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Seventy-ninth year

Provisional

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New York

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Kanu	(Sierra Leone)
<i>Members:</i>	Algeria	Mr. Bendjama
	China	Mr. Fu Cong
	Ecuador	Mr. Montalvo Sosa
	France	Mrs. Broadhurst Estival
	Guyana	Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett
	Japan	Mrs. Shino
	Malta	Ms. Gatt
	Mozambique	Mr. Afonso
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Hwang
	Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
	Slovenia	Mr. Žbogar
	Switzerland	Mrs. Baeriswyl
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Kariuki
	United States of America	Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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

I propose that the Council invite the Permanent Observer of the Observer State of Palestine to the United Nations to participate in this meeting, in accordance with the provisional rules of procedure and previous practice in this regard.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs; and Ms. Lisa Doughten, Director, Financing and Partnerships Division, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

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

I give the floor to Ms. DiCarlo.

Ms. DiCarlo: Once again, the Council is coming together to discuss alarming developments and increasing tensions in the Middle East. The devastating Israeli attack on the Al-Tabaen school in Gaza City, which prompted this meeting, once again points to the desperate need to reach a ceasefire, free the hostages and scale up humanitarian aid to Gaza.

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) air strike in the Al-Tabaen school compound took place early on 10 August. It killed dozens of Palestinians and wounded many others, including women and children, according to local Palestinian sources. The Secretary-General condemned the continued loss of life in Gaza following another attack on a school sheltering hundreds of displaced Palestinian families. According to Israel, the IDF targeted a Hamas command centre in a mosque inside the school compound and killed at least 31 Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad fighters.

As the Secretary-General underlined yesterday, international humanitarian law, including the principles of distinction, proportionality and precautions in attack, must be upheld at all times.

Also yesterday, Hamas announced the killing of a hostage and the serious injuring of two others by Hamas militants while in captivity in Gaza. Both sides said they are looking into the incidents.

With hostilities continuing across the Gaza Strip, including in the north around Gaza City, in the middle area in Khan Younis and in and around Rafah, the situation remains catastrophic for civilians. No place is safe in Gaza, yet civilians continue to be ordered to evacuate to ever-shrinking areas. My colleague Director Doughten, from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, will brief members shortly in more detail regarding the dire humanitarian conditions in Gaza.

Ten months since the start of the war, the threat of further regional escalation is more palpable and chilling than ever. Exchanges of fire across the Blue Line have continued nearly daily. Since I previously briefed the Council, on 31 July (see S/PV.9696), numerous projectiles have been fired from Lebanon across the Blue Line, causing damage to buildings and bushfires in open areas. The IDF has responded with strikes across the Blue Line into southern Lebanon. Uncrewed aerial vehicles crossing the Blue Line from southern Lebanon have also continued. An IDF base was hit across the Blue Line, while another base was hit near Nahariya, in northern Israel. An open area in Nahariya city was also struck.

I urge continued attention to the worsening situation and ongoing violence in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. On 3 August, the IDF said it had conducted two air strikes on a Hamas cell in Tulkarem, killing nine Palestinians whom the IDF said were planning to conduct an attack inside Israel. Separate IDF operations in Jenin and Tubas early last week also killed another 16 Palestinians. On 11 August, a shooting attack claimed by Hamas killed one Israeli civilian and wounded another in the northern Jordan Valley in the occupied West Bank. Another Palestinian shooting attack near Qalqiliya reportedly injured one Israeli and two Palestinians. The assailant, who was claimed by Hamas as an Al-Qassam Brigades commander, was subsequently killed by Israeli security forces.

If the slide towards an even-greater catastrophe is to be halted, the parties must end all escalatory rhetoric and actions. I reiterate the Secretary-General's call for all to work vigorously towards regional de-escalation in the interest of long-term peace and stability. I welcome efforts by Egypt, Qatar and the United States to bring both sides to conclude a deal to bring about a ceasefire, the release of hostages and desperately needed humanitarian relief. As the leaders of Egypt, Qatar and the United States emphasized in their joint statement on 8 August, "[t]here is no further time to waste, nor excuses from any party for further delay." Their call for immediate relief to the people of Gaza and the hostages and their families must be heeded. I urge all parties to prioritize the protection of civilians and promptly conclude the deal as endorsed by the Security Council in resolution 2735 (2024). The United Nations is committed to supporting all efforts towards that goal and remains in close contact with the relevant parties.

The killing, destruction and suffering in Gaza must end. The hostages must be reunited with their families. But even as efforts to achieve those goals continue, we cannot lose sight of what we consider indisputable: in the absence of a clear path towards a future in which Israelis see their legitimate needs for security materialize and Palestinians see their legitimate aspirations for a fully independent, viable and sovereign State realized, lasting peace in the Middle East will remain elusive.

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

I now give the floor to Ms. Doughten.

Ms. Doughten: Here we are again, in the aftermath of yet another horrendous episode in this brutal war in Gaza. Like Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo, we are deeply horrified by the strike on the Al-Tabaen school in Al-Daraj by Israeli forces on Saturday. The school was sheltering several hundred displaced families, many of whom had moved there because of recent evacuation orders. And the strike was conducted during dawn prayers. Initial reports suggest that this was one of the deadliest attacks on a school sheltering displaced people since the start of this conflict.

Tragically, this was far from an isolated incident. Indeed, such attacks appear to be occurring with increasing frequency. The most recent incidents include three schools hit within 48 hours between 3 and 4 August and two schools hit on 8 August, all in Gaza city, with Al-Tabaen on Saturday being the latest such attack. According to the Office of the United Nations

High Commissioner for Human Rights, this is at least the twenty-first strike on a school that had been serving as a shelter recorded since 4 July. Scores of people have been killed in those strikes, among them women and children.

