



# Security Council

Seventy-ninth year

*Provisional*

**9534<sup>th</sup>** meeting

Wednesday, 24 January 2024, 3 p.m.

New York

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<i>President:</i>	Mr. De Rivière . . . . .	(France)
<i>Members:</i>	Algeria . . . . .	Mr. Koudri
	China . . . . .	Mr. Niu Xiaoqiang
	Ecuador . . . . .	Mr. Egas Benavides
	Guyana . . . . .	Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett
	Japan . . . . .	Mr. Nishiyama
	Malta . . . . .	Mr. De Bono Sant Cassia
	Mozambique . . . . .	Mr. Afonso
	Republic of Korea . . . . .	Mr. Kim Sangjin
	Russian Federation . . . . .	Mr. Khloponin
	Sierra Leone . . . . .	Ms. Baimarro
	Slovenia . . . . .	Mrs. Blokar Drobic
	Switzerland . . . . .	Mr. Hauri
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Ms. Zahedi
	United States of America . . . . .	Ms. Postel

## Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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*The meeting resumed at 3.05 p.m.*

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

**Mr. Mohamed Laghdaf** (Mauritania): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the States members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in my capacity as Chair of the OIC Group.

Allow me, at the outset, to welcome and congratulate the newly elected non-permanent members of the Security Council for the term 2024–2025. We are looking forward to jointly working with this organ on meaningful action to strengthen and maintain international peace and security and to ensure respect for United Nations values and resolutions. Our appreciation also goes to the non-permanent members who have successfully completed their terms on the Council. We extend our heartfelt congratulations to the newly elected members, with special recognition for Algeria, Guyana and Sierra Leone, as members of our organization. May their upcoming tenure be marked by success and fruitful accomplishment.

This meeting has been convened to once again address the grave situation unfolding in the occupied Palestinian territory, particularly in the Gaza Strip, due to the brutal Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people that has been ongoing for the past 109 days. It has resulted thus far in the loss of thousands of innocent lives, the injury of tens of thousands of civilians, the destruction of vital civilian infrastructure and the forced displacement of the majority of the Gaza Strip's population in in blatant violation of international humanitarian law and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

The atrocities being committed by the Israeli occupying forces, akin to acts of genocide, are reminiscent of the darkest scenes and memories in human history, such as the ethnic cleansing and acts that amounted to genocide witnessed during the catastrophic 1984 Palestinian Nakba. The deliberate and indiscriminate killing and maiming of approximately 100,000 innocent Palestinian civilians, including women and children, is a testament to the genocidal intent behind the acts being committed today. The wanton destruction of residential buildings, schools, hospitals and United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East facilities further underscores the systematic Israeli persistence in eradicating the Palestinian people's national, ethnic and

religious identity. That indeed requires the immediate attention of and intervention by this organ.

In the same vein, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation firmly rejects any attempt to alter the demographic composition of the Gaza Strip through forced displacement. The suffering endured by the Palestinian population, approximately 90 per cent of which has been displaced, and which is faced with the constant threat of death, all in flagrant violation of international humanitarian law, amounts to a war crime.

In addition, Israel's obstruction of aid workers and the denial of essential supplies such as food, water, electricity, medicine and shelter exacerbate the humanitarian crisis and constitute heinous crimes that demand urgent intervention on the humanitarian, legal and political fronts.

The escalating Israeli aggression, violence and incursions in the West Bank, coupled with settler attacks against Palestinian civilians, exacerbate their suffering and pose a grave risk of further deterioration of peace and stability in the region and beyond. Reports show that since 7 October 2023, approximately 350 Palestinian civilians have been killed and 5,800 have been unjustly detained. The international community must strongly condemn those human rights violations, put an end to those criminal acts and hold those responsible accountable for their crimes.

Furthermore, the OIC draws attention to the disturbing reports of abuse, ill-treatment, collective punishment, torture and violence perpetrated against Palestinian detainees. The plight of more than 11,000 detained Palestinians, including the 5,800 who have been arrested since 7 October 2023, and the death of seven prisoners inside Israeli jails demand independent investigations into those violations. They require the enforcement of international humanitarian law, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention, in order to protect the human rights of Palestinian detainees in compliance with the rules of international humanitarian law.

In addition to the Israeli assault on dozens of mosques and churches in the Gaza Strip, illegal Israeli actions violating the sanctity of the Al-Aqsa Mosque continue unabated. Reports show that more than 50,000 Israeli settlers stormed Al-Aqsa Mosque in 2023 under the protection of Israeli forces, while illegal acts of suppressing, assaulting, terrorizing and banning Muslim worshippers from reaching Al-Aqsa Mosque

were strictly imposed in blatant violation of the right to freedom of religion and belief under international human rights law.

The OIC deeply regrets the fact that the Council has thus far failed to adopt the necessary international resolutions for the protection of Palestinian civilians. As the primary United Nations organ tasked with the protection of global peace, security and justice, the Security Council must do more to enforce its own resolutions, prevent further crimes of aggression and acts that amount to genocide, and ensure Israeli respect for, and compliance with, its obligations under international law.

In response to the current heinous and unprecedented Israeli aggression against Palestinian civilians, a joint Arab and Islamic summit took place on 11 November 2023 in Riyadh, in which a resolution was adopted demanding an immediate cessation of Israeli military aggression, the lifting of the Israeli siege, the delivery of humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip and compelling Israel, the occupying Power to abide by international law.

We call for immediate and decisive Council action to halt the ongoing brutal Israeli aggression and impunity and ensure accountability for Israel, the occupying Power, for its crimes against humanity and the illegal blockade on the Gaza Strip. That includes the need to provide international protection for the Palestinian people and to open humanitarian corridors in order to allow vital supplies for medicine, food and basic necessities to reach the Gaza Strip.

In conclusion, the OIC stresses that security and stability in Palestine can be achieved only through the implementation of international resolutions that would lead to ending the Israeli colonial occupation and enabling the Palestinian people to achieve their legitimate right to return and to self-determination. That is in addition to the realization of a sovereign and independent State of Palestine on all the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, based on the vision of a two-State solution, the relevant United Nations resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative.

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

**Mr. Peñalver Portal** (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Cuba aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Namibia on behalf of the Chairperson

of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

It is time to stop Israel's genocide against the Palestinian people. We reiterate our unequivocal demand for an immediate ceasefire and an end to the warmongering rhetoric. The urgent mobilization of emergency humanitarian aid, under United Nations coordination, is critical to address the catastrophic situation in Gaza.

The summit of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Third South Summit, held recently in Kampala, unequivocally echoed that view.

We demand that the United States Government stop paralysing the Security Council. This organ must fulfil its mandate as soon as possible in order to stop the collective punishment being carried out by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian population and end the escalating violence and massacre in Gaza. History will hold the United States Government accountable for its repeated complicit veto, which guarantees impunity for the war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by the occupying Power.

The root causes of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which did not begin on 7 October 2023, must be addressed without delay. The Security Council must urgently enforce its own resolutions so as to end the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. This organ cannot remain inert in the face of Israel's illegal policy of annexation, all its colonizing practices and its system of apartheid, which have persisted for more than seven decades in the occupied Palestinian territories, in flagrant violation of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. Nothing can justify such actions.

A comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, on the basis of the creation of two States, which would allow the Palestinian people to exercise their right to self-determination and to have an independent and sovereign State within the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital and which would also guarantee the right of return of the refugees, cannot be postponed. We consider it essential to convene, as a matter of urgency, a peace conference under the auspices of the United Nations in order to preserve the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. The entry of the State of Palestine as a full member of the United Nations can no longer be delayed.

We reaffirm Cuba's willingness to contribute to legitimate international efforts to put an end to the current situation. We support South Africa's petition to the International Court of Justice against Israel, with regard to that country's violations of its obligations under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, to which Cuba is a State party.

We reiterate the proposal presented by our country at the recent 19th Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement to urgently send to the Gaza Strip an international protection mission, authorized by the General Assembly, with the mandate to guarantee the security and protection of the civilian population and to facilitate the delivery of emergency humanitarian aid, including water and food.

We emphatically condemn the unprecedented killing of staff members of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and of refugees gathered under the United Nations banner. We will continue to support the extraordinary humanitarian work of the Agency.

In line with that position, we call for compliance with resolution 78/251, introduced by our delegation on behalf of the Group of 77 and China in the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly, which was supported by the vast majority of Member States.

The resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will contribute to stability and peace in the entire Middle East region. That noble purpose would also be served by an end to other Israeli abuses in the region, supported by the United States.

We demand Israel's full and unconditional withdrawal from the Syrian Golan and all occupied Arab territories. Aggressions against Syria that violate its sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as external interference in that Arab nation must cease. We support the search for a peaceful and negotiated solution to the situation imposed on it.

We condemn the military attacks by the United States and its NATO allies in Yemen, in violation of international law. Acts of that nature encourage the expansion of war and genocide in the Gaza Strip. The solution to the conflicts in the Middle East will not be achieved through violence.

We reiterate our strong condemnation of the terrorist attack perpetrated in Kerman during the

ceremony commemorating the fourth anniversary of the assassination of General Qasem Soleimani. We express our solidarity with the Iranian people and Government. Our heartfelt condolences go to the families of the victims.

We demand an immediate and unconditional end to the arbitrary and illegal unilateral coercive measures imposed by the United States against sovereign nations in the Middle East. Stop the double standards, selectivity and political manipulation that undermine the cause of international peace and security. The Security Council must serve the peoples of the United Nations and not the spurious interests of the war machine.

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

**Mr. França Danese (Brazil)** (*spoke in French*): I congratulate France on organizing this high-level debate, which has again drawn the attention of the United Nations community.

(*spoke in English*)

It has been decades since the current item in the Council's agenda was first considered. There is a need to go beyond wishful declarations and engage in dialogue and compromises that translate into action. As never before, there is a need for real diplomacy and true political will that enable effective multilateral action.

The Middle East peace process has long stalled—not on its own but owing to deliberate actions taken by various sides. Now we are witnessing the cruellest war, one that seriously threatens the prospect of a peaceful coexistence between Israelis and Palestinians.

Let me repeat what Brazil has been urging the Council to demand for far too long: an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, before nothing is left to be saved. That is the urgent call from the international community, translated in powerful General Assembly resolutions (resolution ES/10-21 and resolution ES/10-22), adopted in the face of Security Council inaction. Its implementation is long overdue. As stated by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs earlier this month,

“what has been unfolding in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory is a war conducted with almost no regard for the impact on civilians.” (*S/PV.9531, p. 2*)

A ceasefire is necessary to protect civilians not only from indiscriminate or disproportionate military assaults, but also from death by hunger and disease. The feasibility of humanitarian action and life-saving assistance in Gaza, as determined by resolutions 2712 (2023) and 2720 (2023), depends on it. Regrettably, alongside relentless large-scale military operations, undue restrictions and delays to the entry of humanitarian aid in Gaza reported by United Nations agencies compound the hardship of civilians, in blatant disregard for international humanitarian law.

The provisional measures that South Africa requested that the International Court of Justice indicate, with the aim of preventing the risk of genocide by requiring “the immediate suspension of military operations in and against Gaza”, are most urgent and needed. The requested pronouncement by the principal judicial organ of the United Nations not only may enable the necessary humanitarian relief and save civilian lives but also can contribute to creating an environment conducive to the restoration of political dialogue and to the resumption of negotiations aimed at the two-State solution.

A call for a ceasefire in Gaza does not tackle the root causes of the conflict, as is necessary for durable peace in the region. Nevertheless, a ceasefire now is possibly the only alternative that can preserve the international community’s ability to do so thereafter.

There can be no military solution to the deeply rooted causes of tension and hostility. Further military action will only deepen resentments and hatred and, ultimately, perpetuate the cycle of violence with detrimental effects for the whole region and the world.

Beyond Gaza, in the West Bank, in the Red Sea, in Yemen, across the Blue Line between Israel and Lebanon, in Iraq, in Syria and, of course, also in Israel, the escalation of hostilities and new security incidents seem directly related to that growing sentiment of distrust and outright disregard for international law prompted by our collective inability to avoid the tragedy in Gaza, ensure accountability and pave the way for a true and effective peace process.

There is no alternative other than advancing decisively towards the two-State solution, with a Palestinian State living side by side with Israel in peace and security, within mutually agreed and internationally recognized borders.

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

**Mr. Al-Fatlawi** (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): My country’s delegation aligns itself with the statements of the Group of Arab States and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

At the outset, I would like to congratulate the Republic of France on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council this month. We thank France for its efforts in facilitating the holding of this extraordinary meeting. I would like also to sincerely congratulate the newly elected Council members — Algeria, the Republic of Korea, Sierra Leone, Guyana and Slovenia — which will serve on the Council in 2024 and 2025. We wish them all success. I welcome the participation of ministers in this meeting in the light of its importance and added value, as the systematic Israeli aggression on the Palestinian people persists. We thank the Secretary-General for his briefing.

In October, Israeli occupation forces began their aggression against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip. They have been using various types of weapons and resorting to indiscriminate shelling by land, sea and air, claiming the lives of thousands of children, women and older persons. They have been destroying infrastructure, schools, hospitals, places of worship and houses. They have been cutting off water and energy supplies and closing border crossings. They have been imposing a siege, collective punishment and forced displacement.

The Security Council has not been able to fulfil its legal responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. It has been repeatedly unable to stop the massacres and the genocide perpetrated by Israeli occupation forces. That has led to the deterioration of the humanitarian situation and a true humanitarian disaster. As the Secretary-General said, it is an unprecedented situation because of the intensity of the military operations. All of that will result in repercussions that impact international and regional peace and security.

I take this opportunity to express my appreciation to the United Nations and humanitarian agencies that have been on the ground providing assistance. They have continued with their humanitarian work under difficult circumstances, despite the loss of life of some of their colleagues and despite the fact that the Israeli occupation forces have been ignoring their calls to



establish a ceasefire, ending humanitarian disasters and saving lives.

The vast majority of Member States have reflected their positions and will by sponsoring and voting in favour of two resolutions adopted at the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly — to reach a ceasefire, save lives and end the unspeakable daily humanitarian tragedies (General Assembly resolutions ES/10-21 and ES/10-22). We strongly hope that the demands of the majority of Member States will be heeded, and not ignored, and that the dignity of the Palestinian people will be preserved along with their right to live in freedom. Measures should be taken to hold the Israeli entity accountable for its brutal crimes.

