, Egyptian and Jordanian partners and was the objective of the meeting held by the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs with his counterparts from those countries in Paris on 11 March.

Given the gravity and urgency of the situation, the Council must unite in issuing a unanimous call for an early cessation of hostilities. That is the only priority today. And it is our collective responsibility.

Annex 18

Statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Observer State of Palestine, Riad Al-Malki

Allow me to thank China for having convened this important meeting and for being represented at the ministerial level, as well as Tunisia for its relentless efforts in the Council. I also thank my Arab brothers who have decided to participate in this meeting as an integral part of their efforts to end the aggression against our people, land and holy sites. Allow me to also thank the Secretary-General for his participation and ongoing efforts, together with Special Coordinator Tor Wennesland, to end this latest aggression against our people.

There are no words that can describe the horrors that our people are enduring. Baby Omar Al-Hadidi was born just 5 months ago and will now have to go through life without his mother and brothers Osama, 6, Abdelrahman, 8, and Suheib, 14, who were all killed by an Israeli air strike. His family is not the only one to suffer such fate. Members of the Abu Hattab family were killed, including Alaa, 5, Bilal, 10, and Youssef, 11. In the Al-Tanani family, Rawya, who was four months pregnant, was killed along with her husband and sons Ismael, 6, Ameer, 5, Adham, 4, and Mohammed, 3. A few hours ago, 15 members of the Al-Qolak family were killed, including Zeid, 8, Adam, 3 and Qossai, 1, as well as their parents. Aziz, who is 10, survived.

When members of the Council embrace their children and grandchildren tonight, I implore them to think of our children and how they can honour those killed and spare those still alive. I urge them to think about how it would feel to see their world crumbling down and not to be able to protect their children. I ask them to think about what it means to sleep without knowing who will wake up. And I wish to recall that each time Israel hears a foreign leader speak about a country's right to defend itself, it is further emboldened to continue murdering entire families in their sleep.

Israel is killing Palestinians in Gaza, one family at a time. Israel is trying to uproot Palestinians from Jerusalem, expelling families one home and one neighbourhood at a time. Israel is persecuting our people, committing war crimes and crimes against humanity. Some may not want to use those words, but they know they are true. Israel is unapologetic and relentless in pursuing its colonial policies.

We are therefore left with two questions. The first one is, what are the Palestinian people entitled to do in order to resist such policies and defend themselves? The following questions hold the answer. Is violence considered terrorism when committed by Palestinians and self-defence when committed by Israel? Who will be arrested, the settlers or those resisting their presence and assaults? Will our peaceful protesters enjoy international protection or be left to face Israeli bullets and slander? Will we receive support for the investigations by the International Criminal Court or will some countries search for reasons to object, thus shielding war criminals and depriving Palestinian victims of any avenue to justice? Will products from Israeli settlements be banned or will those who call for a boycott be prosecuted? What are we entitled to do apart from hope that one day Israel will take it upon itself to end its occupation and negotiate peace?

The second question is, what tools used regularly in other conflicts is the international community ready to deploy in order to ensure Israel's compliance with its obligations and put an end to its occupation? Is it ready to deploy military intervention and sanctions? Is it ready to suspend bilateral relations and prosecute the perpetrators of crimes? Is it ready to deploy protection forces and impose an arms embargo? Or will it simply rely on the possibility of convincing the occupying Power

to end its colonial occupation, when history has proven that Israel is not willing to listen?

Israel keeps doing the same things and expecting a different result. Did it believe that its troops storming the holiest of sites, Al-Aqsa Mosque, on the holiest of months, Ramadan, and on the holiest of nights, the night of destiny, would bear no consequences? Did it believe Palestinians would accept to live in enclaves and wait for the Israeli settlers to seize the next house? Did they expect Palestinians to coexist with the occupation, its walls, its blockades, its settlements and its prisons? There is no people on Earth that would tolerate this reality.

Israel keeps calling for others to put themselves in its shoes. But Israel is not wearing shoes; it is wearing military boots. It is an occupying and a colonial Power. Any assessment of the situation that fails to take into account that fundamental fact is biased, invalid and unjust. We are not two neighbours living side by side in peace. Israel is the armed thief that has entered our house and is terrorizing our family. It destroys our homes and oppresses our people, generation after generation, decade after decade, and then claims a right to security that it denies us.

Perhaps Israel should put itself in our shoes. What would it do if it were occupied, its people persecuted, besieged and massacred? Better yet, what did it do to achieve its independence and end the oppression of its people? We made a difficult choice to pursue a peaceful path to freedom and it is in everybody's interests for that journey to be successful. But that will not happen without ensuring that Israel bears the cost of occupation instead of reaping its benefits.

How many Palestinian civilians killed is enough for a condemnation? We know that a single Israeli is enough, but how many Palestinians? Two hundred Palestinians have been killed, a third of them children and women. What is the threshold for outrage? Is an entire family wiped out of existence not enough? Are dozens of families killed not enough? Is it not enough to bring residential buildings to the ground and displace tens of thousands of Palestinians for the fourth or fifth time? All of this is happening in the midst of a pandemic.

Israel is not only an occupying Power, but it is also a nuclear Power. It has a military arsenal, the Iron Dome and shelters, while our people in Gaza are besieged and trapped, with nowhere to go and no safe haven. Even the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East schools that provide shelter are vulnerable to Israeli attacks. It is Palestinian civilians who need protection. They deserve compassion, solidarity and action.

The Palestinian people have risen everywhere because they are victims everywhere. They are victims of dispossession, forced displacement, discrimination and the denial of rights, on both sides of the Green Line and in exile. When listening to Israeli officials speak, one might be led to wonder how horrible it must be for Israelis to live under our occupation, with our forces deployed in their streets and our settlers terrorizing their people and taking over their land and homes, and with millions of them under blockade. Just like many colonial Powers before it, Israel holds its victims responsible for their own death. Israel is the victim forced to kill the Palestinians because they do not behave. If only the Palestinians could coexist with their occupiers and oppressors in peace.

Some wonder why Palestine enjoys so much solidarity and support from so many nations around the world, and the reason is that those nations are informed by their own history and their own struggle for freedom, and they know oppression when they see it. The countries that are members of the United Nations would be dishonouring the memory of those who fought for freedom in their respective countries if they were to accept colonialism and apartheid in Palestine.

Where are those who proclaimed that they had achieved peace in the Middle East by brokering agreements between countries that were actually not at war? Where are those who proclaimed that peace in the Middle East could be achieved without the Palestinians and at their expense? Where are those real-estate agents who decided that they could sell what they do not own to those who have no rightful claim? We told them then and we say again now: Jerusalem is not for sale. Our roots are deep, our history long and our heritage etched in every stone, street and alley in this city. War and peace start from Jerusalem. If we want to save peace, we should start by saving Sheikh Jarrah. We should protect Al-Haram Al-Sharif from attempts to divide it temporally and spatially. Israel continues to proclaim that Jerusalem is the unified capital of Israel. Has anyone ever seen the city more divided?

The international consensus that the Council has helped to shape and defend is being destroyed in front of our very eyes. The alternative that Israel chose is apartheid. Yes, apartheid. And one day soon, even the Security Council will not be able to deny that reality. The Council must act now to end the aggression and the assault on our people, our homes and our land. It must act now so that freedom can prevail over apartheid.

As the Palestinian people mark the seventy-third anniversary of the Nakba, Israel pursues the same policies of dispossession, forced displacement, discrimination and denial of Palestinian rights. Israel may believe it is winning, but it is nowhere closer to defeating the Palestinian people. Our people will never surrender or forgo their rights. Palestinian freedom is the only path to peace. Since peace is the responsibility of the Security Council, helping achieve Palestinian freedom is its legal and moral duty.

Annex 19

Statement by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriate Affairs of Jordan, Ayman Safadi

[Original: Arabic]

As the occupying Power, Israel bears responsibility for the grave situation in the occupied Palestinian territories. The escalation must be stopped by halting the attacks against Gaza and by putting an end to all of the illegal practices of Israel, which have unleashed this escalation in occupied Jerusalem and throughout the Palestinian territories. Immediate action must be taken to achieve this and provide protection for the Palestinian people.

The grave state of affairs in the Palestinian territories shows the impossibility of the present situation continuing. Prospects of achieving a just and lasting peace are being undermined by the unlawful practices Israel and its consolidation of the occupation with no hope of it ending. A just and lasting peace is a strategic choice and a regional and international necessity. However, peace will not be achieved by building settlements that undermine the two-State solution and constitute a clear breach of international law and internationally recognized resolutions. Peace will not be achieved by confiscating occupied Palestinian land. Peace will not be achieved by demolishing Palestinian houses and evicting residents from their homes.

Certainly, peace will not be achieved by attempting to change the legal and historical status of the Islamic and Christian holy sites in occupied Jerusalem. Jerusalem and its holy sites are a red line and tampering with it would be playing with fire, inflaming the feelings of nearly two billion Muslims around the world. As the occupying Power, Israel is responsible for upholding the existing legal and historical status of Jerusalem and its holy sites.

Preserving the city's existing legal and historical status and protecting the Arab, Islamic and Christian identity of the holy sites is a noble duty, to which His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein, the custodian of the holy sites, devotes all the capacities of Jordan to ensure that Jerusalem remains the city of peace.

It is imperative that the international community and the Security Council shoulder their responsibilities and compel Israel to respect the rights of the inhabitants of the Shaykh Jarrah neighbourhood to their homes. Under international law and international humanitarian law, Jerusalemites are to be treated as protected people; expelling the inhabitants of Shaykh Jarrah from their homes would represent a war crime. Under international law and Security Council resolution 478 (1980), Israeli courts have no jurisdiction in occupied Jerusalem.

Occupation and peace are opposites that shall never meet. Peace will be achieved by ending the occupation, respecting international law and applying the resolutions of this noble Council, including resolution 2334 (2016).

There is no avoiding Palestine and no avoiding the Palestinian issue, for it is the very core of the conflict. It will be resolved on the basis of a two-State solution that brings into being an independent, sovereign Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital, within the borders of 4 June 1967, in accordance with international law, internationally recognized resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative. This is the only way to achieve the just and comprehensive peace which the peoples of the region deserve.

To bring this about, the international community must act at once. It must create a genuine prospect of ending the occupation and achieving a just peace on the

basis of the two-State solution, in accordance with recognized terms of reference and on the basis of land for peace, which Israel seeks to undermine at every opportunity.

There is no time to lose. The historical oppression which the Palestinian people has endured must end and this inhuman occupation disappear so that our region can enjoy the security, stability and peace it deserves.

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan shall continue to work with you all as a force for a just and comprehensive peace that affirms rights and meets is accepted by the peoples involved.

Annex 20**Statement by the Permanent Mission of Egypt to the United Nations**

[Original: Arabic]

We are gathered today, more than 72 years since the beginning of the Palestinian tragedy and some 42 years after the launch of the peace process in the Middle East, which began with great hopes of achieving peace. Those hopes gradually faded with each failed attempt to put an end to a conflict in which the Palestinian cause witnessed one setback after another, thereby aggravating the climate of frustration and exasperation.

This is what has brought us to where we are at today, as we meet just after the end of the holy month of Ramadan, during which we witnessed the unprecedented provocation and intimidation of worshippers at the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, at the same time as the eviction, as part of a systematic policy, of a number of Arab inhabitants of the Shaykh Jarrah neighbourhood in East Jerusalem, angering millions of Arabs and Muslims who have grown tired over the last three decades of seemingly endless international procrastination and unfulfilled promises and commitments of a legal nature to negotiate seriously the establishment of a Palestinian State on territories occupied in 1967, including East Jerusalem. We are meeting here today at a time when we are faced with the spectacle of a military operation in which large numbers of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip have been killed, threatening the future of peace and stability in the region.

We call upon the Security Council to address this critical situation as a matter of urgency and live up to its responsibility to end the current round of the conflict, in the hope that a period of calm will enable everyone to draw breath and think carefully about the reasons why we have reached the point we are at today and to draw the logical conclusions and lessons which Egypt has long proposed namely, that there can be no peace in the region without a just and lasting solution to the Palestinian issue. We do not need to reinvent the wheel: the solution exists. In spite of everything, the two-State solution remains the only practical option acceptable to all parties.

The turmoil currently buffeting regional stability was not born of the moment. It is the direct result of a prevailing climate of frustration and exasperation caused by years and years of the systematic retreat of all genuine efforts to bring peace to the region.

Perhaps the events of the past few weeks can provide an explanation of why we are where we are today. In recent months, the occupied Palestinian territories have suffered significant setbacks at all levels. The West Bank, including East Jerusalem, has seen a major expansion of settlement activity, a rise in cases of eviction of Palestinians and a continuation of the policy of land seizure and demolition of Palestinian businesses and houses. And matters have not stopped there. Israel has gone as far as to violate the sanctity of the holy month of Ramadan, as mentioned above. We all saw how the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound turned into a battleground, totally unbecoming the holy sites and the places of worship of the three revealed religions.

Given its awareness of its responsibility toward its fellow Arabs and its belief in the key role it plays in maintaining regional peace and security, Egypt has sought from the very beginning, through intensive contacts with all parties, to bring about an immediate ceasefire in order to save innocent lives and prepare the ground for a resumption of genuine and serious peace negotiations designed to arrive at a radical solution to the fundamental issue instead of a continuation of the current fragile

situation, which will only give rise to a vicious circle of recurring violence, with the innocent paying the price.