Sadly, these large-scale incidents are only some of the myriad ways in which this horrendous conflict is causing unbearable suffering and devastation. Unremitting violence in Gaza has now killed almost 40,000 Palestinians and injured more than 90,000 others, according to the Gaza Ministry of Health. Some 10,000 people remain unaccounted for and are thought to be buried under the rubble. And as of 9 August, an estimated 115 hostages remain captive in Gaza, despite repeated demands for their release, including hostages who have been declared dead and whose remains are in Gaza.

The health situation in Gaza remains critical, and the health-care system is barely functional, providing brave but limited support for the injured and the sick, for the women in childbirth and against rapidly spreading disease. Thousands of patients in critical condition are on waiting lists for medical evacuations. More than 60 per cent of residential buildings and 65 per cent of the road network have been damaged or destroyed, according to recent United Nations analysis. In just two weeks, more than a quarter of a million people have been displaced, often on multiple occasions. Evacuation orders —supposedly for civilians' security—are clearly having the opposite outcome. Civilians are repeatedly asked to evacuate to areas where essentials for their survival are absent. They are repeatedly being killed and injured in the very places they have been told were safe to go.

Shelters and displacement camps are reportedly used for military purposes by Palestinian armed groups, exposing those sheltering there to terrible danger. Overcrowding in those places is putting immense strain on already severely stretched water, sanitation and hygiene facilities. Acute respiratory infections, diarrheal illnesses, acute jaundice syndrome and skin infections are all surging. And, very worryingly, with school immunization programmes practically impossible, polio looms as a new threat after six circulating poliovirus strains were detected in environmental samples in June. As a matter of urgency, health workers must be allowed to carry out an immunization campaign.

This war is destroying lives, dreams and futures. More than half a million students have lost an entire academic year, with 39,000 students missing their final exams. Even if this war were to end today, we estimate that at least 8 in 10 schools would require rehabilitation. And we must not discount the immense emotional and psychological trauma this war has had on children — indeed, on people of all ages — trauma that they will carry for the rest of their lives.

It bears repeating: there is no protection of civilians in Gaza. Alongside the relentless mass displacement within Gaza, many thousands of Palestinians have left, and many more are trying to do so. As this conflict persists and lives are threatened daily, civilians must be allowed to seek protection. Those displaced must also be guaranteed the right to voluntarily return.

What we are seeing in Gaza is the result of a war waged with pitiful, if any, regard for the requirements of international law. I share the Secretary-General's and others' deep concern about violations of international humanitarian law being committed throughout this conflict.

In the middle of this spiralling catastrophe in Gaza, the humanitarian community doggedly continues efforts to mount an effective response. We do what we can to increase food assistance, provide education support and boost hospital capacity. Efforts are also ongoing to avert the spread of polio. And senior United Nations officials continue discussions with key stakeholders, including senior Israeli officials, to increase the flow of aid into the Gaza Strip and improve conditions for delivery on the ground.

However, as things stand, access constraints and high levels of insecurity severely hamper the humanitarian response. Aid entering Gaza has more than halved since the Rafah ground operation began and the Rafah crossing was abruptly closed in early May. New limits imposed by Israeli authorities on bringing cash to Gaza are significantly limiting the resources available for operations. Fuel shortages mean water supplies have fallen as low as two litres per person per day, far below the 15 litres required. Organized crime and looting along the route used by humanitarians dispatching cargo from the Kerem Shalom crossing continue to hinder aid delivery. Access to people in need remains a challenge. The increase in bureaucratic and administrative impediments, such as delays in visa

issuance and renewals for broader operational support and management, is severely impacting the response.

And our concerns for the safety of staff keep growing, with attacks on or near aid vehicles that have been coordinated on the rise. Recently, within a 12-day period, there were four shooting incidents involving United Nations convoys, including on a vehicle carrying children on their way to be reunited with their father. Non-governmental organizations and the Palestinian Red Crescent all report similar attacks. The result is that hundreds of thousands of people are not getting the life-saving humanitarian assistance they so desperately need.

How much longer can this continue? How many more tragedies such as the one in the Al-Tabaen school must happen before action is taken? Can the Council look the children, the people of Gaza, and all those affected by this war in the eye, as humanitarian workers have to do every day, and swear that no stone has been left unturned to end their suffering?

The urgent requirements, so often repeated, remain the same: first, an immediate cessation of hostilities and a sustained ceasefire; and secondly, strict adherence to international humanitarian law by all sides. That entails releasing all hostages. It also entails protecting civilians and meeting their essential needs, including by ensuring the unhindered provision of humanitarian assistance throughout Gaza, as ordered by the International Court of Justice, including through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. Lastly, as we have said before in this context, all Member States must use all their leverage to prevent and stop violations of international humanitarian law, including through diplomatic and economic pressure, and conditioning arms exports on compliance with the rules of war, and cooperation in combating impunity.

We must remember that this is now one of several conflicts in Gaza over the years that humanitarians have had to respond to, conflicts that the population in Gaza was never afforded the ability to recover from or repair. The past 10 months have destroyed what little hope for a future existed for any surviving child. I urge the Council and all Member States to use their influence to protect civilians and bring an end to this conflict and its intolerable toll. It is imperative that mutual security and lasting peace be pursued so that hope can be restored, so that civilians there can enjoy the hope that we take for granted and the hope they have never experienced.

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

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

Mr. Bendjama (Algeria): I thank Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo and Director Lisa Doughten of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for their briefings.