Iraq is cognizant that the crises in the Middle East are interconnected. The most recent developments in the occupied Palestinian territories will have serious repercussions on the Middle East as a whole. Since the beginning of the aggression and the unjust war launched by the Israeli occupation forces on the Gaza Strip, Iraq has warned multiple times that, if support is continued to be granted to the usurping entity and if the international community, and in particular the Security Council, does not shoulder its responsibilities, the situation will worsen and the repercussions will not stop at the borders of Gaza and the Palestinian territories. The spectre of war and the spread of violence will then prevail in the entire region.

Calls by the Secretary-General and multiple world leaders to end the war have been ignored, as Israel's aggressive behaviour persists and is even being supported by a number of States. Expanding the conflict will not solve the situation but rather will exacerbate the war. The solution lies in the Security Council shouldering its responsibility by adopting a resolution to stop the aggressive war against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

The Government of the Republic of Iraq expresses its full support and appreciation to the Secretary-General for his principled position contained in his letter addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2023/962) with regard to the flagrant violations in Gaza. Iraq stresses that the humanitarian disasters resulting from the aggression have led to a humanitarian tragedy which requires immediate international action to stop it. International efforts must be made to stop a spillover of the war.

What happened in the Gaza Strip on 7 October must not be considered in isolation from the accumulated events of usurpation of the legitimate rights and continuous violations by the occupation forces on the Palestinian territories and from arrest campaigns, land confiscations and violations of holy places for more than seven decades.

In such circumstances and in view of this escalation, we reaffirm that the Palestinian question cannot be reduced to a problem merely of displacement and humanitarian aid when the real issue is one of a land under occupation and an oppressed people with no freedom. That is why the international community must take effective measures to end the Israeli occupation and the Palestinians' continued suffering. We reiterate our call to the international community to show its solidarity and shoulder its responsibility by urging the Israeli entity, the occupying Power, to cease its continued aggression against the Palestinian people and comply with the relevant international resolutions.

Iraq supports the case that South Africa has brought to the International Court of Justice against the Israeli entity with regard to the crime of genocide. It is an important step in the efforts to achieve a ceasefire, accountability, justice and an end to the occupation. Iraq looks forward to Ms. Sigrid Kaag's role on the ground in ensuring the safe and unhindered delivery of humanitarian aid. We request that she be provided with the support she needs to fulfil her tasks in the implementation of resolution 2720 (2023). It is important to establish a United Nations monitoring mechanism to facilitate and monitor the entry of humanitarian aid into Palestinian territories.

The Government of Iraq has been sending food aid, humanitarian aid and medical supplies to the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip since the start of the Israeli aggression, via El Arish airport in our sister nation of Egypt. The aid is being provided by the Iraqi Red Crescent to the Egyptian Red Crescent accompanied by the Palestinian Red Crescent. We have also provided fuel tankers to Egypt to be delivered to the Gaza Strip.

In conclusion, we once again affirm the position of the Government and people of Iraq in support of the Palestinian people, their aspirations, their right to self-determination and their right to establish a Palestinian State on Palestinian land.

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

**Ms. Zacarias** (Portugal) (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's debate.

(*spoke in English*)

Unfortunately, since the last open debate on the situation in the Middle East (see S/PV.9451), violence is spreading across the region, hostages are still being held captive by Hamas, the suffering of the Palestinian people in Gaza is unprecedented, the territory is becoming unliveable and anger is growing, laying a foundation for future waves of radicalized youth among both Israelis and Palestinians. Portugal would once again like to reiterate its unequivocal condemnation of Hamas's terrorist attacks and reaffirm its solidarity with Israel and its right to self-defence. We demand the unconditional release of all hostages and direct access to the remaining captives for the International Committee of the Red Cross. Terrorism is not permissible in any circumstances.

At the same time, we continue to witness a humanitarian catastrophe unfolding in Gaza. We must be vocal in rejecting any normalization of the suffering of the Palestinian people. After more than 100 days of war, there is no place for waging war against an entire population. The collective punishment of a civilian population is contrary to international humanitarian law, and preventing any further loss of life is a pressing priority. We heard the staggering numbers the Secretary-General brought to us here yesterday. That level of destruction is unprecedented and the civilian population in Gaza is defenceless against both Hamas and Israel. Furthermore, the basic tenets of international humanitarian law are not compatible with the creation of obstacles to the necessary flow of food, water, electricity and fuel to Gaza. We are deeply alarmed by the risk that Palestinians may die from hunger and disease in even greater numbers than those who have already been killed by the bombings.

We need the immediate implementation of resolutions 2720 (2023) and 2712 (2023). There must be rapid, safe, unhindered, expanded and sustained humanitarian access to Gaza, right now. And that means there is an urgent need for creating the conditions for a permanent ceasefire. We maintain the view that our collective priority should be protecting civilians and addressing the humanitarian situation on the ground. Portugal has accordingly contributed €10 million for humanitarian relief for the Palestinians, as we announced at the humanitarian conference held in Paris last November, reflecting our position on this conflict.

We stand on the side of humanity. We therefore reiterate our support to Secretary-General António Guterres's calls for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire. We commend the extraordinary commitment of the United Nations workers on the ground and reject any attempt to undermine the Organization's credibility and authority.

Political narratives play a decisive role in shaping public opinion. We therefore condemn any statement or message that suggests that Palestinians should be relocated. We also condemn the radical settlers' widespread violence against Palestinians in the West Bank and Jerusalem. Failing to hold them accountable for those acts is inconsistent with the rule of law.

Finally, we must do all we can to prevent this conflict from spilling over across the region. We therefore call for more action conducive to de-escalating the situation in southern Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and the Red Sea, as well as for maximum restraint. It is time to bring back the diplomatic track.

We must address the structural drivers of this conflict. We must bring hope for the future for the Palestinian people and meet Israel's security concerns. That must be done by giving the peace process new impetus and by building on the Arab Peace Initiative, among other things. That requires trust and a willingness to engage in meaningful negotiations. We know what we are aiming for — peace in the region, based on a two-State solution. That is the only way forward. Let us now establish the conditions to achieve that goal.

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

**Ms. Rambally** (Saint Lucia): I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of the 14 member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). Allow me to express our appreciation to Secretary-General Guterres for his remarks at yesterday's open debate.

CARICOM is deeply concerned about the unrelenting hostilities on the Gaza Strip, which are threatening an already fragile region and breeding fear, mistrust and disillusionment about the possibility of a two-State solution as provided for in resolution 242 (1967). The statistics are stark. Since 7 October 2023, more than 23,000 Palestinians have been killed in the Gaza Strip, with more than 85 per cent of the population being displaced multiple times.

Although the situation is grim, CARICOM continues to hope that where strong political will and

unity converge, a solution can be achieved. However, a precondition for that is the implementation of an immediate ceasefire. Without it, the resulting death and devastation wrought in the Gaza Strip will further delay the possibility for peaceful coexistence. To that end, we reiterate our call for an immediate ceasefire that can facilitate the parties' return to the negotiating table, which is a necessary step in building trust. We further underscore that the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages would also be a confidence-building mechanism.

Alongside the efforts towards a ceasefire is the need for enabling the permanent, unhindered and unconditional passage of humanitarian aid, at levels commensurate with the overwhelming needs. That is the only way to assuage the symptoms of a conflict in which innocent civilians bear the brunt of the misery. In that context, CARICOM would like to take this opportunity to recognize the commitment made by the United Nations, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, as well as humanitarian partners, working in such hazardous conditions.