Egypt believes that the only way to achieve peace and security in the region is for the Palestinian people to obtain their legitimate rights and for an independent State within the borders of 4 June 1967 with East Jerusalem as its capital to be established. Egypt also emphasizes the urgency of promoting the role of the international Quartet, which is indispensable to a revival of the peace process.

Egypt also seeks to cooperate with Jordan, France and Germany within the framework of the Munich formula in support of international efforts to resume negotiations. We also seek to work constructively with the United States administration toward achieving this goal.

All of us have a duty to step up efforts to put an immediate end to the current military actions and prevent further provocations in Jerusalem, while respecting the legal and historical position of the holy sites under Jordanian Hashemite custodianship. I affirm to you all that Egypt shall spare no effort to reach a ceasefire and shall continue to support efforts for peace until the Palestinian people obtain their legitimate rights and the region enjoys the stability that all its peoples desire. However, this cannot be achieved unless we recognize the need to make concessions as the price of peace in order to save the Palestinian people having to continue paying the high price of war and to keep alive the hope of a better tomorrow for future generations of our children and grandchildren.

Annex 21

Statement by the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations, Gilad Erdan

This is a photograph of Nadine Awad, a 16-year-old girl, an Arab citizen of Israel. She was studying biology and chemistry and she dreamed of changing the world. She was murdered last Wednesday by the radical jihadist terrorist group Hamas. A Hamas rocket slammed into her home in central Israel, killing her and her father.

Over the past week, millions of Israeli children, women and men have been huddling in bomb shelters while thousands of Hamas rockets landed all around them. Hamas has murdered 10 people in Israel, Jews and Arabs, and hundreds of its rockets have fallen short upon the people of Gaza itself, killing Palestinian children and destroying Palestinian homes. Hamas is carrying out its terror attacks while hiding behind Palestinian houses, schools and hospitals, deliberately using civilians as human shields.

Just before I arrived here today, I called my elderly parents, who live in the southern city of Ashkelon and have just 30 seconds to reach a bomb shelter each time Hamas attacks.

Let me ask members of the Security Council: what would they do if thousands of terrorist rockets were being fired at their country and people? At their parents or children? How would they respond if an organization with a similar fanatical jihadist ideology as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) were bombing Beijing or Moscow or Dublin and shutting down the airports of Paris or Oslo or London? What would they expect the Security Council to do?

This is not the first time that Hamas has indiscriminately fired deadly missiles at Israeli civilians while hiding behind Palestinian civilians. But this time it is different. It was completely premeditated by Hamas in order to gain political power. It was all a part of their vicious plan. While Hamas seeks the destruction of the State of Israel, it is also vying to take power in the West Bank and to replace the Palestinian Authority.

Hamas was frustrated last month when President Abbas postponed Palestinian elections, after not holding them for 15 years. It looked for another way to seize power. Unfortunately, it chose to escalate tensions in Jerusalem as a pretext to start this war. Suddenly, Hamas leader Mohammed Deif, who had been silent for years, was threatening that Israel would pay a heavy price if an Israeli court went ahead and ruled on a property dispute in Jerusalem.

Now let me be clear: Israel is a country of law with a robust and independent judiciary. As in any democracy, the Israeli Government does not interfere with court proceedings. Everyone knows that. Buying into Hamas's political propaganda ploy to portray the massive, unprovoked rocket attacks as a result of the dispute in Sheikh Jarrah is not only wrong, but it is also dangerous. It sends a disturbing message. There is never an excuse to indiscriminately fire rockets at civilians. There is never a justification for terror. Do you really believe that property dispute is what caused Hamas to launch that large-scale attack on the people of Israel?

After threatening Israel over Sheikh Jarrah, Hamas's next move was to incite violence on the Temple Mount, the holiest site in the world for Jews and one of the holiest for Muslims. Palestinian extremists turned the Al-Aqsa Mosque into a site for stockpiling weapons and launched violent attacks, with firebombs and rocks, against Jewish worshippers and against the Israeli police. Here is a photo of the stones and other weapons that Palestinian rioters placed in Al-Aqsa, desecrating this holy site and endangering the safety of all worshippers.

The Israeli police had no choice but to intervene to restore order and ensure that both Jewish and Muslim worshippers could pray in peace. Using non-lethal means, our police force was able to disperse the violent riots without a single fatality. I doubt whether there are many police forces anywhere in the world that could have achieved such an outcome.

I want to emphasize that Israel deeply cherishes freedom of religion. Every year during Ramadan and throughout the year, hundreds of thousands of Muslims are free to pray at their holy site in peace. Even after these extremely violent riots, Israel remains committed to the status quo and to religious freedom for all. Here is another photograph, of Eid Al-Fitr prayers from this past Thursday, showing tens of thousands of Muslims praying at Al-Aqsa. Do you really believe that these peaceful prayers are what caused Hamas to launch this large-scale attack on the people of Israel?

Israel will continue to uphold the rights of all believers to practice their religion in freedom and security in the Holy City of Jerusalem. As opposed to Hamas, which did everything in its power to incite violence, Israel took all possible steps to de-escalate tensions in Jerusalem. In an extremely exceptional move, we made a request to the Supreme Court to delay its hearing on the Sheikh Jarrah case. We rerouted our annual Jerusalem Day parade and even took the unprecedented, unthinkable step of preventing Jews from entering their holiest site, the Temple Mount, on our national day of celebration.

Even today, on the eve of the Jewish festival of Shavuot, when we celebrate receiving the Torah, Jews were prevented from entering the site because of Palestinian terror. And how did Hamas respond to all our efforts to de-escalate? By firing rockets and missiles at Jerusalem, our capital city. That is how it started. It was all planned in advance.

For years, Hamas has been using international aid not to help the people of Gaza but to abuse them. It has built a vast web of underground terror tunnels, which snake beneath playgrounds, maternity wards and mosques, with the clear strategic goal of increasing the number of Palestinian civilian casualties when Israel is forced to respond.

It is not just Palestinians whom Hamas uses as shields. As we have revealed, Hamas is hiding its terror infrastructure, such as intelligence stations and command headquarters, in multistorey buildings, including those that house international media — citizens of countries on the Security Council. Israel has no choice but to stop these Hamas attacks, wherever they are being launched, and it is Hamas who should be held accountable for the consequences.

We thank the President of the United States, the Administration and the many other countries that support Israel's right to defend our citizens from this terror. Every time Hamas fires at Israeli civilians while hiding behind Gaza civilians, it is committing a double war crime. It does not care where its rockets hit, as long as there is destruction. It does not care who the victims are, as long as there are victims.

Israel is responding to indiscriminate attacks with precision, through targeted strikes against Hamas military targets. We take unparalleled steps to prevent civilian casualties. Not only do we strictly adhere to international law; we go beyond — making phone calls and sending text messages in order to make sure that everyone gets out beforehand. Tragically, at times, despite all our efforts, Hamas's use of human shields results in civilians getting hurt.

As an Israeli, a Jew and a father of four, I am deeply pained by the death of every civilian, whether Israeli or Palestinian. But any attempt to compare Israel

and Hamas is factually, legally and morally wrong. Hamas targets civilians; Israel targets terrorists. Israel makes every effort to avoid civilian casualties; Hamas makes every effort to increase civilian casualties. Israel sees every civilian death as a tragedy; Hamas sees every Israeli civilian death as a victory in its campaign of jihad based on its anti-Semitic charter and every Palestinian civilian death as a victory in its campaign to gain international sympathy. Israel uses its missiles to protect its children; Hamas uses children to protect its missiles.

At the same time as we defend ourselves against Hamas rockets, the terror organization has been calling on Israel's Arab citizens to attack Jews. We have seen numerous appalling attacks by Arab citizens of Israel against Jews, including the abhorrent burning of synagogues, and multiple lynchings. We have also seen some appalling cases of Jewish violence against our Arab citizens. As Prime Minister Netanyahu said last night, that violence is entirely unacceptable. We are a country of law and the Israeli police is now working vigorously to stop the violence and arrest the perpetrators, whether Arabs or Jews.

That is where we stand now: a massive, unprovoked assault by Hamas initiated not as the result of any incidents involving Israel but due to internal Palestinian political manoeuvring. That assault has forced Israel to defend and protect its citizens and strike Hamas's terror machine in order to stop its aggression once and for all.

Now let me speak about the future. Israel has always sought peace. Just this year, we signed peace agreements with four Muslim countries. In 2005, Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip and uprooted all the Jewish communities there, in the hope that it would bring about security. Instead, it brought unending terror attacks by Hamas.

The members of the Security Council, responsible for maintaining international peace and security, stand today at a critical crossroads. There are two choices: to create false moral equivalence — immoral equivalence — between the actions of a democracy that sanctifies life and those of a terrorist organization that glorifies death, by calling for restraint on all sides and failing to unequivocally condemn Hamas.

If that choice is made, it will lead to the success of Hamas's insidious strategy of firing at Israeli civilians while hiding behind Palestinian civilians. It will lead to the deaths of more innocent Israelis and Palestinians. It will lead to the strengthening of Hamas, the weakening of the Palestinian Authority and the undermining of the chances for dialogue. Choosing to avoid condemning Hamas will strengthen the radical terror group that aims to overthrow the Palestinian Authority, whose charter explicitly calls for wiping Israel off the map. It will continue the cycle of violence and undermine the chances for peace.

But today the Council can choose a different path: to unequivocally condemn Hamas's indiscriminate and unprovoked attacks, which threaten Israelis and Palestinians alike. It can choose to support Israel's heroic efforts to defend itself and dismantle Hamas's infrastructure of terror while doing everything to minimize the number of casualties on both sides.

It can send a clear message to Hamas that the international community will no longer accept its strategy of turning Palestinian children into human shields and using schools, hospitals and high-rises to hide its terror machine. It can choose to support a more peaceful future by demanding the demilitarization of the Gaza Strip and insisting on an authority in Gaza that invests in the well-being of the people of Gaza rather than in the destruction of the State of Israel.

Israel has already made its choice. We will take all steps necessary to defend our people. Now it is the Council's turn to choose. The world is watching.

Annex 22**Statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Algeria,
Sabri Boukadoum**

[Original: Arabic]

Allow me at the outset, on behalf of the Group of Arab States, to extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to you, Sir, for convening this important meeting and to congratulate you on presiding over the Security Council for this month.

I also thank Secretary-General António Guterres for his intervention, as well as Mr. Tor Wennesland, United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, for his comprehensive briefing.

We are meeting today at a time when Israeli crimes and attacks against Palestinian lives, holy sites and property are continuing in the occupied city of Jerusalem. These include brutal assaults aimed at evicting Palestinian residents from their homes and properties in Shaykh Jarrah and other city neighbourhoods and savage attacks on worshippers in the Aqsa Mosque, as well as the relentless bombardment of the Gaza Strip, which has claimed hundreds of lives, many of them women and children, and caused massive damage to infrastructure.

The Group of Arab States affirms once again that the Palestinian cause has been and continues to be our central issue and that the occupied city of East Jerusalem is the capital of the State of Palestine and an integral part of the Palestinian territory occupied in 1967, precisely as affirmed by League of Arab States resolution 8660 on “Israeli aggression against the occupied city of Jerusalem and its people, including the Holy Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Shaykh Jarrah neighbourhood”, adopted by the Council of the League of Arab States at the ministerial level on 11 May 2021.

The violence inflicted on Palestinians in general and Jerusalemites in particular throughout the month of Ramadan has met with a deafening silence on the part of the international community, encouraging the occupation authority to press on with its settlement enterprise in disregard of international norms and laws. However, matters have taken a dangerous turn and the Middle East is on the point of being plunged into a new crisis that it can well do without. Here I should like to express vigorous condemnation on the part of the Group of Arab States of all the crimes committed by Israeli occupation forces against the Palestinian people in violation of their holy places — both Muslim and Christian — and their right to freedom of worship, which is guaranteed by all instruments and laws. The Group also condemns the excessive use of force against the blockaded Gaza Strip.

It is essential to point out that any attempt to alter facts and turn them upside down by portraying the villain as victim will be futile and dismissed out of hand. The latest escalation is nothing but a direct result of the Israeli strategy of obstructing the road to peace and undermining the chances of establishing an independent and fully sovereign Palestinian State. The decision to prohibit the organization of general elections in Jerusalem and the daily attacks on Palestinians are perfect examples of this. Israeli strategy affects all aspects of Palestinian life and serves to increase the sense of frustration among the besieged and oppressed Palestinian people, especially the young, due to their miserable living conditions and lack of any prospect of a solution to the issue, which has remained stalled and in a state of unjustified inertia for years.

The Group of Arab States condemns Israeli crimes and arbitrary measures, which represent a blatant violation of United Nations resolutions, international law and international humanitarian law. Accordingly, it calls upon the United Nations and

specialized international organizations to assume their legal, historical and moral responsibilities and put an immediate end to Israeli aggression, provide international protection for the Palestinian people, uphold their right to freedom of worship and safeguard peace and security throughout the region and the world.

We further stress the need to maintain the existing legal and historical status of Jerusalem and its Muslim and Christian holy sites, including the Aqsa Mosque. We affirm the importance of Hashemite custodianship over the Muslim and Christian holy sites and acknowledge that the Islamic Endowments and Aqsa Mosque Administration of Jordan is the only body authorized to administer the affairs of the Aqsa Mosque and the Haram al-Sharif. Any attempt to erode the status quo will only complicate matters further.