I will start my statement with the same question asked by Ms. Doughten: how long? Is this going to be yet another ineffective, in vain and hopeless meeting of the Security Council? Are we going to count and count the number of deaths in Gaza? The answer is simple: this is neither what the Council is designed for nor what the international community expects from us. More important, this is not how the Council should address the Palestinians' plea, the Palestinians' quest for justice and the Palestinians' right to exist. The Council has the legal and moral primary responsibility to act firmly to shoulder its mandate in preserving international peace and security.

For 311 days, the Council has been constantly fooled and disregarded, while an entire population has been subjected to collective punishment. Last Saturday, the world woke up to yet another incident of horrific bloodshed, after the Israeli occupying Power deliberately targeted a school in the Al-Daraj neighbourhood in Gaza. It was the third school bombed in two days. It was a civilian structure, sheltering civilians, according to the testimony of the international community. The Secretary-General said it clearly: the school was sheltering hundreds of displaced Palestinian families. The Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor, too, stressed that the school was nothing but a dilapidated place in which hundreds of families had taken refuge. The testimony of one of the survivors is harrowing — a father said that he had been given 18 kilograms of body parts, and he buried them as the body of his young son.

The heinous massacre of Al-Daraj, and previous ones, would not have been possible without the generous financial and military assistance freely provided to the Israeli aggressor. More than 100 innocent lives were sacrificed in Al-Daraj, among them women and children, in addition to the nearly 40,000 Palestinian martyrs so far. Were those martyrs not humans, with their dreams and with their hopes, as we all have? Is the Council's role limited to keeping a record of lost lives?

Again, the answer is simple — the Council must fulfil its responsibilities and honour its commitments, and it must do so now. It must fulfil its responsibility to tackle the root cause of the Palestinian question, which is the illegal occupation of the Palestinian land. It must fulfil its responsibility to hold the occupying Power accountable, using all legal means, including sanctions mechanisms. Finally, it must fulfil its commitment to achieve a just and lasting peace in the Middle East and to prevent the dangerous escalation provoked by the Israeli occupying Power.

The Israeli occupying Power continues to defy the very commitment of the Council, made in resolution 2735 (2024), calling for the implementation of an immediate ceasefire in Gaza. That resolution is seriously jeopardized by the intensifying aggression of the Israeli occupying Power against Gaza.

Algeria warns against the continued sabotage of the efforts made by the United States, Egypt and Qatar to urgently and effectively implement that resolution. In that regard, Algeria again expresses its support for the mediation efforts of those three countries. There is no room for delaying or overcomplicating negotiations by adding new conditionalities or new demands. Engaging, in good faith, in the initiative of President Biden is paramount to achieving the long-awaited ceasefire.

For the sake of human values, we must act now. Our inaction is costing lives and jeopardizing the destiny of a whole people — the Palestinian people.

Mr. Žbogar (Slovenia): I thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this urgent meeting, as requested by Algeria. I would also like to thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo as well as Director Doughten for their briefings today.

This Saturday, the world was once again shell-shocked by another devastating air strike in Gaza — one of the deadliest yet. Slovenia strongly condemns the Israeli attack on the Al-Tabaen school in central Gaza City in complete disregard for the fate of Palestinians lives.

There are serious claims that Hamas is embedding itself among the civilian population in civilian infrastructure. We strongly condemn such actions. Hamas must stop sacrificing its fellow Palestinians and putting them in mortal danger.

On the other hand, we are horrified by the series of military attacks on schools that we have witnessed

recently. We repeat our call for full respect for international law, including resolution 2601 (2021). Just yesterday, we marked 75 years since the adoption of the Geneva Conventions, which are being seriously tested these days in Gaza and in other conflicts.

Slovenia is gravely concerned about the potential for tensions to spiral further out of control into a broader regional conflict, with devastating consequences beyond Gaza's borders. We call for maximum restraint by all actors in the region in order to prevent us from going down a road of no return. There is an urgent need to refrain from further attacks and threatening rhetoric.

The Council needs to focus on resolution 2735 (2024) as a priority. We express our full support for the mediators and for their call on both sides to conclude talks on a ceasefire and to release the hostages and prisoners. In that regard, we call on both sides to resume the negotiations this week and to commit to concluding the deal without delay.

It has been more than two months since the Council demanded a ceasefire. We have been patiently waiting for the implementation of our resolutions. Meanwhile, we have been witnessing a continuation of deadly attacks and civilian casualties, and we have been observing Palestinians being chased across Gaza. There is no more time to spare, and there are no more innocent lives to be wasted.

We once again propose that the Council establish a clear deadline for the conclusion of the deal. In the interim period, a pause in the fighting should be observed — one that would allow for humanitarian aid to be delivered at scale and for polio vaccinations to be administered safely. We welcome the efforts of the World Health Organization, UNICEF and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East in outlining plans for two rounds of polio vaccination. However, if a deal is not reached, the Council should, without delay, discuss how to ensure compliance with its resolutions in the face of the immense suffering in Gaza. And indeed, as Director Doughten said, we should not leave any stone unturned.

Yesterday a journalist asked me how many more briefings the Council needs to start changing the situation in Gaza. We are receiving briefings so that we can take action. We adopted four resolutions (resolutions 2712 (2023), 2720 (2023), 2728 (2024) and 2735 (2024)), but we never followed up on their implementation.

The time for action is now. It is time for a ceasefire to finally be reached — or else, it is time for the Council to ensure that that finally happens.

Mr. Afonso (Mozambique): Mozambique wishes to commend Algeria for requesting this meeting. We praise Sierra Leone's presidency for convening this urgent briefing on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question.