We underscore that even conflicts have rules, to which all parties are equally bound. We therefore call on both sides to comply with their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law, particularly as it pertains to the conduct of hostilities, the protection of civilians and civilian objects, humanitarian access and the protection of humanitarian personnel and their freedom of movement. In that vein, we also call on all parties to respect their obligations enshrined within the resolutions adopted by the Security Council, including resolutions 2720 (2023) and 2712 (2023).

As we conclude, we appeal to the members of the Security Council to work constructively to ensure that Gaza, already described by the Secretary-General as a graveyard for children, does not devolve into a charnel house. Discord need not preclude durable solutions. We trust that the Council will prioritize the needs and well-being of civilians in order to positively affect the situation so that both sides are able to work towards the vision outlined in resolution 242 (1967), which remains the cornerstone of peace in the region. To that end, CARICOM reiterates its unwavering commitment to resolution 242 (1967), emphasizing that both Palestinians and Israelis deserve to exist side by side in peace and within secure and recognized borders.

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

**Mr. Muhith** (Bangladesh): I thank the French presidency for organizing this important debate. I also thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive briefing. My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Mauritania on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Group.

The humanitarian crisis in Gaza is staggering. More than 25,000 Palestinians have been killed, and more than 66,000 injured since 7 October 2023. Heartbreakingly, an alarming 70 per cent of those killed are women and children. A total of 1.9 million people have been displaced, forced from their homes as a result of widespread destruction. The toll extends beyond mere numbers. It represents the shattered families and broken lives and a community grappling with unimaginable losses and pain. Relentless Israeli bombardment has spared nothing — hospitals, schools, religious sites — all demolished. The loss of 153 personnel of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East is not just a statistic. It marks the highest number of casualties among United Nations personnel in its history and serves as yet another stark example of indiscriminate brutality by Israel. The aggression, killings and genocide by Israel have continued unabated.

Regrettably, we must acknowledge yet again that we, the United Nations — and especially the Council — have fallen miserably short in preventing the indiscriminate bombing in Gaza and the tragic loss of civilian lives. Adding to the tragedy, Palestinians are now facing critical shortages of basic necessities such as food, water and medicine, and our efforts to ensure vital humanitarian assistance have proven insufficient. Civilian lives are being used as weapons of war, and it continues. Even after securing the support of a two-thirds majority of the General Assembly for an immediate ceasefire, we have failed, as all efforts have been blocked in the Security Council through the use of the veto power, disregarding the will of the international community.

Israel must be held accountable for its flagrant violation of international norms and principles, international human rights and humanitarian laws, as well as other obligations prescribed in the relevant United Nations resolutions. In that regard, we commend South Africa for seeking provisional measures from the International Court of Justice. Bangladesh stands in



full support of South Africa's initiative and urges every Member State to do likewise. Moreover, support for the ongoing investigation by the International Criminal Court is also critical. The Palestinian question has reached a catastrophic stage, owing to the culture of impunity enjoyed by Israel for decades. It is more urgent than ever to hold Israel accountable for its genocidal acts and aggressions.

We call for rapid, safe, unhindered, expanded and sustained humanitarian access in Gaza in order to ensure the provision of necessary life-saving assistance. We refer to resolution 2720 (2023) and welcome the appointment of Ms. Sigrid Kaag as Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza. We urge the Council to implement that resolution and other Council resolutions regarding Palestine.

We once again urge the Council to take immediate measures to stop the Israeli attack on Gaza without delay and to bring an end to the decades-long Israeli occupation and aggression against Palestine. In that regard, we would like to repeat that the only solution to this crisis, and the only way to establish peace in Palestine and the whole region is to establish an independent, viable and sovereign Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, under a two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders. In that connection, we wish to express our full support for Palestine to be granted full membership in the United Nations at the earliest opportunity.

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

**Mr. Dandy** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, my delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Permanent Representative of the sisterly Kingdom of Bahrain on behalf of the Group of Arab States and wishes to make the following statement in its national capacity.

The recent dangerous developments taking place in the Middle East region, given the continued brutal Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people for more than 100 days and its repeated attacks on Syrian territories, are another cycle in the long history of Israeli criminality that dates back more than 75 years and reflects the Israeli entity's inherent propensity for criminality and destruction.

More than 25,000 Palestinian people, most of them women and children, became martyrs, and more than 80 per cent of homes were destroyed by

the Israeli aggression in the north and centre of the Gaza Strip, with the aim of displacing the remaining Palestinians from their land and eliminating the Palestinian question. The Israeli occupying forces continue their inhumane siege of the Gaza Strip, preventing the delivery of humanitarian assistance, using internationally prohibited weapons, including incendiary phosphorus bombs, and threatening to use the atomic bomb, thereby committing various types of war crimes and crimes against humanity, including genocide, in flagrant disregard of all international laws and humanitarian principles.

It is shameful that the United States and certain European countries have tried to legitimize Israel's aggression against the Gaza Strip in the name of self-defence and turn the criminal into a victim. The silence of the United States and its allies regarding Israel's crimes against the Palestinians and their efforts obstructing the Security Council from carrying out its mandate to put an end to those crimes expose the hypocrisy of those States and the mendacity of their claims to protect human rights. It also exposes their spurious allegations over the years against my country, Syria.

To those who have been rapping our knuckles in recent years with their talk of upholding human rights, protecting and assisting civilians and ensuring accountability: where is their zeal for those principles today? What are they doing to protect the Palestinian people from the Israeli killing machine? What about ensuring that Israel does not go unpunished? How will they hold Israel accountable for its criminal acts against Palestinians?

My country calls upon the Security Council to take effective and immediate steps to end the suffering of the Palestinian people by stopping the ongoing Israeli aggression, providing urgent humanitarian support, preventing forced displacement and ensuring that Israel and its supporters are held accountable for those crimes and that they do not go unpunished. In that context, the Syrian Arab Republic welcomes the proceedings initiated by South Africa against Israel at the International Court of Justice in the light of the grave violations of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

As part of the same policy of aggression pursued by the Israeli occupying authorities against the occupied Arab territories, and since its occupation of the Syrian Golan in 1967, the Israeli authorities have systematically

committed the most heinous violations of international law, international human rights law and international humanitarian law, including attempts to change the demographic composition and the institutional structure of the occupied Syrian Golan by building additional settlements, increasing the number of settlers, confiscating land for implementing settlement projects and constructing gigantic wind turbines, as well as attempting to impose Israeli nationality and land titles on the Golan population. Added to that is Israel's plunder of natural resources and continuing closure, since 2014, of the Quneitra crossing, which is the sole lifeline between the residents of the occupied Golan and their families in their homeland of Syria.

In pursuing its hostile policies, Israel has repeatedly launched attacks on Syrian territories while targeting residential areas and critical facilities, including civil ports and airports. Such attacks jeopardize the lives of civilians and the safety of civil aviation, while obstructing United Nations humanitarian operations. The most recent, on 20 January, targeted a residential building in a Damascus neighbourhood. The repeated attacks on territories of the Syrian Arab Republic and the constant threats against the States in the region are an unambiguous expression of the Israeli occupation's expansionist plans in the region, in violation of Arabs' rights in Palestine and other occupied territories.