The Group of Arab States would like to draw attention to the important role played by the Jerusalem Committee, under the chairmanship of the Kingdom of Morocco, in defending the Holy City and bolstering the steadfastness of the Palestinian people. It would also like to draw attention to the important work done by the Bayt Mal al-Quds Agency, a subsidiary of the Jerusalem Committee.

The Group of Arab States believes that, as a first step, the Security Council must take practical measures to bring about a comprehensive ceasefire, including suspension of all military operations, as soon as possible. In this regard, we appreciate the work of the ministerial committee formed by the Council of the League of Arab States and the tireless efforts of Egypt and Jordan. We call upon all parties to employ all available diplomatic means to bring about a cessation of illegal Israeli policies and measures to ensure that matters do not deteriorate in the future.

The Group of Arab States believes that a ceasefire is the first step; it must be followed up with genuine engagement by all parties, especially the Quartet. As such, the Group calls upon the members of the Quartet to step up and play their part to ensure that all parties act swiftly, especially the Secretary-General of the United Nations, in response to the demand of President Mahmoud Abbas to convene an international conference to revive the trajectory of peace.

In conclusion, current events have again shown the need for committed and prompt international action to resume the Middle East peace process by expanding and promoting the role of the international Quartet in order to bring about a real political prospect of ending the conflict on the basis of a just and lasting solution, leading to the establishment of an independent and contiguous Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital, and also bring stability to the region on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions, especially those adopted by this esteemed Council, and the Arab Peace Initiative.

Annex 23

Statement by the Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States to the United Nations, Maged Abdelfattah Abdelaziz

[Original: Arabic]

Permit me to preface my statement by expressing the deep appreciation of the League of Arab States for the efforts of the People's Republic of China during its current presidency of the Security Council to ensure that the Council plays its intended role of maintaining international peace and security in the Middle East, in the wake of the bare-faced Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people in Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip, igniting a dangerous confrontation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories that will bring nothing but destruction and instability to the entire region.

On behalf of His Excellency Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, I should like to begin by affirming the League's full support for the statement delivered by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria and president of the Group of Arab States for the month of May, and commending the close coordination between the Group of Arab States and the vast majority of Council members in our common endeavour to prevent the situation from slipping out of control and descending into a long-term armed conflict with potentially terrible consequences.

Addressing the daily deteriorating situation on the ground requires a realistic assessment of the course of events and an objective view of the ability of the multilateral international order to deal with the situation. The Security Council has failed even to issue a press release in recent days to affirm the principles of international legitimacy and establish the lost balance between a brutal occupying Power employing its full military force and enjoying unqualified international protection, and an occupied people demanding their inalienable rights, principally the right to establish their own free and independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital, and seeking to assert their rights to the land until this can be achieved through direct negotiations between the Palestinian and Israeli sides.

To make such an assessment, the Security Council must answer clearly and unambiguously a number of crucial questions to help the Council and us at the League of Arab States handle the situation more effectively. The most important of these questions are as follows.

First, do United Nations rules for the protection of civilians in armed conflict not apply to the civilian Palestinian population, who were attacked and denied access to the Islamic holy sites at the Haram al-Sharif during the holy month of Ramadan? Are these rules only for the protection of settlers when, with the connivance of Israeli forces, they seize Palestinian land and attack unarmed Palestinian civilians in Shaykh Jarrah, Silwan and other occupied Palestinian areas around Jerusalem and elsewhere, in flagrant violation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016)?

Secondly, does the present situation not oblige the Security Council, the Secretary-General and other United Nations bodies to promote and enforce the concepts of responsibility to protect and human security, agreed by us all at the 2005 summit, in order to protect the Palestinian people from the brutal Israeli occupation? Or do these concepts only apply to the Arabs and their counterparts in African and Latin American countries in a way that causes them and their leaders to be placed under sanctions regimes and at the mercy of alliances formed to bomb them?

Will Israel remain forever beyond the scope of international accountability for the crimes it has committed against the Palestinian people, including provocations, attacks and destruction of infrastructure, carried out to serve domestic Israeli political goals and advance the personal ambitions of certain Israeli leaders? Israel seeks to provoke the Palestinian resistance movement into responding militarily and to use the ensuing vicious circle of violence and counter-violence as an excuse to widen its attacks and justify seizing yet more Palestinian land in furtherance of its colonialist schemes and initiatives, rejected years ago by the Arabs and the international community as contrary to international legitimacy, international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

Thirdly, is the Security Council, with its unwillingness to engage the international Quartet and raise its status to ministerial level, not helping to obstruct the pursuit of peace in the region on the basis of direct negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis at the international conference called for by President Abu Mazen under United Nations auspices? Is the Security Council, with its disregard of Israeli hubris in refusing to allow the inhabitants of Jerusalem to vote in Palestinian presidential and parliamentary elections, thereby causing the elections to be delayed, not helping to obstruct the creation of the credible democratic framework which the Palestinians are seeking to put in place as the basis for a new phase of national action and serious negotiations?

Fourthly, what is the Security Council's stance on protecting the Muslim and Christian holy sites in the occupied Arab territories, which are subject to malicious attacks by the Israeli government that inflame the feelings of Muslims and Christians around the world, in spite of the tireless efforts of Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Morocco and other sponsoring States to protect them? What is the Security Council's stance on protecting a free media that seeks to report the massacres committed by Israeli forces against Palestinians, in line with the United Nations' call for worldwide freedom of access to information, but that same free media is being attacked, bombed and destroyed by Israel at the Damascus Gate, the Jala Tower and elsewhere?

Experience shows that Israel will be unable to achieve security no matter how long and how far its military operations extend. It will only be able to achieve security by pursuing peace through negotiations with a Palestinian State. History is full of vivid examples of this. No one can forget month-long attacks on Lebanon by Israel in 2006 and Gaza in 2008, as well as other acts of aggression; these did not and will not bring security either to the State of Israel or the State of Palestine. Security will only be achieved through peace based on legitimacy and by upholding the international determinants affirmed in the resolutions of this Council, the Madrid and Oslo Accords of 30 years ago and the Arab Peace Initiative of 20 years ago, which remains a firm foundation for a just and comprehensive peace on the basis of the two-State solution, which has been and will remain the ultimate goal of all legitimate international efforts to establish an independent Palestinian State.

In this statement, the League of Arab States is issuing a number of urgent appeals, in the hope that the response will help save the situation. The first appeal is to the United States of America, specifically the administration of President Joe Biden, to engage more closely and effectively with the Middle East peace process in such a way as to dispel any delusions left over from the previous administration that Israel gets everything, and the Palestinians get nothing. We still appreciate President Clinton's pioneering initiative in 2000 and the working paper he presented personally at the "Peacemakers' conference" in Sharm Al-Sheikh on the five final status issues, alongside his courageous invitation to the Palestinian and Israeli leaders to Camp David 2 to engage in genuine and serious negotiations, which resulted in agreement being reached on four of these issues. However, the issue of Jerusalem was the straw

that broke the camel's back and prevented agreement being reached with the late Palestinian President, Yasser Arafat. We in the League of Arab States believe that the time has come for the United States to complete its courageous journey and for a Democratic administration to show, once again, that it has the ability to achieve a major breakthrough, similar to that achieved by President Carter between Egypt and Israel in 1979 and which President Clinton came close to achieving in 2000. The League of Arab States is ready and willing to work alongside the United Nations and other peace-loving forces in support of all productive efforts in this regard.

The second appeal is to the international community, in the form of the Security Council, the United Nations General Assembly, our partners in the European Union, Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Non-Aligned Movement, Palestine Committee and Practices Committee and our partners among the permanent and non-permanent members of this Council. We call upon them all to continue to exert pressure to implement the vision of the two-State solution through negotiations. We must not allow external forces, whether regional or international, to exploit this critical situation to make gains in negotiations or other situations that benefit them alone or to threaten the international community's united stance on the long-awaited goal of the establishment of a Palestinian State. Until such time, we call for all efforts to be directed immediately toward bringing about a ceasefire on both sides. We are confident that the response to Egyptian mediation will guarantee this, ensuring the cessation of all violations of the rights of the Palestinian people, retreat from aggressive settlement works and policies and provision of essential protection for the defenceless Palestinian people through innovative mechanisms on the part of United Nations observers. Furthermore, the inhabitants of Jerusalem must be allowed to vote in Palestinian elections. Additionally, the Secretary-General, in coordination with the Security Council, must step up efforts to convene the international Quartet at the highest level, in preparation for an international conference on the establishment, at the earliest opportunity, of an independent Palestinian State within the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Annex 24**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Australia to the United Nations, Mitchell Fifield**

Australia is deeply concerned by the escalating violence in Israel, Gaza and the West Bank. We unequivocally call on all leaders to take immediate steps to halt the violence and exercise restraint and to move without delay towards a sustainable peace. Indiscriminate attacks with disregard for civilian casualties perpetuate the cycle of violence and bloodshed. The protection of civilians must remain paramount.

Australia condemns the relentless and indiscriminate firing of rockets into Israel by Hamas. The State of Israel unquestionably has the right to defend itself and its people in accordance with international law. Equally, the Palestinian people must be able to live peacefully.

The focus of all parties must be on a return to direct and genuine peace negotiations as soon as possible, with a view to defining a just, durable and resilient peace agreement. To support this objective, we urge all parties to refrain from violent or provocative acts, or actions that increase tensions.

Australia strongly supports a two-State solution to the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, where Israel and a future State of Palestine exist in peace and security within internationally recognized borders.

Annex 25

Statement by the Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations, Rabab Fatima

Let me begin by thanking you, Mr. President, and the co-sponsoring members of the Security Council for having convened today's open debate. I also thank the Secretary-General and the Special Coordinator for their informative briefings.

The latest ongoing outbreak of violence and the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, is grave, disturbing and deeply concerning. We deplore such abhorrent and inhuman acts of aggression and violence against innocent people in the midst of a pandemic and the holy month of Ramadan. The escalating attacks and horrific violence unleashed by the occupying Israeli forces on the innocent devotees and civilians at the Al-Aqsa Mosque during this holy month, as well as the evictions of Palestinians in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood, are flagrant violations of international humanitarian norms, human rights laws and other international accords. Such atrocities and bloodshed must stop immediately.

Bangladesh condemns the reprehensible acts by the Israeli forces and calls for an immediate ceasefire and the protection of the innocent Palestinian population. The Security Council must act now to put an end to the flagrant and repeated violations by the Israeli forces against innocent Palestinian civilians. Let today's meeting be one of real action and decisive decisions.

In that regard, allow me to propose the following.

First, the Security Council must act now to enforce an immediate and complete halt to the brutal attacks against the Palestinians, their homes and territories and the holy sites. Israel must end its illegal occupation of Palestinian territory and the Security Council must ensure that is realized. The Council must ensure that Israel respects the sanctity of the holy sites and the historic and legal status quo at Al-Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram Al-Sharif. It must also ensure that Israel immediately stops all illegal settlement activities and confiscations of private property in the occupied territories. The international community must reverse the culture of inaction and the Council has a particular responsibility to ensure that this is accomplished by fulfilling its obligations under the Charter of the United Nations, enforcing all relevant resolutions in that regard, including resolution 2334 (2016).

Secondly, the United Nations needs to engage with all relevant actors, including the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, to support the just cause of Palestine and ensure the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination, as well as a just and comprehensive peace based on the two-State solution, with East Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Palestine. The early implementation of the Quartet road map, the Arab Peace Initiative and the wider efforts of the Quartet are crucial building blocks in that regard.

Thirdly, ensuring accountability and justice for Israel's atrocities and human rights violations would serve to end the entrenched culture of impunity. The persistent violations of all international laws and the suffering of innocent civilians, including children, continue at the hands of the occupying Israeli forces and their illegal settlers, with blatant disregard for international laws and principles, creating a sense of perpetual injustice. That is a glaring manifestation of our collective failure to act on the side of the oppressed and for justice. We should not allow ourselves to be swayed and deceived by blatant lies and propaganda by the Israeli regime. Holding the violators accountable would be an important step in achieving justice and lasting peace. In that regard, we welcome the developments in the International Criminal Court.

Let me conclude by reaffirming Bangladesh's unequivocal and unwavering support for the establishment of the State of Palestine on the basis of a two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital. We stand resolute in our commitment to supporting the inalienable rights of the Palestinians for a sovereign and independent homeland in a viable Palestine State, as established through various United Nations resolutions. We reiterate our steadfast support for finding a lasting solution to the Palestinian issue through peaceful means and dialogue.

In this seventy-fifth year of the United Nations, it bears heavily on our collective conscience, given our collective failure, to ensure justice for the Palestinian people and their just cause. As the Council meets today, let this not be one of the many meetings of rhetoric but instead one of action. If it is to stay relevant and credible, the Council must fulfil its Charter responsibility and ensure peace and justice for the Palestinian people and the Palestinian cause. We must act now with authority and on the side of the right.

Annex 26**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Bolivia to the United Nations, Diego Pary Rodríguez**

[Original: Spanish]

The Plurinational State of Bolivia expresses its grave concern over recent events and the dangerous deterioration of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. Bolivia condemns in the strongest terms the acts of aggression against the Palestinian civilian population in recent days and regards them as a serious case of military aggression by the occupying Power against the Gaza Strip, resulting in the death of Palestinians, including children, as well as dozens of injured civilians.

As an organ called upon to maintain international peace and security, the Council must act immediately when enforcing its own resolutions and fulfilling its duties under the Charter of the United Nations. It therefore cannot remain paralysed on the Palestinian question, which is a situation that currently constitutes a threat to international peace and security.