We are grateful to the Under-Secretary-General, Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo, and Ms. Lisa Doughten, representative of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, for their briefings to the Council.

The ongoing conflict in the Middle East has been having devastating consequences and taking an unacceptable toll on children, women and the civilian population at large. The most recent killings claimed the lives of more than 100 Palestinians. It is imperative that urgent efforts be undertaken in order to address and to stop those killings.

We are deeply concerned about Israel's continuous air strikes against civilian infrastructure, including schools, hospitals and shelters, inflicting severe damage. In that connection, we wish to recall once more that attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure constitute a grave violation of international law and international humanitarian law. That is particularly disturbing as we celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Geneva Conventions this year.

We call on all those who sincerely believe in the obligation arising from the premise of the responsibility to protect to ensure that that doctrine is swiftly and coherently applied to the Gaza situation. On the other hand, indiscriminate military attacks can only aggravate regional conflicts and trigger new conflicts that will take on larger dimensions, with unimaginable implications for regional and international peace and security.

Given the gravity of the situation, it is imperative that all parties involved, particularly Israel, comply with international legal norms and agreements. In particular, they must abide by all orders and judgments enacted by the International Court of Justice on the matter. We reiterate our call for an immediate end to this war. We urge the parties to implement, without reservation and without further delay, all the Security Council resolutions that we have adopted pertaining to this conflict. As advocates of peace, security and

humanitarian aid, it is crucial that we underscore the importance of raising awareness about the heartbreaking events described by our briefers.

We hold the view that resolving the conflict in the Gaza Strip and Palestine requires an approach that encompasses negotiations. That approach must include plans for economic development, humanitarian aid, the reconstruction of Gaza and regional collaboration. Those are the necessary steps that will pave the way towards a lasting and sustainable peace. We therefore embrace the move towards concerted global action to end Israel's military operation in Gaza, which is expanding exponentially, with untold suffering for the Palestinian people.

In that context, Mozambique reaffirms its commitment to supporting all diplomatic efforts aimed at finding a sustainable solution to the protracted conflict in the Gaza Strip and Palestine. We reiterate our full support of the ongoing diplomatic efforts undertaken by the United States of America, Egypt, Qatar and other Arab countries, and of the international community at large, in pursuit of a lasting solution to the protracted conflict in the Gaza Strip.

Mozambique remains steadfast in its recognition of the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, political independence and sovereignty, as prescribed by the Charter of the United Nations and the dictates of international law. We reiterate the urgent need to implement a two-State solution — a solution based on the existence of two independent and sovereign States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security, both as Members of the United Nations.

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): I thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo and Director Doughten of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for their briefings.

First, the United Kingdom is appalled by the Israeli military strikes on the Al-Tabaen school, where Palestinian civilians were sheltering. The United Nations tells us that that strike killed dozens of Palestinians, many of whom are reported to be women and children. Sadly, that was not the only Israeli strike that we have seen on schools turned into shelters. There were 17 such attacks in July alone.

Palestinians have nowhere safe to turn. Eighty-six per cent of Gaza is now under evacuation orders. In the recent days, we have seen some of the largest orders to

date, affecting tens of thousands of people, who have been displaced multiple times over. Families are forced to move back and forth and back and forth, but with none of those places offering the safety or security that they so desperately need. On top of that, some of those orders have been issued by Israel in the middle of the night, with minimal notice to allow civilians to flee. Israel must ensure that it complies with its obligations under international humanitarian law to protect civilians.

The United Kingdom is also horrified by the reports of sexual violence and abuse faced by the hostages in Gaza and the Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli detention, many of whom are children. Hamas must release all the hostages immediately. Hamas must also stop endangering civilians. And Israel must grant the International Committee of the Red Cross access to prisoners immediately and ensure accountability if anyone is found to be responsible for the abuse of detainees.

We have also heard completely unacceptable rhetoric from Israeli ministers relating to the mistreatment of detainees and the starvation of civilians in Gaza. We call upon the Government of Israel to retract and condemn those remarks. International law could not be more clear — systemic mistreatment of detainees and the intentional starvation of civilians are war crimes.

Another deadly threat is on the horizon for the people of Gaza. They stand on the precipice of a polio outbreak, with 600,000 children under the age of eight in desperate need of vaccinations. We call on the parties to cooperate urgently with the World Health Organization to facilitate vaccine roll-outs and ensure the safety of humanitarian workers. We call on Israel to allow unfettered aid access into Gaza and to put in place an effective deconfliction mechanism to ensure aid can be delivered safely.

Finally, I reiterate the United Kingdom's call for regional de-escalation, as my Prime Minister made clear in his call with Iranian President Pezeshkian last night. Thanks to the tireless efforts of the United States, Qatar and Egypt, there is a ceasefire deal on the table for Gaza. My Prime Minister has joined with his French and German counterparts to urge the parties to resume discussions on 15 August and get the deal done. We need an immediate ceasefire. We must get the hostages out, get much more aid in and move quickly towards a two-

State solution with a safe and secure Israel alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian State.

Mr. Fu Cong (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank the delegation of Algeria for requesting this meeting. I thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo and Director Doughten for their briefings.

Israel's air strike on the Al-Tabaen school in Gaza last week claimed approximately 100 innocent civilian lives. China strongly condemns that attack. Civilians and civilian infrastructure must not be the target of military operations. That is a red line under international humanitarian law. Repeatedly attacking, in broad daylight, a school in which a large number of civilians are seeking shelter is a heinous act.