The Syrian Arab Republic has been warning Israel and its sponsors against pursuing such aggressive policies, which have the potential to set the entire region on fire, resulting in a global escalation that would jeopardize peace and security at both the regional and international levels. We call on the Security Council to shoulder its responsibilities and to put an end to Israel's aggressive approach, to urgently end its occupation of the Arab territories and ensure the implementation of the relevant resolutions, including resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 497 (1981), which declared Israel's annexation of the Golan null and void and without international legal effect.

Before I conclude, I would like to underscore that the delegation of the European Union (EU) has taken to exploiting the platform of the Council in order to raise Syria-related issues that have nothing to do with the subject of this meeting, with the aim of diverting attention from the crimes that Israel is committing in the region and from the EU's own misguided policies, which have helped to prolong the crisis in Syria and exacerbate the suffering of the Syrian people. However, given the

scope of the tragedy in Palestine and in consideration of the Council's limited time, my delegation reserves the right to respond to the representative of the European Union in future meetings.

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

**Mr. Bunnarith** (Cambodia): I would first like to express my appreciation to you, Mr. President, for convening today's debate under the agenda item "The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question". It has been more than 100 days since the conflict began on 7 October of last year, resulting in thousands of civilian casualties and enormous destruction in Gaza. It is very unfortunate that the war is still going on. Without a ceasefire, many more innocent lives will be lost not only to gunfire but also because of disease, food shortages and a lack of available treatment for the injured and sick.

When very bad decisions are made, we should not be shy about insisting on bringing the subject up as often as necessary. I would therefore like to reiterate the views of my delegation on this topic.

First, while welcoming the four resolutions related to this conflict — two of them adopted by the General Assembly at its emergency special session (resolutions ES/10-21 and ES/10-22) and two by the Security Council (resolutions 2712 (2023) and 2720 (2023)), Cambodia urges all the parties involved in the conflict to implement the resolutions to save people's lives, prevent the conflict from spilling over into the wider region and institute a ceasefire.

Secondly, in order to enable the two nations, Palestine and Israel, to live in harmony, it is vital to investigate and address the root causes of the conflict. Cambodia urges all parties to exercise the greatest possible restraint, engage in constructive dialogue and work to resolve the conflict through diplomacy and peaceful means in order to end the humanitarian crisis and promote an enduring peace. At the recent World Economic Forum held in Davos, Secretary-General Guterres repeated his valid views on the urgent need to build trust in order to advance a two-State solution.

Thirdly, the lives and safety of all civilians must be protected in the conflict. My delegation therefore urges all sides to refrain from targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure and to implement a ceasefire in order to allow humanitarian access for the delivery

of essential aid to those in need, under international humanitarian law.

In conclusion, Cambodia joins others in calling for the unconditional release of all hostages.

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

**Mr. Mythen** (Ireland): Ireland aligns itself with the statement delivered yesterday on behalf of the European Union.

Today's debate comes more than 100 days after the start of the war. The situation on the ground in Gaza is becoming increasingly desperate. The level of civilian deaths is wholly unacceptable. The humanitarian aid and supplies reaching civilians in Gaza are wholly inadequate. As the Secretary-General said yesterday, the entire population of Gaza is enduring destruction at a scale and speed without parallel in recent history. The adoption of resolution 2720 (2023) was a step in the right direction, but it did not go far enough. It is now manifestly clear that the situation on the ground demands an immediate humanitarian ceasefire. We therefore urge the Security Council to call for such a ceasefire, in line with the view of an overwhelming majority of the international community. Ireland thanks the Secretary-General for his frank assessment of the situation yesterday, and we acknowledge and thank the United Nations staff members who are working on the front line in Gaza. We also express our heartfelt condolences to the families of those who have been killed. Ireland is shocked that a sustained campaign of disinformation and delegitimization has been directed at United Nations organizations, particularly the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and the International Committee of the Red Cross. It is vital to ensure that this campaign ceases and that Israel will instead move to foster a more constructive relationship with those organizations.

Ireland has consistently condemned the attacks launched by Hamas on and since 7 October of last year. The rape and murder of civilians, the destruction of civilian property, the taking of hostages, the use of human shields and the indiscriminate firing of rockets at urban centres are serious violations of international humanitarian law, for which those involved must be held accountable. We continue to call for all hostages to be released immediately and unconditionally.

However, it is equally incumbent on all of us to recall that international law limits the use of force in self-

defence to no more than is necessary and proportionate. In our view, those limits are being exceeded, as evidenced by the unacceptable death toll, the massive destruction of property, including homes, throughout Gaza, the displacement of as many as 2 million people and the ensuing humanitarian catastrophe that we have referred to. Furthermore, international humanitarian law requires that in any armed conflict, military operations must respect the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution. Ireland is increasingly concerned about the fact that when heavy munitions with a wide blast area are used in heavily populated urban centres their effects cannot be limited to military objectives, and they therefore become indiscriminate. Their use in such circumstances unavoidably leads to extensive destruction of nearby civilian property and the loss of civilian life. The use of such munitions must stop and must stop now.

Ireland reiterates that we must take concrete steps to achieve long-term peace, stability and security for Palestinians and Israelis alike and for the region as a whole. That can be done only through sustained and serious commitment to a two-State solution, and that requires genuine political will. The rejection by Prime Minister Netanyahu of the perspective for a sovereign Palestinian State is not acceptable. In February of last year, the Security Council reaffirmed its unwavering commitment to the vision of the two-State solution whereby two democratic States — Israel and Palestine — live side by side in peace, within secure and recognized borders, consistent with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions. As I said, the Security Council reaffirmed its unwavering commitment to that vision. Today the achievement of that vision is more pressing than ever.

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

**Mr. Mohamed** (Maldives): I would like to thank France, President of the Security Council for the month of January, for convening this important open debate on the Middle East.

I would also like to congratulate and welcome the newly elected members to the Council: Algeria, South Korea, Guyana, Sierra Leone and Slovenia. It is heartening to see Guyana, a fellow small island developing State (SIDS), on the Council. I have no doubt that it will continue to champion the interests of SIDS on the Council, including a close examination of

the security dimension of climate change, which the world is going through at the moment.

The Security Council has failed. That is a fact that even the permanent five members should acknowledge. And its failure is most clearly seen in Israel's ongoing war of aggression in occupied Palestine, most recently since 7 October 2023. What is most astonishing is that the Council, which is responsible for maintaining global peace and security, is refusing to call for a ceasefire. With that refusal, it is perpetuating a potentially genocidal war by the most powerful military in the Middle East against Palestinians.

Over a month has now passed since the adoption of resolution 2720 (2023), the second such Security Council resolution since the beginning of the war. The resolution was viewed as the first step towards peace and was supported by many countries, including the Maldives. Over the course of the past month, we have not seen a cessation of hostilities. We have not seen an end to the collective punishment imposed on the Palestinian people. We have not seen the adherence of Israel to international law and international humanitarian law. The Council must enforce its resolutions and universally implement its mandate, or we risk losing faith in the United Nations system as a whole and the weakening of multilateralism. The Council should send a clear and unmistakable message to the Middle East. The message should tell Israel to immediately and unconditionally accept and implement a ceasefire, open humanitarian corridors, release the prisoners, return to the negotiation table and pay for the reconstruction of Gaza.