In that regard, Bolivia calls on the Security Council to assume its responsibility and act urgently to curtail this volatile situation, demand the cessation of violence and all illegal actions and provocations and ensure respect for international law and relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2334 (2016) and all those relating to Jerusalem.

As the occupying Power, Israel continues to consolidate its annexation policies, increase its illegal colonization practices and measures, including the construction and expansion of settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory, and pursue its punitive demolitions, its seizing of resources from Palestinian institutions and its blockade of the Gaza Strip, causing the forced displacement of hundreds of civilians. While the situation has been critical for years, the intensity of the human rights violations and crimes perpetrated in recent days must not go unpunished.

We therefore reiterate our unwavering support for a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, allowing the Palestinian population to exercise its right to self-determination and have an independent and sovereign State based on the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Bolivia underscores that international law and United Nations resolutions, which are the cornerstone of regional and global peace and security, as well as respect for the Charter, constitute the basis for a just solution to the Palestinian question.

It is the duty of all States to defend multilateralism and the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, including respect for the sovereign equality of States and their political independence, unity and territorial integrity; the peaceful settlement of disputes; and refraining from the use or threat of use of force in international relations. But it is also the duty of the Security Council to enforce its resolutions in order to maintain international peace and security.

Annex 27**Statement by the Permanent Mission of Brazil to the United Nations**

I thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this most urgent debate.

This week we have witnessed a dangerous escalation between Israelis and Palestinians, including clashes in East Jerusalem as well as the firing of rockets from Gaza. As we speak, the violence is still ongoing and has already taken the lives of dozens of civilians and injured hundreds of others, including, sadly, many children. The death toll and destruction are appalling, and we call for immediate de-escalation from all sides. Too much pain has been inflicted already.

It bears stressing that there can be no justification for any attacks against civilians. We condemn the indiscriminate launching of rockets towards Israeli population centres by Hamas and other militant groups, which are unacceptable and must stop immediately. In addition, the reports of innocent lives and civilian infrastructure being damaged by Israeli air strikes in Gaza are of extreme concern and we call on the Israeli security forces to exercise maximum restraint and to fully respect international humanitarian law at all times, while exercising their inalienable right to self-defence under the Charter of the United Nations. Time is of the essence and all parties must strive to avoid escalation before it is too late.

The escalation is all the more tragic in the light of the clashes around places of worship in Jerusalem, including Temple Mount/Al-Haram Al-Sharif, which should be a symbol of the city's multi-religious identity. At this delicate juncture, there can be no place for acts of provocation, incitement and inflammatory rhetoric. We call for the historic and legal status quo at the holy sites in Jerusalem to be upheld and respected, as well as for the right to peaceful worship and assembly to be ensured.

It should also be pointed out that the potential ruling to evict Palestinian families from their homes in East Jerusalem, including the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood, could further exacerbate the situation. We welcome the suspension of the ruling by the Israeli Supreme Court.

The Security Council cannot remain silent in the face of such a dangerous threat to international peace and security. We hope that its members can find common ground in order to send a unified message urging immediate de-escalation, the protection of civilian lives and respect for the Council's resolutions and human rights and humanitarian law.

At the core of the current escalation of violence lie unresolved matters that led to this situation: the legitimate Israeli demand for security and the legitimate Palestinian aspiration for justice. We firmly support political dialogue as the means to achieving a just and lasting peace in the Middle East, with Israel and Palestine living side by side within secure and internationally recognized borders. To that end, we urge the parties to engage in mediation efforts and resume negotiations, as well as to refrain from unilateral actions. In that regard, Brazil stands ready to contribute to actions that may help to achieve peace and security and we encourage all well-intentioned States, in particular those with the most influence over the situation, to strive to calm the situation, prevent escalation and restore the conditions for fruitful dialogue.

Annex 28**Statement by the Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations**

Canada is appalled by the ongoing violence, rising tensions and devastating loss of life. The toll, in particular on civilians, including women and children, has already been too great. Canada continues to express grave concerns over the escalating violence in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza. Canada joins its allies and friends in urging all parties to take steps to immediately end all violence, prevent the further loss of life, protect all civilians and de-escalate tensions. All parties must uphold international law.

Canada reiterates the fundamental importance of protecting journalists and press freedom. Journalists and media workers are the cornerstone of any fair, strong and vibrant society and must be free to do their work without fear. Any violence against journalists is completely unacceptable, especially in volatile contexts in which they are risking their lives to do their jobs. It is also completely unacceptable to see humanitarian workers and facilities coming under fire. Their safety and security must always be ensured.

The continued indiscriminate barrage of rocket attacks fired by Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad into Israel against civilians is completely unacceptable and must cease immediately. The foreign entities that support Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad must end their material and financial support to those groups. Canada supports Israel's right to live in peace with its neighbours within secure boundaries and fully supports Israel's right to assure its own security. That right also comes with immense responsibility and obligation to act in accordance with international law. The use of force has led to significant civilian loss of life and we urge utmost restraint.

Canada remains gravely concerned by the continuing expansion of settlements, demolitions and evictions, including the ongoing cases in Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan. Those actions impact families and livelihoods, do not serve peace and are a violation of international law. Unilateral actions that prejudge the outcome of direct negotiations and further jeopardize the prospects for a two-State solution must be averted.

Canada is alarmed by the clashes and violence among Arab and Jewish communities in parts of Israel. We implore all authorities and citizens alike to help maintain calm, reduce tensions and help keep the peace while respecting human rights. We stand firmly with the Israeli and Palestinian people in their right to live in peace and security, with dignity and without fear and with their human rights respected.

Canada has observed an increase of hatred, including anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, at home and around the world. It is our collective responsibility to fight hatred and condemn it in the strongest possible terms. Canada is committed to standing against hatred and discrimination in all their forms and is committed to working with our domestic and international partners to promote and defend pluralism, inclusion and human rights at home and abroad.

Canada is committed to the goal of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East, including the creation of a Palestinian State living side by side in peace and security with Israel. We will always stand ready to support efforts for a two-State solution.

The loss of life in this conflict is heartbreaking. For decades, it has caused much pain to both Palestinian and Israeli families and impacted the social fabric of

the region. That is all the more reason for the parties to urgently find a sustainable resolution to the conflict. The spiral of violence and hatred must immediately stop. Mutual recognition and respect are the critical foundation for a lasting peace.

Amid the coronavirus disease pandemic and with Israeli and Palestinian young people and future generations at the top of our minds, we urge all parties to renew their commitment to peace and security and we encourage the Security Council to remain engaged in efforts to bring an end to the violence.

Annex 29**Statement by the Permanent Mission of Chile to the United Nations**

[Original: English and Spanish]

My delegation thanks the Chinese presidency of the Security Council during May for having convened this meeting and for the opportunity to participate in this open debate by delivering a written statement explaining the Government of Chile's position on the current situation of violence in the Middle East.

We believe in the urgency of taking action and mobilizing the international community to address the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, underlying that a just and lasting solution to the Palestinian question in all its aspects must remain a priority on the Security Council's agenda.

The Government of Chile issued a statement on 11 May expressing its deep concern about the escalation of violence in Jerusalem, which later spread to other cities, wrecking the lives of innocent victims. Any actions that indiscriminately target the civilian population are unjustifiable, seriously undermine international humanitarian law and warrant the total repudiation of the international community.

As we have repeatedly pointed out in multilateral forums, our country reiterates its condemnation of the escalation of violence affecting the Middle East, including Israel's disproportionate use of force in densely populated areas and Hamas's indiscriminate use of rockets. We once again call on the parties to fulfil their international obligations regarding the protection of civilians. Attacks on civilians, both in Gaza and Israel, violate international humanitarian law.

Chile stresses its condemnation of violence against civilians, especially women and children, by all parties to the conflict. In that regard, we believe that taking measures to protect the most vulnerable is of the utmost importance and it is therefore an urgent priority that the parties to the conflict allow unhindered access to the humanitarian assistance needed to mitigate the effects of the conflict.

Chile's unwavering position is that a negotiated solution to the conflict must be sought in accordance with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions, based on two independent States that recognize the right of each to live in harmony within secure and recognized borders.

Annex 30**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Costa Rica to the United Nations, Rodrigo Carazo**

[Original: Spanish]

Costa Rica reiterates its deep concern over the escalation of tensions in Jerusalem and Gaza — the worst since 2014 — since the beginning of the holy month of Ramadan. We condemn in the strongest terms the violence against civilians, in particular against women and children, which continues to cause numerous fatalities and hundreds of injuries. Costa Rica regrets the loss of human life and expresses its condolences to the families of the victims.

In that regard, allow me to reiterate three fundamental points.

First, Costa Rica condemns the air strikes and the deployment of troops and tanks by Israel in the Gaza Strip, as well as the launching of rockets, missiles and incendiary devices from the Gaza Strip into Israel by Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad. Costa Rica urges all parties to stop using heavy weapons in densely populated areas and we urge the international community to immediately halt the transfer of arms and their ammunition to both parties, as that will serve only to further fuel the conflict. Costa Rica vehemently calls on both parties to establish an immediate and lasting ceasefire in the search for a solution to the conflict.

Secondly, Costa Rica reiterates its strong opposition to Israel's settlement policy and condemns the possible evictions of Palestinian families in the Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan neighbourhoods. The Israeli Government has financed and built those settlements, offering incentives and subsidized housing, in clear contravention of resolution 2334 (2016). We reiterate our long-standing position that all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, are illegal under international law and constitute an obstacle to international peace and security. We urge Israel to cease its demolitions and evictions, in accordance with its obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

Thirdly, we deplore Palestinians being deprived of certain fundamental guarantees of civil rights, as well as the lack of legal means to claim the lands they possessed prior to 1948 in West Jerusalem and elsewhere in Israel. We urge Israel to grant Palestinians full civil and other rights, at least equal to those granted to Israeli citizens.

Costa Rica calls on the parties to end the conflict, recognizing today more than ever that only a two-State solution, satisfying the legitimate aspirations of the Israeli people for security and those of the Palestinians for sovereignty, will bring lasting peace to the region. That solution must be based on the parameters agreed and established by the resolutions of the Security Council. It is necessary to create a Palestinian State that lives side by side with Israel in peace and security, within secure and internationally recognized borders based on the pre-1967 lines, with Jerusalem as capital of both States.

Annex 31**Statement by the Permanent Mission of Ecuador to the United Nations**

[Original: Spanish]

Ecuador is grateful to China and the members of the Security Council for having convened this meeting, which is taking place at a crucial moment. We wish to reaffirm the validity of our statement made on 22 April in the quarterly open debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question (see S/2021/404).

Lasting peace will be achieved only through a political, definitive and just solution for both parties, based on the existence of two States. We regret the deterioration of the situation since the previous debate and express our concern over the escalation of violence, and we call on the parties to avoid aggravating the ongoing conflict. It is essential to put a stop to any harm to the civilian population and ensure respect for people's lives and safety, in accordance with obligations under international humanitarian law.

The hostility between the parties that has led to destruction and death is unacceptable, even more so given that the two nations are obliged to comply with the norms of international law. Ecuador calls for an end to the spiral of violence and reiterates its firm belief that both parties have a right to live in peace and dignity.

While reiterating the validity of all Security Council resolutions on this issue, we call on all parties to make a collective effort to initiate credible negotiations and intensify regional and international diplomatic efforts in order to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East without delay.

Finally, the Security Council must ensure the effective implementation of its resolution 2532 (2020) and a ceasefire and put a halt to violence throughout the world.

Annex 32**Statement by Olof Skoog, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, in its capacity as observer**

The European Union (EU) is extremely concerned about the continuing escalation of violence in Gaza and calls for an immediate cessation of hostilities. The EU strongly condemns the indiscriminate firing of rockets into Israel by Hamas and militant groups in the Gaza Strip, directly harming civilians.

While recognizing Israel's legitimate right to defend itself against any attacks, the EU underlines that the Israeli military operation must be proportionate and in line with international humanitarian law. The EU stresses the need to protect civilians at all times.

This tragic escalation of hostilities again confirms the unsustainable nature of the status quo with regard to the situation in the Gaza Strip. While fully recognizing Israel's legitimate security needs, the EU underlines that the humanitarian and socioeconomic situation in Gaza must be addressed. We reiterate our call for the immediate, sustained and unconditional opening of crossings for the flow of humanitarian aid, commercial goods and persons to and from the Gaza Strip, in line with relevant Security Council resolutions.

The EU calls on political leaders to work together through visible actions to contribute to calm and address the underlying causes of the tensions. The EU recalls the special significance of the holy sites and calls for upholding the status quo put in place in 1967 for Temple Mount/Al-Haram Al-Sharif, in line with previous understandings and with respect to Jordan's special role.

While recalling that settlements are illegal under international law, constitute an obstacle to peace and threaten to make a two-State solution impossible, the EU reiterates its strong opposition to Israel's settlement policy and actions taken in that context, such as building a separation barrier beyond the 1967 lines, demolitions and confiscations, including of EU-funded projects, evictions, forced transfers, including of Bedouins, the establishment of illegal outposts and the restriction of movement and access. We urge Israel to end all settlement activity and dismantle the outposts erected since March 2001, in line with prior obligations. Settlement activity in East Jerusalem seriously jeopardizes the possibility of Jerusalem serving as the future capital of both States.

The EU is convinced that only the re-establishment of a political horizon and the resumption of dialogue can stop the violence. Security measures alone cannot stop the cycle of violence. The underlying causes of the conflict need to be addressed.