Over the past 10 months, millions of people in Gaza have seen their homes destroyed and their loved ones separated and have been forced to move from place to place in search of a corner of peace only to be met with indiscriminate bombardment and death that could befall them at any moment. As we speak, nowhere is safe in Gaza. The people in Khan Younis, a place once declared a so-called safe zone by Israel, have been forced to flee in the face of new bombing raids. The desperate people of Gaza want to know when the war will end and if there is hope for survival.

An immediate and durable ceasefire is what the people of Gaza yearn for. It is also the overwhelming consensus of the international community. Two months ago, when pushing for resolution 2735 (2024), the United States delegation claimed that Israel had accepted a ceasefire agreement, but the reality is quite the opposite. Instead of credible signs of Israel's commitment to a ceasefire, what we see is ever-expanding military operations and ever-increasing civilian casualties. The United States, as the largest supplier of weapons, has enough influence over Israel. We hope that the United States will take sincere and responsible action to push Israel to stop its military operations in Gaza as soon as possible and to stop slaughtering civilians.

The humanitarian disaster in Gaza has continued to worsen. Hunger and disease are spreading rapidly. A high-ranking Israeli politician recently described starving 2 million people in Gaza as justified and moral. Such appalling remarks are totally unacceptable. Hunger must not be weaponized. Humanitarian issues must not be politicized. Civilian lives must not be trivialized or used as bargaining chips. China urges Israel to fulfil its international humanitarian law obligations by opening

all border crossings and guaranteeing rapid and safe access for the delivery of humanitarian supplies at scale. The World Health Organization is conducting a polio vaccination programme for children in Gaza, which is crucial to stemming the spread of infectious diseases and protecting children's health. Israel is obliged to protect the safety and the freedom of movement of the medical workers involved.

The increased volatility of the situation in the West Bank is worrisome. We are gravely concerned about the incidents of sexual abuse by Israeli soldiers against Palestinian detainees. We call for investigations and accountability. China urges Israel to immediately cease all settlement activities, effectively curb the intensifying settler violence and stop undermining the basis of the two-State solution. We reiterate that the two-State solution is the only viable way to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli issue. China supports the establishment of an independent Palestinian State and advocates the convening of a larger, more authoritative and more effective international peace conference.

The fallout from the Gaza conflict is spreading ever faster. The situation in the Middle East is hanging in the balance. Nevertheless, irresponsible provocation and adventurism continue unabated. We are deeply worried about that. China reiterates that the key to avoiding the deterioration and escalation of the situation lies in achieving a comprehensive and durable ceasefire in Gaza without delay. China stands ready to work tirelessly with the international community to put an end to the fighting in Gaza, alleviate the humanitarian catastrophe and implement the two-State solution to ensure long-term peace, stability and security in the Middle East.

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): I thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo and Director Doughten for their very sobering briefings. We continue to support the United Nations vital, albeit difficult to implement, humanitarian efforts in Gaza.

The United States is deeply concerned about the reports of civilian casualties following the 10 August strike by the Israel Defense Forces on a compound in Gaza that included a school and a mosque sheltering desperate, displaced people, including women and children.

We have raised our concerns with Israel, and while it indicated it was targeting senior officials from Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, it has an obligation to do

everything possible under international humanitarian law to protect civilians. We mourn every civilian lost in that horrific incident and in that conflict.

But this much we do know and must be acknowledged: Hamas continues to gather and continues to operate out of schools, with no regard for the well-being of civilians. Israel has a right to pursue Hamas. Israel has a right to respond to threats. But how it does that matters. We have said repeatedly and consistently that Israel must take measures to minimize civilian harm.

I cannot stress enough President Biden's view that it is time to bring immediate relief to the long-suffering people in Gaza and the long-suffering hostages and their families. The best way to do that is a ceasefire in Gaza with a hostage deal. The United States, alongside Qatar and Egypt, has worked tirelessly for months to forge the framework agreement on the table, with only the details of implementation to be concluded. It is a framework based on the principles endorsed by the Council in resolution 2735 (2024). Simply put, the deal must get done now. As President Biden emphasized in a statement last week with leaders of Qatar and Egypt,

“[t]here is no further time to waste nor excuses from any party for further delay. It is time to release the hostages, begin the ceasefire and implement this agreement”.

We have called on both sides to resume urgent discussion on Thursday, 15 August, in Doha or Cairo to close all remaining gaps and commence the implementation of the deal without further delay. As mediators, we are prepared to present a final bridging proposal — one that resolves the remaining implementation issues in a manner that meets the expectations of all parties. We welcome the statements of support for that effort, such as the one issued by Algeria over the weekend, and we call on every member of the Council to speak with one voice, to press Hamas to participate in the discussions on 15 August and for both sides to agree to implement the deal on the table without further conditions or delays.

A durable ceasefire could accelerate efforts to restore basic services, including electricity, water and sanitation, bringing much-needed relief to Palestinian civilians, many of whom have been displaced multiple times. It could enable an urgently needed vaccination campaign to stop the spread of polio. And it would facilitate the release of all hostages held by Hamas,

including eight Americans and citizens from many other countries. We have also been clear that a ceasefire in Gaza could help enable diplomatic efforts to restore calm along the Blue Line and reduce regional tensions. Indeed, from the start of the conflict between Hamas and Israel, the United States has worked to avoid a situation in which the fighting in Gaza spirals into a broader regional conflict.

Exactly four months ago, on 13 April, the United States worked closely with Israel and our partners in the region to repel Iran's unprecedented attack on Israel and stave off a broader conflict. Now we are once again in a moment of heightened threat. Consequently, the United States has taken needed precautionary steps, including moving an aircraft carrier group and additional air assets to the region, so that, should the situation arise again, we are prepared to defend Israel and United States military personnel in the region against any threats.