Maldives is encouraged that many powerful supporters of Israel have come out in recent weeks and called for the establishment of an independent, sovereign State of Palestine in the lands currently occupied by Israel. Such calls should also include the fact that lasting peace can only be achieved in the Middle East with the establishment of an independent State of Palestine, based on the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. Maldives also welcomes South Africa's application to the International Court of Justice on 29 December 2023, requesting to declare that Israel is in breach of the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. An expedited response by the Court will undoubtedly make it possible to take urgent action against all acts and measures that are in breach of international humanitarian and international human rights law.

Tensions in various parts in the Middle East have also resulted in attacks, including massive bombardments and substantial loss of lives. We would like to see a deeper engagement by the United Nations, especially the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, in promoting dialogue, mediation and other preventive diplomacy tools. We would like to believe that the Department and other United Nations entities have accumulated a substantial amount of knowledge on conflict resolution and management in the Middle East. We call on Council members to use such resources, for such knowledge can generate evidence on which policies and tools have worked and which have failed in preventing conflicts and sustaining peace. The enduring conflict in the Middle East stand as a powerful symbol of the failures of the Council. Maldives therefore urges the Council to uphold its obligations in maintaining international peace and security. We reiterate our calls for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza to allow immediate and urgently needed humanitarian aid and assistance to the Palestinian people.

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

**Mr. Sakowicz** (Poland) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this debate.

(*spoke in English*)

Poland aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of the European Union, and I would like to share some comments in my national capacity.

Poland reiterates its unwavering commitment to peace and stability in the Middle East. We are strongly in favour of a robust coordination of all efforts to restore calm in the region. For that purpose, Poland will remain actively engaged in various diplomatic forums. Although the key role here is for the regional partners, we support all processes that have the potential to contribute to achieving a diplomatic solution and to improve the situation of civilian populations. In the longer term, we firmly back a viable two-State solution based on internationally agreed parameters.

Applauding the initiatives of Malta and the United Arab Emirates, we welcome resolutions 2712 (2023) and 2720 (2023) and call for their swift and full implementation. We extend our gratitude to all humanitarian actors, particularly the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), who persist in delivering



life-saving assistance to the civilians affected by the situation on the ground. Saying that, we strongly underline the need for all aid to be distributed solely by United Nations agencies in order to prevent its misuse by terrorist organizations.

From the very beginning, Polish authorities at all levels have condemned Hamas's brutal attacks in the strongest possible terms. The use of innocent civilians as human shields is particularly repulsive. We consistently call for the release of all hostages without any preconditions. We are of the opinion that Israel — just as any other State — has the right to defend itself in the face of terror. Nevertheless, we emphasize that the right to self-defence must be exercised in full compliance with international law, including international humanitarian law. We strongly advocate for immediate relief to Gaza's civilian population through increased humanitarian efforts. The extremely tragic situation of Gazans must be alleviated without delay. Therefore, we have increased our humanitarian aid to the Strip. Poland doubled its financial contribution to UNRWA and provided additional funding for UNICEF and World Food Programme operations in Gaza.

We have been following with concern the security situation in southern Lebanon and the ongoing skirmishes between Hizbullah and the Israel Defense Forces. In that context, we reiterate our strong support for unified actions aimed at preventing a regional spillover of the Gaza conflict. We must encourage all sides to find a diplomatic solution that will allow for the Lebanese and Israelis to return to their homes in the areas close to the border.

Now, with regard to Houthi attacks on commercial ships in the Red Sea, Poland deems such actions totally unacceptable. There is no doubt that Houthi attacks pose a threat to global trade operations and increase the risk of regional escalation. Therefore, we hope that resolution 2722 (2024), recently adopted, will contribute to our common goal to de-escalate tensions and restore stability in the Red Sea area.

To conclude, preventing a regional spillover and restoring calm in the Middle East is now more urgent than ever before. We believe that ending the hostilities in Gaza would facilitate the process of reaching a diplomatic solution to the situation in the region, and that the United Nations community should be able to develop a common position on this extremely important issue. Otherwise, the escalation and spreading of

the conflict may have further devastating and long-lasting consequences.

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

**Ms. Quintero Correa** (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): As a nation committed to promoting peace and respect for human rights, Colombia has joined the majority of the Member States of our Organization in demanding an immediate cessation of hostilities in order to put an end to the violence and barbarism that have continued to spiral in the Middle East since the beginning of October. The escalation of violence that we have witnessed for more than 100 days puts the maintenance of peace and security in the region at imminent risk. The vast majority of those who have died have been women and children, which is absolutely unacceptable. Our national experience has shown us that violence leads only to more violence and further loss of life, leaving in its wake a harmful legacy for societies, especially for young people and future generations.

Colombia expresses its solidarity with all the victims and their families. Nothing justifies targeting civilians in attacks or taking them as hostages. Nothing justifies the killing and wounding of civilians, including defenceless women and children, journalists and staff of the United Nations Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. As the Secretary-General told us, 152 United Nations personnel have been killed in Gaza since 7 October 2023, the greatest loss of life in the Organization's history, which is shocking and disheartening. We are also concerned about the scarcity of water, food and shelter in Gaza, as well as the displacement of a high percentage of its population. It is unacceptable that people are being forced to leave their homes to shelter in crowded and confined areas. We reiterate that the international community has an obligation to strongly condemn the serious violations of international humanitarian law that are taking place and which have had disproportionate effects on women, children and other vulnerable groups.

The absence of a definitive resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is having devastating consequences for the civilian population, destabilizing the region and calling into question the very meaning of life and humanity. We therefore reaffirm our support for a peaceful, definitive and comprehensive settlement of the Palestinian question, based on a two-State solution, with both peoples living side by side within secure and

internationally recognized borders, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council and with respect for human rights and international humanitarian law.

The Government of Colombia welcomes South Africa's action in bringing a case against Israel at the International Court of Justice in The Hague for an investigation into violations of several provisions of the Genocide Convention of 1948. Colombia will continue to carefully monitor the proceedings and if necessary will announce in due course the specific legal actions it will take as additional steps in support of South Africa's case.

Colombia recognizes and appreciates the efforts being made by various countries to stop the violence. We urge the United Nations and its Member States to redouble their efforts to secure an immediate cessation of hostilities, guarantee humanitarian access to the areas affected by the conflict, ensure the immediate release of all hostages and de-escalate the violence that we have been witnessing in the Middle East.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the observer of the Observer State of the Holy See.

**Monsignor Quirighetti** (Holy See): In his recent address to members of the diplomatic corps accredited to the Holy See, Pope Francis once again expressed his deep concern about the ongoing war. He reiterated his condemnation of the terrorist attacks of 7 October on the Israeli people, in which a large number of innocent persons, including women and children, were horribly wounded, tortured or murdered, with many others taken hostage. Pope Francis made it clear that he was reiterating his condemnation of that act and every instance of terrorism and extremism. He said that it was no way to resolve disputes between peoples and once again called for the immediate release of all hostages held in Gaza. At the same time, he renewed his appeal for a ceasefire on every front, including in Lebanon, which would create a space for dialogue, however difficult it may be, in order to secure the release of the hostages still being held in Gaza, and would facilitate the distribution of much-needed humanitarian aid.

The humanitarian situation in Gaza is extremely grave, affecting innocent civilians and causing unimaginable suffering, with more than 20,000 people now killed and nearly 2 million displaced. As the Holy See has already stated in its council, it is essential to prevent an entire population from suffering the

consequences of a heinous act of terrorism. Furthermore, any action taken in self-defence must be guided by the principles of distinction and proportionality and comply with international humanitarian law. It is deplorable that hospitals, schools and places of worship, all of which represent a last resort for those fleeing the violence in Gaza, are being used for military purposes and therefore being attacked. Such military activity by all the parties must cease, and those facilities must be guaranteed the protection granted them under international humanitarian law. Pope Francis has therefore called for the international community to make a greater effort to defend and implement humanitarian law, which seems to be the only way to ensure the defence of human dignity in situations of warfare.