The EU is united in its commitment to achieving a two-State solution — based on the parameters set out in the European Council conclusions of July 2014 — that meets Israeli and Palestinian security needs and Palestinian aspirations for statehood and sovereignty, ends the occupation that began in 1967 and resolves all permanent status issues in order to end the conflict. We strongly oppose all actions that undermine the viability of the two-State solution and urge both sides to demonstrate, through policies and actions, a genuine commitment to a two-State solution in order to rebuild trust and create a path back to meaningful negotiations.

Annex 33**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Finland to the United Nations, Jukka Salovaara**

Finland aligns itself with the statement submitted on behalf of the European Union (annex 32).

The grave escalation in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory, including the major upsurge in violence in and around Gaza, must stop. A ceasefire needs to be implemented without any delay in order to avoid further casualties and to avoid making this conflict even more difficult to solve.

We now need determined actions by both Israeli and Palestinian leaders. Instead of the use of force, we need to see negotiations between the parties to the conflict. In this situation, it is also important that the Security Council act according to its mandate and support efforts to maintain international peace and security in the Middle East. The recent escalation of violence follows days of tension and clashes in Jerusalem, including at the holy sites, and increasing violence in towns in Israel and the West Bank.

Finland strongly condemns all violence against civilians, including the indiscriminate firing of rockets into Israel by Hamas and militant groups in the Gaza Strip, directly harming civilians. While Finland recognizes the legitimate right of Israel to protect its citizens against any attacks, Finland underlines that the Israeli military operation must be proportionate and in line with international humanitarian law. Civilians need to be protected at all times. Security belongs to all.

The priority in the conflict at hand must be to protect all civilians, in particular children. All efforts should be directed at avoiding civilian casualties and damage to civilian infrastructure, supporting de-escalation, implementing an immediate ceasefire and ensuring safe and unhindered humanitarian access. After the implementation of the ceasefire, we will need actions at the level of religious and political leaders, including community leaders, on both sides. The incitement to hatred and violence needs to be stopped immediately. Human rights, including the religious rights of everyone in the region, need to be respected by all. The most recent upsurge of violence clearly shows once again that Israel and Palestine should return to negotiations on equal grounds in order to find a permanent solution to their conflict.

Finland shares the view that a negotiated two-State solution — based on the parameters set out in the European Council conclusions of July 2014 — that meets Israeli and Palestinian security needs and Palestinian aspirations for statehood and sovereignty, ends the occupation that began in 1967 and resolves all permanent status issues, is the only sustainable way to end the conflict.

Israeli settlement activities are illegal under international law and weaken the prospects for a two-State solution.

Annex 34**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Iceland to the United Nations, Jörundur Valtýsson**

I wish to thank you, Mr. President, for having convened an open debate in the Security Council on the evolving situation in Israel and Palestine.

Iceland is deeply concerned about the ongoing military escalation taking place in and around Gaza and the rising violence in the occupied Palestinian territories and Israel.

Iceland strongly condemns all attacks on civilian populations, which have caused great suffering and casualties, including among children. Rocket attacks from Gaza on civilian populations in Israel are never justifiable, and while we recognize Israel's right to self-defence, we must demand maximum restraint and proportionality in the use of force in order to safeguard civilians, in line with international humanitarian law. De-escalating the current volatile situation is of paramount importance. We urge all actors to step back before more civilian lives are lost or harmed.

The ongoing clashes around the holy sites in East Jerusalem have caused severe injuries and fuelled tensions. All religious and political leaders need to do their utmost to stop the provocations and calm the situation. The settlement activities, including in East Jerusalem, are of grave concern and need to cease, in line with Israel's obligations under international humanitarian law.

Iceland urges all parties to break out of this spiral of violence and work towards a sustainable political solution based on international law, relevant Security Council resolutions and agreed parameters. We also urge both parties to demonstrate their commitment to the two-State solution and to refrain from any unilateral steps that could undermine it.

Finally, we call on the Security Council to remain firmly seized of the matter.

Annex 35**Statement by the Chargé d'affaires of Indonesia to the United Nations,
Mohammad Koba**

At the outset, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this event. I thank the Secretary-General and the Special Coordinator for their briefings. I would like to reiterate Indonesia's support for the Palestinian cause.

We are closely following developments on the ground and believe that the Security Council must devote full attention to the issue. The continuing violence and atrocities perpetrated by Israel towards the State of Palestine demand our condemnation. They also demand concrete actions.

I would like to stress three main points.

First, the Security Council needs to act urgently to de-escalate the situation, establish a cessation of hostilities and illegal actions and ensure Israel's compliance with international law and relevant Council resolutions. The agreement of an immediate ceasefire is of utmost importance to enable life-saving humanitarian assistance to be delivered, as well as to allow space for the resumption of the peace process.

The Security Council cannot remain silent when confronted with such a blatant threat to international peace and security. It cannot remain silent over the continuing violence and violations of international law and United Nations resolutions. The inaction of the Security Council will jeopardize its credibility and legitimacy. I would like to echo the statement delivered by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, in which it voiced its determination to pursue the actions and decisions of the General Assembly should the Security Council fail to live up to its responsibility.

Secondly, as we have spent so much time deliberating, the people on the ground have already suffered devastating consequences. So far, hundreds of people have been killed or wounded and thousands have fled their homes in Gaza. The situation will potentially deteriorate in the coming days, and this is happening against the backdrop of already dire circumstances owing to the ongoing conflict and the coronavirus disease pandemic. We therefore call for the international community to enhance humanitarian assistance for the people of Palestine. We urge Israel to allow unhindered access to the urgently needed humanitarian assistance for the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory and the city of Al-Quds Al-Sharif.

Thirdly, it is imperative to prevent similar atrocities from occurring in the future. Our President, together with the Prime Minister of Malaysia and the Sultan of Brunei Darussalam, has called for both parties to accept a temporary international presence in the city of Al-Quds in order to monitor the cessation of hostilities in the occupied territory of Palestine.

The expansion of illegal settlements, forced evictions and the demolition of Palestinian-owned structures, which continue to cause immense harm to the Palestinian population in the occupied Palestinian territory, must also be stopped immediately. As they constitute a flagrant violation of international law and relevant United Nations resolutions and present a major obstacle to a peaceful resolution of the conflict, we call on the international community to demand accountability and ensure that any violations by the occupying Power will have consequences in order to protect the Palestinian civilian population under occupation and salvage the prospects for a just and peaceful solution.

Lastly, I would like to reiterate the importance of ensuring a peaceful and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Now is the time for the international community to show its commitment to advancing a just and comprehensive peace

based on the two-State solution, in line with internationally agreed parameters. I truly hope that the international community, in particular the Security Council, will fulfil its responsibility and stop the aggression against the Palestinian people. They have suffered for far too long. The time to act is now.

Annex 36

Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations, Majid Takht Ravanchi

Concurrent with this meeting, the brutal forces of the Israeli regime are committing an actual massacre in Palestine, in particular in the Gaza Strip — the world's largest open prison, where up to now 192 Palestinians, including 58 children and 34 women, have been martyred. The Israeli forces are cowardly killing defenceless women, cold-bloodedly slaughtering innocent infants and children, viciously killing family members all together, brazenly desecrating holy places, inhumanely bombing and shelling residential areas, schools and health facilities and senselessly demolishing houses. In short, they are committing all four core international crimes simultaneously.

The question is, why are the Israeli forces committing such mass cruelties? The answer is, because the Palestinians raised their voices against the Israeli forces who are confiscating their ancestral lands in Palestinian neighbourhoods in East Jerusalem — in Sheikh Jarrah, Silwan and At-Tur — and other areas. They protested against the demolishing of their houses, where they have lived for generation after generation. They resisted forced eviction from their own houses. And they protested against the attack by the Israeli security forces against the Muslim worshippers in the Al-Aqsa Mosque during the holy month of Ramadan.

Make no mistake — these are the greatest sins if you are a Palestinian and living in Palestine, where a racist and apartheid regime, founded on aggression, occupation and oppression, is committing heinous crimes against them.

But why is the Israeli regime able to commit all of those crimes with total impunity? Because, for well over seven decades, the Security Council has been dead silent against all unlawful acts committed by that regime. And the Council's decades-long utter and inexcusable inaction, in addition to resulting in a deficit of trust and confidence as well as a crisis of its credibility and legitimacy, has seriously emboldened that regime to commit more crimes with more brutality.

That is why the Israeli regime has committed the gravest international crimes, namely, genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and the crime of aggression. It is why it has waged more than 15 wars, occupied territories of other countries, invaded all its neighbours without exception, attacked countries in the region and beyond, from the Middle East to Africa, and possessed all types of weapons of mass destruction. And the list goes on and on.

Then, why has the Security Council been so silent and inactive for such a long time against such grave and clear “threats to peace, breaches of peace or acts of aggression”, while, according to the Charter of the United Nations, it should have decided what measures shall be taken “to maintain or restore international peace and security”? Purely and simply because, as a permanent member of the Security Council, the United States, whether under Democrats or Republicans, has systematically shielded the Israeli regime against any action by the Council. So far, the United States has vetoed 44 draft resolutions of the Security Council against Israel. That is unprecedented in the Council's history.

Under the current United States Administration, decisions are now made to further shield the Israeli regime, to further lend shamelessly “unwavering support for Israel's security”, to further justify Israel's crimes with the so-called “Israel's legitimate right to defend itself” and to further deny the inherent rights of the oppressed Palestinians, including their right to life, to dignity, to liberation, to self-defence, to self-determination and to establish their own independent State.

In the past few days, the United States blocked the Security Council from issuing even a simple press statement calling for an end to Israel's bombardment of Gaza. Yes, "America is back" — again to unreservedly support an occupying and oppressive regime, no matter how brutal its crimes are.

As usual, today the Israeli regime's representative cried wolf, played the victim, desperately attempted to distract attention from Israel's crimes and brazenly defended the killing of Palestinian women and children.

Before concluding, I must stress that Palestinians are under an unlawful occupation and blockade by the Israeli regime, and they therefore have an inherent right to self-defence. While condemning in the strongest possible terms all the crimes of the Israeli regime against Palestinians, the Islamic Republic of Iran reiterates its support for the just cause of the Palestinian people and the full realization of all their inalienable rights, particularly their inherent right to self-determination and to establish an independent Palestinian State throughout Palestine, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

We once again call on the Security Council to take its responsibility seriously and to compel the Israeli regime to put an immediate end to its military adventurism in the region, particularly its ongoing bloodshed and crimes against Palestinians; stop its deliberate, systematic and massive ethnic cleansing, including by altering the demographic composition and character of Palestine, particularly the demographic composition and Islamic and Arab identity of Al-Quds Al-Sharif; remove the unlawful and inhumane blockade of the Gaza Strip; end the occupation of all Palestinian territories, the occupied Syrian Golan and parts of Lebanon; and hold that regime accountable for committing the gravest international crimes for over several decades.

The question of Palestine will not and cannot be settled unless and until the principles of justice and international law are strictly applied. This is long overdue. While the Palestinians are struggling for the realization of their inherent rights, the international community has a legal, political and moral obligation to fully support their legitimate cause. In this context, the Security Council has a special responsibility. If the Council continues to be prevented from playing its role, the General Assembly should take the necessary measures against the Israeli aggressors.

Annex 37**Statement by the Permanent Mission of Iraq to the United Nations**

[Original: Arabic]

We are meeting today to debate the acts of aggression, oppression and repression to which the people of the State of Palestine and occupied territories are subjected to in complete denial of their human rights and in breach of international law. The most recent of these violations is the desecration by soldiers of the Israeli entity of the Haram Al-Sharif in Jerusalem and subsequent missile strikes against Palestinian civilians. This confirms once again the savage nature of the usurper and presents this esteemed Council with the real and crucial challenge of supporting the oppressed Palestinian people.

The global solidarity with the Palestinian people today is the reflection of a single fact, namely the certainty of the restoration of the rights of those to whom they belong and an end to Israeli military and settler occupation of the territories of the State of Palestine, thereby ensuring the maintenance of peace and security in the Middle East, which is of such vital importance to the peace and security of the whole world.

We affirm the position of Iraq of unqualified support for the just Palestinian cause and steadfastness of the Palestinian people. We condemn the storming of the Aqsa Mosque by forces of the Israeli entity and the acts of terror they practice, designed to spread panic among the ranks of defenceless Muslim worshippers. We also condemn the subsequent barbaric attacks against our people in the Shaykh Jarrah neighbourhood and adjacent neighbourhoods in occupied Jerusalem, as well as in the Gaza Strip. We further condemn the illegal and sham decisions concerning Jerusalem issued by the Israeli occupation and reject the violation of the historical right to the land of Palestine for which generations of resistance fighters and martyrs have given their lives.

My country's delegation calls upon the international community to take all necessary measures to end the unjust and distressing conditions under which the Palestinian people languish and to adopt a stance consistent with the scale of the solidarity merited by our core issue and the core issue of the whole world — the Palestinian issue — and its enormous impact on the stability of the entire region and international peace and security. In this regard, Iraq believes that implementation of the relevant United Nations resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative represents the best way of reaching a solution to the conflict and securing Palestinian rights.

In conclusion, the people of Iraq salute the honourable stance adopted by the Palestinian people at this time and the steadfastness of their resolve to establish their own State on their own land, with Jerusalem as its capital. I end my address with the verses of the poet of Iraq and the Arabs, Muhammad Mahdi al-Jawahiri, from his ode entitled, "Bleeding Palestine":

The young have risen up and who is like the young,
When flames of zeal and honour blaze?
The Arab blood within their veins refuses to see one free Arab oppressed;
Everywhere they demonstrate with flags and words, united.