But let me be clear: our deployments of additional military assets are not a prediction of what is to come. A broader regional conflict is not inevitable. The overall goal of the United States remains to turn the temperature down in the region, deter and defend against any future attacks and avoid regional conflict. That starts with finalizing a deal for an immediate ceasefire with hostage release in Gaza. We must get this over the finish line. Again, we urge every member of the Council to say clearly and unequivocally that it is time to finalize and implement this agreement.

Mrs. Shino (Japan): I also thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo and Director Doughten for their briefings.

The number of civilian casualties and the degree of suffering that we have seen in Gaza in more than 300 days of conflict are unbearable and distressing. Today this urgent meeting has been convened following yet another grave incident.

Japan expresses its deep concern about the loss of many civilian lives and injuries caused by the Israeli air strikes on Saturday against the Al-Tabaen school. It is appalling that numerous civilian casualties have occurred in schools and hospitals. All parties must strictly abide by the relevant principles of international law, especially the protection of civilians. We urge Israel to make every effort to avoid civilian harm.

Gaza is truly in agony. Nearly 1.9 million people have been forcibly displaced owing to the repeated evacuation orders issued by Israel, fleeing again and again to places where life is barely tenable. Japan is deeply worried about the significant shortages of food, medicine, fuel and other basic necessities in Gaza. We strongly condemn the deplorable remark made by an Israeli Cabinet Minister in that regard. Starving more than 2 million Palestinians in Gaza cannot be justified. The detection of polio and the spread of such diseases is a human-made problem stemming from the collapse of the waste management system and is another matter of serious concern. The Rafah crossing must be reopened, and the safety of aid workers must be assured at all times. Israel must lift all impediments to humanitarian assistance, not only to provide the minimum for survival, but also to protect human dignity.

The still-unfolding tragedy confirms that three things that the Council called for in resolution 2735 (2024) must be achieved now without further delay, namely, an immediate ceasefire, the release of all remaining hostages and the expansion of aid delivery across Gaza at scale. In that vein, Japan appreciates the vigorous diplomatic push by the United States, Egypt and Qatar to close all remaining gaps to finalize the deal on the ceasefire and hostage release. We strongly support the recent joint leaders' statement and the efforts made by the three countries, and we urge all parties concerned, especially Hamas, to constructively engage at the proposed meeting later this week and urgently work towards concluding the deal. The Council and the entire international community must remain united to end this crisis immediately. Japan will play its part in close cooperation with the relevant stakeholders.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett (Guyana): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting in response to the timely request made by the delegation of Algeria. I also thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo and Ms. Doughten of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for the information provided.

The attacks on the Al-Tabaen school are part of an ongoing pattern employed by the Israel Defense Forces since the beginning of the war in Gaza. It is a pattern characterized by complete disregard for the humanitarian principle of proportionality, and it results — over and over again — in the killing of many civilians on the pretext of eliminating one or more military targets. The Al-Tabaen incident joins a growing list of similar incidents, and one can expect

that pattern to continue unless there are meaningful measures to stop the Israelis from continuing this senseless massacre of the Palestinian people. Guyana condemns in the strongest terms the ongoing violations of international law, including international humanitarian law, which manifest in the targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure. We call on Israel and all parties to the conflict to abide by their obligations under international law and to end the hostilities against the people of Palestine.

Ten months of Israel's unrelenting and unprecedented assault against the Palestinian people in Gaza have created a tragedy of such cruel proportions that it is difficult to find anything comparable in modern history. The death toll is approaching 40,000, with women and children overrepresented in that number. People are starving and living in the most inhumane conditions imaginable, with virtually no access to medicine or health care. Polio has now been detected in wastewater in Gaza, placing unvaccinated children at risk.

Again, it is the children of Gaza that will suffer the most if an outbreak is not prevented. What else can we expect though, when there is one toilet for 600 people living in shelters? Council members are all aware that the World Health Organization (WHO) is ready to send more than 1 million polio vaccines to Gaza, targeting 600,000 children. In the words of the Director-General,

“[WHO] need[s] absolute freedom of movement for health workers and medical equipment to carry out these complex operations safely and effectively. A ceasefire, or at least ‘days of tranquillity’ during preparation and delivery of the vaccination campaigns are required to protect children in Gaza from polio.”

Guyana supports WHO's plans to tackle the problem and appeals to the Israeli Government to provide the relevant authorizations and to ensure the necessary conditions to facilitate the vaccination campaign. This is a humanitarian imperative and a legal and moral obligation.

Guyana has watched with keen horror the Israeli strategy of making Gaza a thoroughfare of destruction. The images coming out of Gaza show a moonscape. Yet what those images do not show is the problem of unexploded ordnance which, according to one commentator, makes Gaza a literal ticking time bomb.

This represents a real danger that could possibly take years to address, even after the end of hostilities.

Shall we also speak of the severe war-induced psychological trauma to which Ms. Doughten referred? The constant bombings, the multiple displacements, the sight and smell of death, the dismemberment, the harassment and other indignities can only be expected to have a heavy mental toll on civilians.

Shall we also speak of the harrowing accounts of Palestinian civilians detained in Israel? The torture, including sexual violence, to which they are being subjected is illustrative of a level of depravity and debauchery that should never find expression among the agents of a civilized nation, let alone those of a United Nations Member State.

All of that represents the occupying Power executing its colonialist aspirations, fuelled by a racist and religious ideology of superiority that allows it to treat Palestinians as inferior. It is an ideology that promotes the subjugation of the Palestinian people. That is why Israel's response to the events of 7 October 2023 has been so over the top. It is to pummel the Palestinians into relinquishing any aspiration to freedom and self-determination. It is part of a wider strategy that we are also witnessing in the occupied West Bank, characterized by the ongoing illegal settlement activity and the accompanying violence, under the watchful and encouraging eyes of the Israeli security forces.