In Israel and Palestine, as in every other part of the world, every human being, whether Christian, Jewish or Muslim, or indeed of any people or religion, is sacred and precious in the eyes of God, and has the right to live in peace. The most viable route to achieving lasting peace is still a two-State solution, with internationally guaranteed special status for the city of Jerusalem. It will be vital for the international community, together with the leaders of the State of Palestine and the State of Israel, to pursue such a solution with renewed determination at a time of widespread despair and hostility, so that humanity may prevail over hard hearts.

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

**Ms. Squeff** (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Argentina is following with extreme concern the developments in the current crisis in Gaza.

Argentina condemns in the strongest possible terms the terrorist actions of Hamas, which are at the root of the humanitarian disaster that the Secretary-General described for us yesterday, and we regret that the Security Council has yet to condemn those actions explicitly. In that regard, Argentina recognizes Israel's right to exercise its right to self-defence in accordance with international law and international humanitarian law.

Argentina deeply deplores the high toll of the conflict in terms of civilian casualties, including children, women and the elderly, and of the destruction of essential civilian infrastructure, as reported by the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross, and we want to express our condolences to the families of the civilian victims of all nationalities

who have lost their lives as a result of the current armed conflict. Argentina has always believed that every effort should be made to protect the lives of innocent civilians. For that reason, Argentina calls for the immediate implementation of resolution 2720 (2023) so that urgent measures can be taken to enable immediate, safe and unimpeded humanitarian access and create conditions conducive to a sustainable cessation of hostilities — that is, a ceasefire. In accordance with the resolution, Argentina also demands the immediate and unconditional release of all the hostages still in captivity who were kidnapped during the abominable terrorist act perpetrated by Hamas on 7 October. Among them are nationals of my own country, Argentina, and they are suffering the consequences first-hand.

In that regard, Argentina once again expresses its commitment to a just and lasting peace as part of a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which must be in accordance with international law and the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. It will be possible to achieve a lasting peace only through the resumption of a process of dialogue based on a two-State solution, whereby Israel and Palestine can live side by side in peace and security within secure and internationally recognized borders. In that regard, it is urgent that the international community renew its commitment to encouraging Israelis and Palestinians to return to the negotiating table with a view to reaching a peaceful and agreed settlement of the conflict.

Finally, Argentina thanks the Secretary-General and his team for the efforts they have been making and pays tribute to the international civil servants who have been working on the ground with great sacrifice and effort. I want to give special mention and recognition to the United Nations personnel who have lost their lives in carrying out their duties.

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

**Mr. Vidal** (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank France for convening this open debate and for its leadership of the Council during its presidency this month. We are grateful for the opportunity to reaffirm the importance we attach to the subject. In the same vein, we take note of the briefing by the Secretary-General and the statements by other speakers.

Chile advocates for a two-State solution and the right of Israel and Palestine to live in harmony, within secure and recognized international borders, with full

respect for the human rights of all their inhabitants. In that regard, we urgently call for swift and full compliance with the relevant resolutions that support the right of the Palestinian people to form a sovereign State, such as General Assembly resolution 181 (II) and Security Council resolution 242 (1967), as well as other related resolutions such as resolution 2334 (2016), which reaffirms that Israel's establishment of settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, has no legal validity and constitutes a flagrant violation of international law.

There can be no doubt that the terrorist acts perpetrated by Hamas on 7 October of last year and Israel's indiscriminate response towards the civilian population in the Gaza Strip, which has also affected people in the West Bank, are violations of the Charter of the United Nations, international law and international humanitarian law. In addition, we are alarmed by the conflict's repercussions on the rest of the region, where we are seeing deeply worrisome situations arise. We therefore echo the views of the Secretary-General and the respective heads of various United Nations agencies — including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, the World Health Organization, the World Food Programme and UNICEF — that an immediate, durable and comprehensive ceasefire is essential if we are to de-escalate tensions. A ceasefire remains a priority for the protection of civilians, particularly women, elderly people and children. But while there is no question that human life must be our top priority, the Security Council has so far failed to take action.

We underline that there is no contradiction between a State's legitimate self-defence or fight against terrorism and ensuring respect for the lives of civilians. It is simply not permissible to attack critical civilian infrastructure, including homes, health and education centres and shelters, among others. Full, immediate, safe, secure, unimpeded and sustained humanitarian access must be guaranteed, including based on respect for resolutions 2712 (2023) and 2720 (2023), which the Council adopted last year. We believe that the use of all available routes into and through the Gaza Strip must be facilitated.

Violence cannot be solved with more violence. Its indiscriminate use has cost the lives of thousands of Palestinian civilians and put the lives of the kidnapped Israeli citizens at great risk, as has already been tragically demonstrated. Chile has unequivocally

condemned the actions of Hamas, as well as all terrorist acts, acts of violence and hostilities against the civilian population. We also demand the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages still held by Hamas, ensuring their welfare and proper treatment in accordance with international law.

We encourage all the parties involved, as well as the international community, to continue working to end the war. That will be possible only through diplomacy and dialogue. We recognize the efforts that have been made and the results achieved by friendly countries in defusing the crisis. We wish the recently appointed Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza, Ms. Sigrid Kaag, every success in her work and hope she will receive everything she needs to carry out her duties.

Chile has always affirmed that helping to reach a peaceful solution in the Middle East is a priority of its foreign policy, and has continually expressed its support for a just and lasting solution. That commitment is also demonstrated by the fact that we host the largest Palestinian community outside the Middle East, whose members began to arrive in Chile at the beginning of the twentieth century and have become fully integrated into our society. We also have a dynamic and active Jewish community.

In conclusion, we would like to inform the Council that on Thursday, Chile and Mexico together submitted a referral letter to the International Criminal Court regarding the situation in Palestine, with the aim of strengthening the investigation into the alleged war crimes and crimes of crimes against humanity in Gaza, the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Israel — crimes that are provided for in the Rome Statute. Considering that there is currently an ongoing investigation by the Office of the Prosecutor of the Court regarding the situation in Palestine, the objective of Chile's referral is to support the Prosecutor in that investigation. In Chile's view, it is essential to clarify the facts and responsibilities if we are to ensure that such situations cannot recur.

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

**Mr. Al Rubkhi** (Oman) (*spoke in Arabic*): The Security Council is meeting again today, more than 100 days since the escalating situation in the Gaza Strip began, and yet it is still unable to take the practical, concrete measures for the ceasefire that has been repeatedly called for by the international community,

the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Secretary-General, whom we commend for upholding peace, international law and international humanitarian law.

Peace-loving nations and the world at large will not forget those who have given Israel the green light to continue its crimes against the Palestinian people. From this Chamber we say to Israel, with one voice, that it must cease its holocaust against the Palestinian people. Its attempts at genocide, ethnic cleansing and forced displacement are unacceptable. We hold Israel, the occupying Power, and all who support it in committing such crimes, fully responsible for the aggression, which has undermined and continues to undermine the legitimacy of the Security Council — the organ that has always taken pride in its achievements and its role in maintaining international peace and security.