Annex 38**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations, Ishikane Kimihiro**

At the outset, I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to the Special Coordinator of the Secretary-General for the Middle East Peace Process, Tor Wennesland, for his briefing.

Japan expresses its deep concern about the deteriorating situation surrounding Israel and Palestine. In particular, we have seen the indiscriminate launching of rockets on a daily basis by Palestinian militants and the ensuing military operations by the Israel Defense Forces, which have caused a large number of civilian casualties on both sides. Japan strongly condemns such acts of violence and extends its condolences to the victims and their families. To end the vicious cycle of violence as early as possible and to prevent harrowing casualties among innocent civilians, Japan strongly urges all parties to exercise maximum restraint.

Japan is convinced that the issues regarding the Middle East peace process can never be solved through violence but only through negotiations, based on relevant Security Council resolutions and the internationally agreed parameters, as well as through the efforts to build mutual trust between the parties to the conflict. Japan calls on all the parties concerned to make the utmost efforts to that end. Japan supports the ongoing mediation efforts aimed at ending further escalation and is determined to continue its diplomatic efforts together with the international community.

Annex 39**Statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs of Kuwait, Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammed Al-Sabah**

[Original: Arabic]

The Security Council is meeting today to discuss the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, at a time when the international community is following with growing anxiety the grave escalation in the Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, in the wake of the outrageous crimes committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people.

The State of Kuwait reaffirms its vigorous condemnation of the outrageous crimes committed by the Israeli occupation forces in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including the city of Jerusalem. It further condemns and denounces all illegal Israeli settlement schemes and attempts to confiscate Palestinian houses and property, specifically the property of Jerusalemites resident in the Shaykh Jarrah neighbourhood, in an effort to evict them and empty the Holy City of its inhabitants in order to Judaize it and alter the facts on the ground. Kuwait holds these to be illegal and unlawful acts that represent a flagrant violation of international resolutions and terms of reference. It affirms that all unilateral measures and decisions that seek to change the existing legal and historical status of the Occupied Palestinian Territories are null and void, neither creating a right nor giving rise to any obligation.

Regrettably, we all saw Israeli occupation forces storming the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound a few days ago and targeting worshippers. Alongside illegal settlers, occupation forces continue to target women and children without mercy and seize property. Its policies and practices confirm yet again that Israel seeks to consolidate the occupation and has no desire to reach a just and comprehensive peace agreement.

The outrageous crimes committed by Israeli occupation forces are part of a series of crimes and violations committed by Israel, the occupying Power, in breach of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 476 (1980), 478 (1980) and 2334 (2016). These resolutions affirm that the special status of Jerusalem may not be violated and declare null and void any measure designed to change the city's character. The eviction of the residents of Shaykh Jarrah in East Jerusalem is a crime and blatant violation of international law, especially as East Jerusalem is a part of the occupied Palestinian territories, to which the Fourth Geneva Convention (1949) applies. As such, the occupying Power must respect its obligation to protect private property in the occupied territories; it may not confiscate private property.

We are standing at a critical crossroads, where any just and comprehensive resolution of the central issue of the Arab and Islamic nations is in danger of being undermined. We are confronted with rapidly-unfolding plans that are not confined to expanding illegal settlements or seizing Palestinian land and property but seek to Judaize East Jerusalem, the Old City in particular, and empty it of its Palestinian inhabitants. The State of Kuwait affirms once more its total rejection of all illegal settlement schemes in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, and stresses that these settlements are null and void under international law and Security Council resolutions.

Since the start of the latest Israeli outrages, the State of Kuwait has spared no effort to mitigate the suffering of the fraternal Palestinian people. We have pursued contacts with friends and allies and taken part alongside our brothers in meetings of the League of Arab States and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation at which statements and resolutions have been adopted calling upon, inter alia, the United Nations, including the Security Council, to shoulder its legal, moral

and humanitarian responsibilities to bring an immediate end to Israeli aggression, provide international protection for the Palestinian people, uphold their right to freedom of worship, preserve peace and security in the region and ensure that the Israeli occupation authorities do not implement their despicable schemes and impose a fait accompli that flies in the face of resolutions of international legitimacy and violates international law.

In conclusion, the State of Kuwait reiterates its commitment to the Arab position, which affirms that peace is the strategic option and that a just, lasting and comprehensive peace has to be based on the two-State solution, in accordance with the agreed terms of reference, consisting of the relevant Security Council resolutions, the principle of land for peace, the road map and the Arab Peace Initiative, leading to the Palestinian people obtaining their legitimate political rights in full and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State on their own land, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Annex 40**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the United Nations, Amal Mudallali**

I thank you, Mr. President, for having organized this particularly important open debate on the situation in Palestine, under the Chinese presidency of the Security Council for this month. It is imperative that the Council speak up on what is happening to the Palestinians today.

Yesterday, 15 May, is a date referred to by Palestinians and Arabs as the day of the Nakba — the catastrophe. It has been decades of Nakba for the Palestinians, and what is happening now as we meet in the Council is a continuation of their Nakba. What is happening today did not come out of thin air; it is the mere consequence of decades of occupation, humiliation, dispossession, imprisonment, colonialism, liquidation of the Palestinians' rights and lands, collective punishment and living in fear.

We have consistently recalled the Council's obligation to act decisively in order to put an end to the inhumane, immoral and illegal treatment of the Palestinians, the incessant strangulation of the civilian population by the occupying Power and, most importantly, the culture of impunity enjoyed by the Israeli authorities. Years of impunity for successive Israeli policies have brought the Palestinians to this explosive situation, to a state of desolation and despair, and left them with no recourse but to defend themselves.

The latest Israeli attacks on Palestinian rights included attacking their most sacred of places, including the Al-Aqsa Mosque, the third-most sacred place in Islam. It included disrespecting their faith during the holy month of Ramadan, preventing them from exercising their religious duties in peace and desecrating Al-Aqsa through an Israeli attack using live munitions in a holy place, leaving behind many victims. The Palestinians considered that a turning point, as the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem said.

Israeli actions also included evicting Palestinians from their ancestral homes, the latest case being in Sheikh Jarrah, and the demolition of houses, which the Palestinians rightly saw as uprooting them from Jerusalem. That invited the strongest reaction in years to the unfair Israeli treatment of Palestinians in the Holy City.

Let us not forget the decision by the Israeli authorities to bar Palestinians living in Jerusalem from voting in the upcoming Palestinian elections. Depriving them of that right led the Palestinian Authority to cancel the elections. Those are just a few examples of the reality of a people living under occupation.

As the death toll continues to rise in Gaza, at least 40 children have been killed by Israeli air strikes in Gaza since the beginning of the week. A 10-year-old in a neighbourhood that lost eight children in a single attack summed it up by saying: "I am just a kid! It is not fair! Why do we deserve this? It is not fair!"

Yes, it is not fair what is happening to Palestinian children. Years of impunity and occupation have also created a breeding ground for Israeli radicalization, emboldening extreme-right groups in Israel. They are now waging a war against the Palestinians in senseless attacks that should raise alarm bells about what is to come if nothing is done to change the situation on the ground in a major way. The chants of "Death to the Arabs" from those extremists are very dangerous and led to the lynching of a Palestinian a few days ago. Israel should be pressured to control them and protect the Palestinians who are subjected to those attacks. If those extremists are not contained, it will put the Palestinians who live with the Israelis in existential danger.

The brutal Israeli actions are not only perpetrated against the Palestinians. Yesterday they shot at unarmed Lebanese protesters on the border who were expressing solidarity with the Palestinians and killed a 21-year-old Lebanese young man. Lebanon condemns the shooting of protesters, just as it condemns the destruction by Israel of the building that housed the international press in Gaza City. Silencing the media will not make the world blind to Israel's actions and crimes against the Palestinians.

In the wake of the United States recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital by the former United States Administration, in contravention of international legality, many interpreted the subdued reaction of the Palestinians and the Arabs as acquiescence, and it led to more Israeli actions in the city, in contravention of international law and United Nations resolutions — and with impunity. The events of the past week prove that no one on the ground accepts Israel's facts and also undermine the formula for peace that is needed.

It is time to go back to the real basis for peace in the region, namely, a comprehensive and just settlement based on international law, including relevant United Nations resolutions — especially resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 2334 (2016) — the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative and the principle of land for peace.

The two-State solution should go from being used as an empty promise to being used to implement real steps on the ground to make sure that the basis for a Palestinian State is protected and respected. A Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital should not be a slogan anymore. The Palestinian population needs to be protected, and its rights under international law should be upheld by the occupying Power.

The Security Council has a responsibility under the Charter of the United Nations to uphold the principles that the Organization was built upon, foremost among them being the guarantee of international peace and security, by implementing its own resolutions. Israel's continuous and blatant disregard for international law is to disregard our United Nations and its organs, including the Security Council. The situation in the Palestinian territories and Gaza needs decisive and swift action by the Security Council in order to stop the Israeli attacks on the Palestinians and to put the parties on the path to peace — not a mere lull in the aggression, but a real effort to achieve peace this time, because the situation is grave and what we are seeing on the ground is terrifying.

It is time to move from mere words of condemnation to action. Action is expected from this organ. Only a just and peaceful settlement can bring peace to this region after decades of bloodshed and conflict.

The Palestinians remembered their Nakba with more loss and pain this week. Is it not time for them to enjoy respite and be set free? It is high time that the Council take action that sets them free at last.

Annex 41**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Liechtenstein to the United Nations, Christian Wenaweser**

I thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to contribute to today's open video-teleconference. Liechtenstein approaches today's meeting with an atmosphere of grave concern regarding the escalation in and around Gaza and the violence in the rest of the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, as well as in Israel. Liechtenstein urgently calls on all actors to end the violence, demonstrate utmost restraint and work towards de-escalation and a ceasefire.

Liechtenstein stresses the need for all actors to demonstrate respect for international humanitarian law, in particular the principles of military necessity and proportionality. The indiscriminate firing of rockets from Gaza must end; the deliberate targeting of civilians constitutes a grave violation of international humanitarian law. The large numbers of civilian casualties, many of them children, caused by Israeli air strikes in Gaza are unacceptable. The basic principles of the protection of civilians under international humanitarian law must be safeguarded at all times and there must be accountability for violating them.

Liechtenstein reiterates its belief that a two-State solution based on applicable international law, in particular international humanitarian law and relevant Security Council resolutions, remains the only viable pathway to a peaceful, stable and secure Middle East. Liechtenstein is gravely concerned over settlement activities, notably the threatened evictions of Palestinian families in East Jerusalem, and calls on Israel to cease those activities, as it is obliged to do under international law.

The increasing violence, death and destruction we have seen in recent days must be a wake-up call for all who have influence, in particular the Security Council, to help bring about a cessation of violence and address the long-standing and well-known causes of the conflict, in line with the obvious historic obligation of the United Nations as well as the mandate of the Security Council. A sustainable solution can be achieved only if the parties are willing to embark on credible and constructive negotiations in good faith and are assisted in their effort to do so.

It is long past time for those parties to demonstrate their commitment to peace through concrete actions and to refrain from unilateral steps to undermine it, in particular through acts that clearly violate the decisions of the Council and are crimes under international humanitarian law. In that respect, we call on the Security Council to take steps to ensure the implementation of its own resolutions, and we note the statement issued by the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court on 3 March.

Annex 42**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Malaysia to the United Nations, Syed Mohamad Hasrin Aidid**

I thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this open debate on this long-standing question at this critical time.

The continuing, excessive use of force in the occupied West Bank, including in East Jerusalem as well as in and around Gaza, is inhuman, unjustifiable and unacceptable. Israel must immediately cease its aggressions against Palestinians. Malaysia condemns in the strongest terms the indiscriminate targeting and killing of civilians, including children, by the occupying Power.

The international community must not stand idle and allow Israel to continue its inhuman assault on the Palestinians, which clearly violates numerous United Nations resolutions and international law, including international humanitarian law. Every effort must be made to de-escalate this dangerous situation with the aim of bringing a halt to the violence and avoiding more loss of lives. The Security Council must act immediately and fulfil its duties under the Charter of the United Nations. Malaysia urges the Security Council to speak with one voice and act swiftly and decisively to respond to the series of Israeli aggressions.

Malaysia also reiterates its call for the Security Council to revisit the recommendation contained in the Secretary-General's 2018 report, A/ES-10/794, on the deployment of United Nations-mandated armed forces or unarmed observers in order to improve the protection of Palestinians. We must spare no effort to ensure the safety, protection and well-being of the Palestinian civilian population who have been living in dreadful living conditions under Israeli occupation.

Malaysia also strongly condemns the incursion and escalating attacks by the Israeli occupying forces and Israeli settlers against Palestinian civilians and worshippers at Al-Aqsa Mosque. Targeted aggressions against worshippers during prayers, in particular in the final days of the holy month of Ramadan, are contemptuous to all Muslims and humankind. Those are heinous acts, and the Israeli Government, along with the perpetrators, must be held responsible and accountable.

We also condemn all forced evictions of Palestinians from their homes, including those in the Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan neighbourhoods of East Jerusalem. Such actions are illegal under international humanitarian law and serve only to fuel tensions on the ground. Malaysia will not recognize any blatant seizure of Palestinian land by Israel for its illegal settlements. We also reject any unilateral action regarding the final status of Jerusalem.