The Council has a responsibility to end the impunity with which Israel has been carrying out its atrocities against the Palestinian people. Such actions fly in the face of everything that the United Nations is built on — peace and security, human rights and sustainable development. We cannot allow this to continue.

It has been more than two months since the Council passed resolution 2735 (2024), endorsing the efforts of the United States, Qatar and Egypt, for which we thank them. Since then, 2,600 additional Palestinians in Gaza have been killed and more than 7,000 injured. Ms. Doughten asked how long; we ask how many more.

We stress again the obligation of the parties to implement the provisions of resolution 2735 (2024) in order to reach a deal for a ceasefire, the release of hostages and the provision of adequate humanitarian assistance to the people of Gaza. We also underline Israel's obligation to abide by the International Court of Justice's orders mandating that Israel take the necessary

steps to protect Palestinian lives, ensure their well-being and prevent genocide.

In conclusion, the implementation of the two-State solution is way overdue and is the only viable path to peace. It is an injustice to the Palestinian people and to the people of the Middle East, generally, that peace appears to be a chimera owing to Israel's dogged agenda to deny Palestinians their right to live in freedom and dignity in their own State. Guyana urges the Council to act to end this injustice. Guyana is prepared to do its part.

Mr. Hwang (Republic of Korea): I thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo and Director Doughten of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for their detailed briefings on the current situation in Gaza.

The entire globe is anxiously watching the precarious situation in the Middle East. A series of destabilizing incidents have continued all across the region, including along the Blue Line, in Tehran, in Tel Aviv, in Beirut and in the Red Sea. As repeatedly stressed in the Chamber, the Republic of Korea reiterates its urgent calls for maximum restraint by all parties in the region. We strongly oppose any action that could trigger another cycle of violence and counter-violence, as that would only further endanger the lives of innocent civilians throughout the region.

We are appalled and gravely disturbed by the repeated attacks against civilian infrastructure, including schools, hospitals and shelters in Gaza and, in particular, by the 10 August strike on a mosque inside the Al-Tabaen school, where around 100 people were reportedly killed. This was Israel's eighth bombing, in August alone, of a school sheltering civilians. We are all aware that civilian infrastructure should not be targeted — all the more so when those schools are being used as shelters for desperate civilians who have been displaced multiple times amid ongoing hunger, insecurity and disease.

Israel argues that the attacks on the Al-Tabaen school were carried out using precision munitions in order to eliminate members of Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad embedded in the compound. Regardless, the fact is that yet another school, where hundreds of civilians were sheltering, was intentionally targeted. Israel claims that 31 terrorists were eliminated, but the indiscriminate air strike made no distinction

between militants and civilians, who included women and children.

We understand that Israel is facing numerous challenges in its fight against Hamas, but it is beyond belief that a school filled with displaced civilians was once again bombed by an advanced country like Israel. International humanitarian law must be observed at all times.

As the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) explained clearly, the potential co-location of Hamas with civilians and its non-compliance with international law, which we strongly condemn, does not negate Israel's obligations under international law. Killing militants cannot justify killing civilians, including children. That is international humanitarian law's unambiguous conclusion. Hamas must not endanger civilians by using them as human shields. At the same time, we urge Israel to take every possible measure to protect innocent Palestinian civilians. We are also disturbed by last month's OHCHR report and its media reporting, which detailed that the rights of Palestinian detainees have been violated through arbitrary detentions and ill-treatment.

We are seriously alarmed by the worsening humanitarian situation in Gaza. The spreading famine is compounded by the total destruction of law and order and repeated evacuation orders by the Israel Defense Forces. We urge Israel to implement all possible measures to enhance the swift and safe delivery of humanitarian aid throughout Gaza at scale. Humanitarian workers, notably the staff of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), must be protected and their activities secured. We are, however, appalled by the announcement made last week that the Office of Internal Oversight Services determined that at least 9 UNRWA staff members might have been involved in the 7 October attack. UNRWA should maintain its role as the core pillar of humanitarian efforts in Gaza. Its credibility and neutrality must be ensured.

The situation in the Middle East simply cannot continue along this dangerous trajectory of escalation. The conflict in Gaza must end immediately. In that regard, we welcome the joint statement made on behalf of the United States, Egypt and Qatar, calling for the resumption of negotiations on 15 August. Hamas must take part in the talks. Israel should comply with the

conditions set out in resolution 2735 (2024). An urgent ceasefire should be followed by humanitarian aid, distributed at scale, and reinvigorated efforts towards a two-State solution. We hope that all leaders in the region make the right de-escalatory decisions and reject the extremist voices bent on additional bloodshed.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Rosemary DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, and Lisa Doughten, Director of the Financing and Partnerships Division of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, for their comprehensive briefings and their assessments of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories.

We are grateful to the delegation of Algeria for its initiative to convene today's meeting regarding recent events in Gaza. The last time we discussed the situation was two weeks ago (see S/PV.9696), and it is clear that we need to hold more frequent meetings. After all, the notion that the situation in Gaza and in the region as a whole continues to rapidly deteriorate has, unfortunately, become routine, and does not transmit the horrors and the suffering that civilians in Gaza — including the elderly, women and children — have to face every day. It is pointless to expect our Western — primarily American — colleagues, who are in cahoots with Israel, to express any compassion towards Palestinians. It is therefore important to regularly bring the truth about what is happening in the Gaza Strip to the international community through the Security Council.