Nonetheless, we stress that what has happened will not undermine the will and determination of the Palestinian people or any other nations in their efforts to obtain freedom and reject occupation. We proclaim it here that any occupation is doomed to end. Decolonization is an endeavour that requires many sacrifices, often borne with great hardship by many peoples of the world for the sake of gaining their freedom and dignity and shaping their own destiny.

My country condemns the genocidal policy of Israel against the Palestinian people, and we continue to urge the Security Council to uphold its legal and ethical responsibilities, to call for a ceasefire, to provide protection for the Palestinian people and meet their humanitarian needs and to hold Israel accountable for violating international law and international humanitarian law. Israel must also be held accountable for disregarding the resolutions of international legitimacy calling for an end to the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian and Arab territories and for Israel's withdrawal to 1967 borders, with a view to achieving justice with sustainable and comprehensive peace.

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

**Mr. Cherif** (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate France on its presidency of the Security Council for the current month and on convening this important periodic debate. I also congratulate the newly elected members of the Council. I would be remiss if I did not also express our appreciation and support to Secretary-General António



Guterres for his noble efforts and repeated calls for a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip.

More than 100 days after the outbreak of the aggression, the occupying Power continues its systematic aggression, its policy of collective punishment and its genocide against the brotherly Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip by destroying civilian facilities and infrastructure with the aim of deepening the suffering of Palestinians, who are facing a humanitarian catastrophe as a result of that relentless, continued brutal aggression.

We condemn in the strongest terms the war crimes committed by the occupying Power against Palestinian civilians through the systematic killing of women and children and the targeting of hospitals, schools, universities, places of worship and even humanitarian workers. The occupying Power uses starvation and the interruption of basic services as tools of war. We cannot by any means accept the silence of the international community and the inability of international institutions and organs to carry out their responsibilities.

In that context, Tunisia stresses that support for the Palestinian people is a moral and legal responsibility that lies with the entire international community. It is therefore of paramount importance to unify and step up international efforts in order to end the bloodshed and colonization and to ensure the realization of the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people.

The stalemate in the peace process, the continued deterioration of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories and the approach adopted by the international community with regard the Palestinian question, namely, dealing with repeated cycles of violence without addressing the root cause — the occupation — can lead only to further escalation and complication of the situation in the region and to greater suffering for the Palestinian people.

At a time when the peoples of the world aspire to promote development and achieve economic growth, the resilient Palestinian people continue to suffer under the yoke of occupation and blockade for more than 75 years. The occupying entity has continued its aggression, its expansionist project and its flagrant violations of international law, with full impunity.

In that context, Tunisia emphatically denounces the policy of double standards and all attempts to place the executioner and the victim on the same footing or to liquidate the just Palestinian question. We reiterate our

call for an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, for ensuring the protection of civilians and for accelerating the unimpeded delivery of humanitarian aid. We reject all attempts to forcibly displace the Palestinians from their land, considering such attempts to be flagrant violations of the principles of international law and the resolutions of international legitimacy.

Tunisia, which is firmly committed to the values of justice and rights, resolutely rejects any forms of injustice and aggression. We reiterate our steadfast position in support of the brotherly Palestinian people in their resilience in the face of occupation, the war of genocide and their struggle to establish an independent State on the entire land of Palestine, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

Tunisia has spared no effort to help the Palestinian people in their legitimate struggle to achieve their inalienable rights and end colonization.

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

**Mr. Pieris** (Sri Lanka): The horrific position in Gaza and the West Bank has been described to us in graphic detail in the meeting over the past two days. It distinguishes itself from all other historical conflicts by being of incomparable intensity, in the context of the grotesque manner in which the conflict is being conducted by the parties to the conflict, encouraged, of course, by third parties, who appear to have little concern for humankind, but are simply driven by the greed for global dominance and the pursuit of their collateral agendas. We heard the Secretary-General yesterday tell us of the untold suffering and trauma of the Palestinian people and of the family members of the hostages, including families who lost family members to the terror of 7 October.

It is said that an eye for an eye makes the whole world blind. My delegation does not intend to add to this tragic narrative. Instead, we silently wish and pray that sanity, which we humans are said to be blessed with, will prevail sooner than later.

My delegation therefore appeals to the higher beings in all of us present here at this Security Council meeting by citing a few lines, which I have recited before, from a verse from Rabbi Sheila Weinberg, a community relations professional, entitled “Two Peoples, One Land”, composed in her zest for peace in the Middle East. It is a plea worthy of contemplation,

and I think that it captures what should be the true ethos if we are to achieve a true and lasting peace.

“Two peoples, one land,  
Three faiths, one root,  
One earth, one mother,  
One sky, one beginning, one future, one destiny,  
One broken heart, One God.  
We pray to You: Grant us a vision of unity.  
May we see the many in the one and the one in the many.  
May you, Life of All the Worlds, Source of All Amazing Differences help us to see clearly.  
Guide us gently and firmly toward each other, toward peace.”

In that spirit, let us all breathe together, breathe life into all that we do to alleviate the pain of those suffering due to this terrible conflict. In the context of the escalation of aggression in Palestine, it is important that we convey a message to all parties involved in the conflict, that we promote empathy, understanding and plead for a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

We understand that the current situation is tense and filled with pain and suffering. We urge all parties to prioritize dialogue, empathy and the pursuit of peaceful solutions, that it is critical to recognize the value of human lives and the importance of finding common ground.

It is important to note that dialogue and empathy alone may not resolve all aspects of the complex conflict in Palestine. However, they provide a foundation for peaceful negotiations and can create a conducive environment.

Violence perpetuates only a cycle of destruction and hinders progress towards a just and lasting peace. We encourage all parties to engage in constructive dialogue, listen to each other's concerns and work towards a negotiated settlement that respects the rights and aspirations of all people involved.

We know that trust-building is crucial in the dialogue process as it creates a safe and open

environment, fosters understanding, builds confidence in the process, facilitates cooperation and collaboration and sustains dialogue over time. Without trust, effective and meaningful dialogue becomes challenging, hindering progress towards a peaceful solution. Peace cannot be kept by force. It can be achieved only through understanding.

Our clarion call today is for an immediate ceasefire and for all parties to respect international humanitarian law, ensuring the protection of civilians and the provision of necessary aid and support. It is through dialogue, understanding and a commitment to peaceful coexistence that we can build a future where all can thrive in dignity and security.

Sri Lanka's long-held principled position on the matter has been clear. We recognize the legitimate and inalienable right of the people of Palestine to statehood. Sri Lanka remains committed to supporting a just and comprehensive negotiated political settlement to the Palestine issue in line with the relevant United Nations resolutions, leading to two States living side by side based on the 1967 borders.

Sri Lanka is also the Chair of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories and continues to stand in solidarity with the Palestinian cause and affirms the rights of the Palestinian people to live in peace and dignity alongside their Israeli brothers and sisters.

Finally, our plea today to our brothers and sisters of Palestine and Israel is that they come together as members of one human family, put aside their differences and strive for a future of peace, justice and prosperity for all in Palestine and in Israel. The members of the Security Council, as trustees of global stability and security, and as pledged in the Charter of the United Nations, must do everything possible and must do everything that it takes to facilitate a peaceful resolution of the conflict, which we must not pass on to future generations.

*The meeting rose at 4.45 p.m.*