In that connection, Israel must be made to fully comply with all its obligations as prescribed by relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2334 (2016), and international law as well as the Charter of the United Nations. We call on the Security Council to demand accountability and bring an end to this injustice.

Malaysia remains steadfast in supporting the Palestinian cause, including the establishment of an independent and sovereign State of Palestine based on the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. We also call on the Middle East Quartet to find a mutually agreeable path for the parties to re-engage towards a negotiated peaceful settlement.

Malaysia's resolute support for, and full solidarity with, the Palestinian people in realizing their inalienable rights to self-determination, freedom and independence have never been greater and will never waiver. We will continue our bilateral assistance to Palestine and support for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency

for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, which plays a vital role in easing the dire conditions of the Palestinian people.

The ongoing violence could easily spill over into turmoil elsewhere, threatening the stability of the region and beyond. In that respect, Malaysia urges the Security Council to exercise its primary responsibility in the maintenance of international peace and security and to make full use of the available tools at its disposal in order to avert further escalation and prevent loss of life.

Annex 43**Statement by the Permanent Mission of New Zealand to the United Nations**

Aotearoa New Zealand welcomes the opportunity for the Security Council to focus on this important matter. We urge the Council to find a way to bring about an immediate ceasefire, protect those who are in danger and give hope to those who currently have none.

We are gravely concerned at the escalation of violence in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories, including Gaza, and we are appalled by the growing civilian death toll and the large number of casualties, including among children, caused by Israeli air strikes and rocket attacks by Hamas. The reported number of civilian deaths in Gaza is especially distressing.

As a nation, we reiterate the need to ensure the protection of civilians, including journalists and refugees, and we join others in condemning the destruction of homes and damage to vital infrastructure, including electricity networks and water installations, particularly in Gaza. International law, including international humanitarian law, must be respected by both sides.

The escalating violence and provocations of recent days have made it clear that without the concerted support and commitment of the international community, the hostilities will persist and intensify. It is concerning that reported offers of a ceasefire may have been rejected in favour of continued violence and hostility.

The violence that has taken place cannot be excused. There can be no military solution. All sides have a responsibility to de-escalate, stop the violence and prevent further suffering and loss of life. We call on the Council to take urgent action to help end the violence and bring about a lasting ceasefire, and we stand ready to assist in any constructive way possible to support those efforts.

This latest cycle of violence occurs amid a steady erosion of the viability of a two-State solution. The Council has a duty to act to preserve the two-State solution and advance the Middle East Peace Process. That is why we put forward resolution 2334 (2016) during our term on the Council in 2016, which condemned Israeli settlements as a flagrant violation of international law and reinforced the international community's commitment to a two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Aotearoa New Zealand remains steadfast in its belief that the seemingly intractable Israeli-Palestinian conflict can be resolved and that a two-State solution is the only basis to achieve sustainable peace.

The Council is today considering a situation that is teetering on the brink of a full-scale war. The actions of the Council now and in the coming days will quite simply be the difference between life or death for many Israelis and Palestinians.

Annex 44**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations, Munir Akram**

Pakistan welcomes this open meeting of the Security Council to discuss the extremely grave situation in the occupied Palestinian territory and Jerusalem. It is regrettable that the Council has been unable even to hold this meeting and take action to halt the Israeli aggression for so long.

Pakistan condemns Israel's use of indiscriminate and disproportionate force, including aerial bombings, resulting in the deaths of nearly 200 Palestinians, including dozens of women and children, as well as destruction of civilian infrastructure. We also strongly condemn: Israel's deliberate and systematic assault against Palestinian worshippers at Al-Haram Al-Sharif, including at the Al-Aqsa Mosque during the holy month of Ramadan; its violation of the sanctity of those holy sites; its continued policy of expansion of its illegal settlements; its forced evictions of Palestinians and demolition of their homes; and its targeting of journalists and international media outlets in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Those actions perpetrated by Israel are unacceptable and in contravention of the norms of international law. They violate Security Council and General Assembly resolutions and have grave implications for the maintenance of peace and security in the region and beyond.

Resolution 242 (1967) declared the "inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war" and demanded that Israel withdraw its armed forces from territories occupied in the 1967 war. Numerous Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2334 (2016), have declared that the "establishment by Israel of settlements in Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, has no legal validity and constitutes a flagrant violation under international law and a major obstacle to the achievement of a two-State solution and a just, lasting and comprehensive peace".

Likewise, Security Council resolutions 252 (1968), 267 (1969) and 271 (1969) censured Israel in the strongest terms for its illegal and unilateral measures taken to change the status of city of Jerusalem. The Council called on Israel to rescind such measures and to refrain from such actions in future. It recognized "that any act of destruction or profanation of the Holy Places, religious buildings and sites in Jerusalem or any encouragement of, or connivance at, any such act may seriously endanger international peace and security". General Assembly resolution 2253 (ES-V) also declared Israeli measures to change the status of Jerusalem as invalid. Security Council resolution 478 (1980) and others on the status of Jerusalem subsequently reaffirmed that position.

Israel's ongoing attacks against Palestinians also violate Security Council resolutions, including resolution 259 (1968), relating to the protection of civilians in the occupied Palestinian territories.

It is regrettable that despite the daily loss of lives due to Israel's aggressive actions, the Security Council has failed to demand that Israel halt its indiscriminate and disproportionate use of force against the defenceless and beleaguered Palestinian people in Jerusalem, the occupied West Bank and the besieged Gaza. It is regrettable that such actions by the Council have been prevented by those who proclaim their strong adherence to the principles of human rights and the international rule of law.

In the ongoing Israeli onslaught against the Palestinians, the violations of human rights and international legality could not be more blatant and egregious, yet Israel continues to enjoy immunity from the sanctions often used against others.

It enjoys immunity from any accountability for its aggression, which many have judged amount to war crimes, and impunity for flouting the so-called rules-based world order.

There is neither a moral nor a military equivalence between Israel and the Palestinians. The Palestinian cause is a legitimate struggle against an occupying Power by an occupied people. It is a just struggle for self-determination and against foreign occupation. The asymmetry of power between an occupied and beleaguered people and one of the most powerful militaries in the region is stark and brutally evident.

Against the grim backdrop of the deteriorating situation in the region, we urge the Security Council to fulfil its obligations under the Charter of the United Nations, call for an immediate halt to Israel's use of disproportionate and arbitrary force, offer protections to the Palestinian civilians who are bearing the brunt of the Israeli attacks and ensure Israel's full compliance with international humanitarian and human rights laws, including the right to life, freedom of worship, movement and peaceful assembly. Israel must be asked to stop all unilateral and illegal steps, including the expansion of settlements and attempts to change the status of Jerusalem.

The Council should initiate steps to hold Israel accountable for its war crimes and crimes against humanity. Above all, the Security Council must promote the full implementation of the relevant resolutions especially for the realization of the two-State solution through the establishment of a viable, independent and contiguous Palestinian State within the pre-1967 borders and with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

Annex 45**Statement by the Permanent Mission of Peru to the United Nations**

[Original: Spanish]

We welcome the initiative of the Chinese presidency to convene this open debate on the grave situation in the Middle East, including the question of Palestine.

Peru deeply regrets the escalation of violence in Israel, Gaza and the occupied Palestinian territories and the fatalities it has caused among the civilian population, many of them minors. The scenario is unsustainable and destabilizing for the Middle East. We deplore the persistence of hostile dynamics, the indiscriminate violence of Hamas, the disproportionate Israeli response and the confrontational rhetoric from both sides. International law and human rights are being openly ignored amid a climate of impunity that is exacerbating the conflict.

In these grave circumstances, Peru calls on the leaders of both parties to show concrete signs of restraint and commitment to peace. It is urgent that they immediately comply with the ceasefire called for by Secretary-General António Guterres as an essential measure to protect the civilian population and strengthen diplomatic action. We also reaffirm our commitment to the only solution that we consider viable and consistent with international law: that of two States with internationally recognized and secure borders, to be negotiated directly between Israel and Palestine based on the pre-1967 borders, which must also lead to the determination of the final status of Jerusalem.

Peru emphasizes that achieving the two-State solution presupposes Israel's necessary compliance with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council. In particular, we consider it urgent that the Israeli authorities put an end to the illegal policy of settlements, demolitions of buildings and evictions in the occupied Palestinian territories, as they undermine the two-State solution and contravene the provisions set forth by the Council in its resolution 2334 (2016).

In that regard, we highlight the central role that the Middle East Quartet is called to play in the efforts to resume a peace process, together with various countries that have expressed their willingness to provide their good offices. The Security Council, in line with the high responsibilities entrusted to it, must also be capable of reaching minimum consensus and acting firmly when the situation so requires.

I wish to conclude by expressing our support for the Secretary-General and Mr. Tor Wennesland and encourage them to persevere in their efforts to reverse the cycle of destruction, address the underlying causes of this long and bloody conflict and achieve the resumption of direct negotiations between the parties.

Annex 46**Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations, Cho Hyun**

I would first like to thank you, Mr. President, for having convened today's open debate. I reaffirm my Government's strong support for the Security Council, the Secretary-General and the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and their efforts to end hostilities and de-escalate tensions.

The Republic of Korea expresses its deep concern over the aggravating situation of violence in Israel and Palestine. In particular, we express our serious concern over the large number of civilian casualties, including children, caused by the indiscriminate firing of rockets from Gaza and the response thereto. Violence cannot be justified under any circumstances. My delegation calls on the parties to refrain from further escalation and immediately halt the use of force. We call for respect for international law, including international humanitarian law.

My delegation further expresses concern about the tensions and violence in East Jerusalem. We urge for the exercise of maximum restraint and respect for the status quo at the holy sites.

The Republic of Korea reiterates its support for a negotiated two-State solution, in line with relevant United Nations resolutions as well as international law and bilateral agreements and calls on the parties concerned to cooperate with the efforts of the international community towards that aim.

The Republic of Korea — a staunch supporter of the efforts of the international community and the Security Council to establish lasting peace in the region — reaffirms its commitment to continuing its constructive role to that end.

Annex 47**Statement by the Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations, Mathu Joyini**

We thank the People's Republic of China for having convened this emergency meeting on the escalation of violence in the occupied Palestinian territory.

South Africa strongly condemns the continuing escalation of attacks by Israel against Palestinians in Gaza and East Jerusalem. Those actions are totally unjust and shameful, in particular the targeting of the most vulnerable section of the Palestinian community: civilians, including children, women and the elderly. The resulting casualties, loss of livelihoods, ensuing hostilities and surge in intercommunal violence engulfing the occupied Palestinian territories bear the sole responsibility of the occupying Power, Israel.

We express our condolences to the families of all who have been injured or lost their lives.

Israel's ongoing attacks against Palestinians, including on civilian infrastructure, which violates United Nations resolutions, including resolutions of the Security Council, justifies an urgent call for the intervention of the international community. Those actions should be addressed by the International Criminal Court — a Court that was set up by the international community to address crimes against humanity. The Council has in the past not hesitated to refer crimes of that nature to the International Criminal Court and should not hesitate to do so again in this case. Failure to do so will fuel the perception of double standards.

The continuing illegal settlement activity of Israel, including the planned evictions of Palestinian families in the Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan neighbourhoods, must be condemned by the Council.

South Africa is also appalled by the violence of vigilante-style groups and mobs against Palestinians, as well as the violation of religious sites. As Secretary-General Guterres has stated, leaders have a responsibility to curb inflammatory rhetoric and calm the rising tensions.

South Africa remains unequivocally committed to working towards a situation where the fundamental human rights and freedoms of all people on both sides of the Green Line are promoted and respected and where all live free from violence, occupation and oppression based on race, religion or any other status. South Africa remains committed to reviving a political process that would see the realization of those rights and values.

Any peace plan should reject attempts to restrict Palestinians to balkanized territories that are devoid of sovereignty, territorial contiguity and economic viability, which would be similar to the Bantustans of apartheid South Africa. A lasting solution must be premised on a just settlement with just laws that are rights-based and that facilitate equality and equity for all who have a right to live in the territories of Israel and Palestine. That includes sovereign equality between States.

The recent developments require the urgent attention and appropriate response of the Security Council. The Security Council must call for an immediate cessation of all attacks by the occupying Power, Israel, on civilians, including children, and Israel should also not impose any conditionalities for negotiations towards a ceasefire agreement.

In conclusion, South Africa is of the view that if the Security Council is unable or unwilling to act, then this matter must be referred to the General Assembly for consideration. That will ensure that the United Nations does not shirk its responsibility to maintain international peace and security.

Annex 48

Statement by the Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations

[Original: English and French]

Switzerland thanks the Chinese presidency for organizing this open debate and for the opportunity to contribute to it.

Switzerland is extremely concerned about the ongoing escalation of violence in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory. This new cycle of violence must stop immediately. All the necessary precautions must be taken to avoid further Israeli and Palestinian civilian casualties. Switzerland reminds all parties of their obligations under international law, in particular international humanitarian law.

The indiscriminate firing of rockets from the Gaza Strip into Israeli territory is contrary to international humanitarian law and must stop. The same applies to breaches by all parties of the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution in the conduct of hostilities. In the context of the already dramatic humanitarian situation in Gaza, the ongoing Israeli military operation will contribute only to further instability and violent extremism. Civilians, including children, should not be made to pay the price. It is imperative to put an immediate end to the violence, protect the population as well as the civilian infrastructure and allow the necessary access for humanitarian assistance.

Switzerland is also concerned about the escalation of violence in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and in Israel. It calls on all leaders to stop the incitement to violence and to actively engage in immediate de-escalation. Such cycles of violence can end only if the root causes of the conflict, as enshrined in United Nations resolutions, in particular resolution 2334 (2016), are resolved. It is also necessary to work towards peaceful coexistence between Israelis and Palestinians based on respect for the principle of equality. Switzerland is convinced that only a negotiated two-State solution in accordance with international law and internationally agreed parameters, including Security Council resolutions, can lead to a lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians.^{[P]_{SEP}} Switzerland calls on all actors involved to put an urgent end to this cycle of violence and to do everything possible to conclude a ceasefire as soon as possible, while initiating a process that allows for the root causes of the conflict to be resolved. Switzerland remains at the disposal of the parties to facilitate the resumption of a credible dialogue.

Annex 49**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Syria to the United Nations, Bassam Sabbagh**

[Original: Arabic]

My country's delegation deplores the procrastination of the United States delegation over the convening of this meeting, considering it a blatant attempt to allow the Israeli occupation forces more time to continue their attacks against the Palestinian people.

The escalation of barbarous practices by Israel against the Palestinian people in Jerusalem coincides with the 73rd anniversary of the rape of Palestine and is but part of a relentless series of sustained war crimes and outrages committed against the Palestinian people, aimed at expelling them from their land and changing its demographic and religious character. Israeli settlers attacked unarmed Palestinian citizens in the Shaykh Jarrah, Damascus Gate and Silwan neighbourhoods, violating the sanctity of their homes and attempting to dispossess them on the basis of outrageous, sham decisions in clear violation of the obligations of the occupying Power under the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949.

And matters did stop there. Provoked by hordes of settlers and Israeli occupation forces storming the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound in occupied Jerusalem, Palestinian worshippers were prevented from performing their religious duties during the holy month of Ramadan. The occupation forces then introduced an internal state of alert, designed to inflame the situation and serve the racist policies of the Netanyahu government by enabling it to export a crisis of government to the occupied Palestinian territories. The real reason for what is happening is aggressive practices and illegal measures taken by Israel aimed at expelling the Palestinian inhabitants from their homes in Jerusalem, not the reaction to this of the Palestinian resistance. The Netanyahu Government bears full responsibility for the escalating situation in the occupied territories.

The Syrian Arab Republic condemns in the strongest possible terms the ongoing barbaric behaviour of the Israeli occupation forces against the Palestinian people in Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip and elsewhere. It also condemns western coverage of Israel's indiscriminate bombardment and killing of civilians, mostly women and children, and the massive and deliberate destruction caused by Israeli airstrikes on public and private property and civilian facilities. No exception has been made for United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) schools. Indeed, Israeli aerial bombardment has caused severe damage to several UNRWA schools in Gaza, destroying at least 29 classrooms. Furthermore, UNICEF has confirmed that an Israeli airstrike on the Shati refugee camp left eight Palestinian children dead, bringing the number of children who have lost their lives in airstrikes to more than 52 in a six-day period; 31 women have also been killed.

Yesterday's destruction by Israel of the Jala Tower in Gaza City, a building housing global media headquarters, can mean only one thing: Israel wants to cover up its war crimes and prevent the world from finding out the truth about what is happening to the Palestinian people, of whom 181 have been killed and 1,225 wounded so far.

It is a disgrace for the United States and certain European countries to describe what is happening in the occupied Palestinian territories as "a reciprocal cycle of violence", thereby turning villain into victim on the pretext of self-defence, and to condemn Palestinian attacks against Israel before condemning Israeli attacks against Palestinians. Those who point to the reaction of the Palestinian resistance to

avoid having to condemn Israeli violations would do well to remember that, during the marches of return, which were launched at the same time in 2018 in response to former President Trump's transfer of the United States embassy to occupied Jerusalem, hundreds of unarmed Palestinian civilians were killed by Israeli forces without a single missile being launched. Nevertheless, those countries failed to condemn Israel at the time.

It will be clear to any observer of developments in the occupied Palestinian territory that the current situation could not have arisen without a green light from the United States and the West. The silence of the United States, France and Britain over Israeli war crimes against Palestinian civilians, above all against women and children, and the attempts to cover these up in the Security Council with feeble excuses, reveal the hypocrisy of those countries and give the lie to their claims to be concerned with protecting human rights. They also reveal the deranged nature of the campaign of false allegations made against my country, Syria, for years. Why do we hear nothing now from those who have given us headaches in recent years with talk about protecting civilians and civilian facilities, preserving human rights and ensuring accountability? How do they propose to protect the Palestinian people from the Israeli killing machine? How are they going to hold Israel accountable for its criminal acts against the Palestinians?

It is a disgrace for those countries to trumpet slogans about democracy and human rights and use these as a means of interfering in the affairs of many Member States to undermine their security and stability. Yet they deny anti-war campaigners and peace activists the right to demonstrate peacefully against Israeli practices and to express their support for and solidarity with the Palestinian people. As such, they expose the double standards adopted by western nations when it comes to protecting Israel and ensuring that it escapes accountability for its violations of international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

The Palestinian people have suffered greatly for more than seven decades and it is now time for the international community to take effective and immediate steps to end their suffering, stop the relentless Israeli aggression against them and support their right to self-determination and the establishment of their own independent State with Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions. The international community must also guarantee the refugees the right of return to their homes in accordance with resolution 194 (1948); this is a non-negotiable and non-assignable right that shall not lapse with the passage of time.

The Security Council must move on from making speeches and statements to taking action. It must shoulder its responsibility to end Israeli occupation of Arab land, including the Syrian Arab Golan, by implementing the appropriate resolutions, principally resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 497 (1981), to put an end to this long, unrelenting and unprecedented violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

Annex 50**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations, Feridun Sinirlioğlu**

First, I would like to extend my deepest condolences to the Palestinian people for the tragic loss of innocent lives, including among children and babies. I also wish a speedy recovery to the more than 5,000 Palestinians who have been wounded.

We strongly condemn Israel's aggression, including its air strikes. The recent developments cannot be portrayed as the result of mutual escalation. The responsibility for the situation rests with the Israeli Government, under the leadership of Netanyahu. It is Israel that shockingly attempted to expel the Palestinian people from their homes in East Jerusalem and the West Bank during the holy month of Ramadan. It is again Israel that conducted operations against Palestinians worshipping at the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

We also condemn the targeting in Gaza of schools of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, which caused serious damage to buildings and at least 29 classrooms. That is nothing but a war crime.

It is deeply regrettable that an open Security Council meeting could only be held 10 days after the start of Israel's lethal military aggression against Palestinian civilians. With each passing day that the Council remained silent, more innocent lives were lost in Palestine. Since the start of the Israeli aggression, more than 40 children have died in Gaza. If a classroom full of kids were to have been blown up elsewhere, how many days would it have taken for the Council to hold a public meeting? How many hours would the Council need to agree on a statement condemning that attack? What can justify the Council's current inaction in the face of such human carnage, broadcast live on television? If the Security Council was not conceived for stopping such murderous acts, what was it created for?

The Council should have immediately and unequivocally condemned Israel's indiscriminate attacks against worshippers at the Al-Aqsa Mosque observing Ramadan and protesters in Sheikh Jarrah defending their homes against a deliberate campaign of ethnic cleansing two weeks ago. Remaining silent served only to embolden Netanyahu, prompting the occupier to launch its largest military operation targeting Gaza since 2014. The failure to adopt even a press statement on an issue that has been on the Council's agenda almost since its inception is simply unacceptable.

In line with its mandate under the Charter of the United Nations to preserve international peace and security, the Council must act at once to stop Israel's attacks on Palestinians. It must also compel Israel to immediately allow humanitarian aid into Gaza for the thousands of displaced Palestinians. The Council can no longer shun its responsibilities towards the Palestinian people.

Restrictions on the freedom of worship at Al-Haram Al-Sharif and the forced evictions of Palestinian people from their homes during Ramadan set the stage for the current crisis. However, those are symptoms of a cancer of much greater proportions that has been engulfing the Palestinian territories. The Netanyahu Government is provoking Palestinians to create a smokescreen for implementing its annexation plan. Israel is trying to oust Palestinians from Jerusalem in order to forcefully change the demography of the capital of the State of Palestine.

That is part of Israel's plan to render a two-State solution impossible by changing facts on the ground. Therefore, brokering a ceasefire alone will not be sufficient and will remain a stopgap measure unless coupled with more determined action to end Israel's occupation and blockade over Palestinian territories.

Turkey is actively pursuing multilateral efforts to galvanize the international community to stop the deterioration of the situation on the ground. Upon our initiative and in consultation with the Palestinian authorities and with the Chair of the Summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the OIC Executive Committee met today at ministerial level. OIC Foreign Ministers consulted on possible steps to be taken within the OIC and at the United Nations against the attacks by Israel in the Palestinian territories. The OIC group also discussed the need to involve the General Assembly in our efforts. We are ready, as before, to extend our full support to initiatives in the General Assembly in the coming days.

Given the situation and the risks faced by Palestinian civilians, we have to take decisive action to deter the aggression of the Israeli Government and ensure protection for Palestinian civilians. We must put in place an international protection mechanism to deter aggression. The General Assembly should lead the efforts for the establishment of an international protection mechanism for the Palestinian civilian population in accordance with General Assembly resolution ES-10/20. We have a moral and legal obligation to ensure the safety of Palestinian civilians, including by providing physical protection through the dispatching of an international protection force.

The latest events have served to highlight the urgency of revitalizing the Middle East Peace Process towards a two-State solution. Palestinians will never be able to live in peace and prosperity under the current circumstances, where they continue to be treated as second-class citizens in their own homeland. This occupation and apartheid regime must end.

The legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people for freedom and dignity can no longer be repressed. A just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict can no longer be delayed. Turkey will continue to extend every support to the Palestinian leadership and people in their struggle for statehood on the basis of pre-1967 borders.

Annex 51**Statement by the Permanent Mission of Venezuela to the United Nations**

[Original: Spanish]

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela strongly condemns the new round of bombings by Israel against the civilian population of the occupied Palestinian territories, which marks a serious and dangerous escalation in the situation. Those attacks reflect systematic policies by the Israeli authorities aimed at changing the historic and legal status of the territory of the Palestinian State, paving the way for enacting its illegal policy of annexation and colonial expansion.

Those crimes committed by Israeli occupying forces against the heroic Palestinian people have resulted in more than 140 people being killed, including 39 children and 22 women, as well as more than 1,000 injured and the destruction of more than 500 homes, including leading to the forced displacement of the rightful inhabitants of the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood of East Jerusalem.

That constitutes a grave violation of the human rights of the Palestinian population, especially during the holy month of Ramadan. Those criminal acts have been accompanied by repeated assaults by mobs of Israeli settlers, who have attacked residents and intimidated them with hateful and racist actions.

We categorically condemn that the occupying Power, Israel, has not ceased its violations of international law in the occupied Palestinian territories, in particular United Nations resolutions, including resolution 2334 (2016), and the 2004 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice. Israel continues the illegal practice of violating the human rights of the Palestinian people through the demolition of houses, expropriation of land, expansion of illegal settlements, extrajudicial executions, mass arrests, ethnic cleansing and desecration of holy sites, apartheid and other inhuman acts that cause great suffering. The occupying Power must be held accountable for such serious crimes.

The blockade of Gaza — the largest prison in the world — which has endured for 14 years and imposed a dire humanitarian situation and deplorable socioeconomic conditions, among other things, with the firm intention of fragmenting the Palestinian territories and destroying the viability of establishing two States based on the pre-1967 borders, jeopardizes the possibility of achieving peace. Infrastructure in Gaza continues to be affected, including the central warehouse of the Palestine Red Crescent Society and through the destruction of buildings.

The informal meeting of the Security Council on 10 May ended without a substantial outcome, and it is a regrettable situation that this organ has yet to adopt concrete decisions on those abhorrent actions that, in addition to claiming a significant number of human lives, continue to threaten international peace and security and undermine international efforts to facilitate a credible political process to end the long-standing Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In the face of such grave events, there can be no paralysis of the Security Council simply because of an existing complicity between one of its permanent members and Israel, the occupying Power, who are obliged to comply with the provisions of international law, the Charter of the United Nations and relevant Security Council resolutions and to put an end to the occupation.

Venezuela urgently calls on the international community to activate the multilateral mechanisms necessary to avoid the unpredictable consequences that will be generated by the barbaric bombings deliberately targeting civilians in the

blockaded Gaza Strip, which obstruct the path of dialogue towards a negotiated solution, in accordance with international law, and distance the parties from understanding and peace. The escalation of the conflict amid the coronavirus disease pandemic may lead to increased humanitarian needs given the already limited access that Palestinians in Gaza have to health care and vaccines.

Multilateralism and diplomacy provide the tools for reaching a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. That solution cannot be unilateral, forced or unfair. The international community and the Security Council must demand immediate action from Israel that will lead to an end to the bombings, provide international protection to the Palestinian civilian population, ensure accountability for those crimes and cease the attacks and other atrocities against civilians as well as all actions that violate the dignity and human rights of the heroic Palestinian people.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela reaffirms its historical and principled position in defence of the sovereignty, independence and self-determination of the Palestinian people and expresses its firm support for the Government of the Palestinian National Authority and its unwavering solidarity with the victims and their families. We advocate for the realization of their full sovereignty and independence and for the recognition of their inalienable rights, including self-determination, and we remain committed to the achievement of a just, lasting and peaceful solution to the Palestinian question in all its aspects.