We are deeply shocked by the Israeli strike on the Al-Tabaen school in Gaza. At the time, more than 2,000 refugees were sheltering there. More than 100 people died and dozens were injured. Many of the victims were women and children. We express our sincere condolences to the families of those who died and wish a speedy recovery to the injured. We recall our consistent principled position on the need for strict compliance with the norms of international humanitarian law. We call on West Jerusalem to refrain from any attacks on civilian objects. There can be no justification for such actions.

Unfortunately, what happened at Al-Tabaen cannot be seen as an isolated episode or a criminal gaffe. As mentioned today, in the past 10 days alone, 13 centres in Gaza where internally displaced persons were sheltering have been bombed. According to data from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human

Rights, since 4 July, the Israelis carried out 21 strikes on schools where displaced people were located, killing at least 274 people. An obvious conclusion emerges that what is happening is nothing but a deliberate choice by the Israeli leadership. Condemning the actions of West Jerusalem and calling for restraint will not suffice. The problem runs much deeper.

The unfortunate problem is that, due to the pandering to Israel from our American colleagues, the Council has still been unable to take an adequate response to the escalation of the crisis in the Middle East. Essentially, the Security Council is gradually turning into a passive and powerless bystander, capable only of reporting the further degradation of the situation and ritually expressing its concern. Furthermore, 14 members of the Security Council are basically being held hostage by the United States, which is blocking any action towards an immediate ceasefire.

On 10 June, more than two months ago, the Council adopted its most recent product on Gaza (see S/PV.9650). On that occasion, its American sponsors pressured the members of the Security Council to give it the green light as soon as possible, claiming that the fate of the ceasefire deal between Hamas and Israel hung in the balance. I recall that Russia abstained in the voting because we had grave doubts regarding the feasibility of the resolution. Time has proven all those doubts to be well-founded.

Our Western colleagues prefer not to think about it, but resolution 2735 (2024) contained three phases, with extremely ambitious plans — from a comprehensive ceasefire to the beginning of a large-scale reconstruction of the Gaza Strip. None of those phases has materialized. They now all look absolutely surrealistic. Unfortunately, the Security Council signed up for that surrealism. Worst of all, it signed up for a blatant lie, namely, the first operative paragraph, which indicates that Israel agreed to the proposed conditions of the deal. Israel's representatives have repeatedly and explicitly stated, including in the Chamber, that they did not agree to anything. Moreover, all the rhetoric of Israeli officials shows that Israel has no intention to stop its military operation, regardless of the position of the Security Council. In particular, Israel's Finance Minister Smotrich called the deal a "capitulation to Yahya Sinwar", and its National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir explicitly stated that there will be no end to the war.

What was the result of our American colleagues' so-called "active" diplomacy on the ground to bring the parties to agreement, an intervention in which the Security Council was urged not to interfere? Even the expression "the mountain brought forth a mouse" would be an overstatement. We are not aware of any progress at all. Moreover, since the adoption of resolution 2735 (2024), the only anti-result has been the blatant, provocative assassination of Hamas's main negotiator and former Palestinian Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh during his visit to Tehran. Now the whole world is anxiously anticipating a new round of escalation in the region, while the United States, which so far has not even mildly reprimanded Israel, is hypocritically urging everyone to press Hamas to participate in the 15 August 15, as if everything depended on Hamas alone.

Even a bystander today can plainly see that attempts to replace a complete solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with various "deals of the century" co-sponsored solely by the United States have proved not only unsuccessful, but counterproductive. The entire Middle East region is ablaze and on the brink of plunging into an all-out war. The priority, of course, should be to put an immediate stop to the bloodshed in the Gaza Strip.

From the very beginning of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Russia has called on the Council to take decisive measures to ensure an immediate and unconditional ceasefire. I recall that we proposed the first draft resolution with such a demand (S/2023/772) as early as 16 October year (see S/PV.9439). How many lives could have been saved if the Council then had risen to the occasion? That is not a rhetorical question. There is a precise figure available — 40,000 people have been killed, including more than 200 staff of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, and more than 90,000 have been injured. As we have already said today, more than 2,500 people have died since the adoption of resolution 2735 (2024).

That is the price of the inaction of multilateral diplomacy and the short-sided interests of some members of the Council, who used their veto of Damocles for six months to prevent even the mention of a ceasefire in Security Council documents. Without a ceasefire, however, it is impossible to put an end to the suffering of the innocent Palestinian civilians, to ensure the release of hostages and detainees and to secure full and unimpeded humanitarian access to the enclave.

We call on the Council not to be controlled by Washington, which cares only to protect Israel's interests, and profits from supplying weapons to hotspots. Together, we should once again contemplate what measures the Council could take to de-escalate in Gaza and the region as a whole. If that requires a field visit by the Security Council, then that is what should happen. Otherwise, we would find ourselves in a strange situation in which we all expect the specialized departments of the Secretariat to be actively present in the conflict zone, often risking their lives in order to fulfil their mandates, while we, in New York, receive information through their reports and open sources, or receive invitations to visit Geneva rather than the regions where we are all really needed. The Middle East should be a priority for the Council's visits, which should not become an occasion for political tourism in comfortable locations.

We must also take a second look at how to adapt specialized missions on the ground, mainly the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization. We need to consider enhancing its mandate, if necessary without requiring the consent of both parties, because it is obvious that such consent will never be given. General Patrick Gauchat has already briefed the Council twice, outlining some specific, practical issues that need to be addressed in order to breathe new life into his mission's mandate, which is essential in the light of the current escalation. We urge our colleagues on the Security Council not to sit idly by but to actively engage in that discussion.

The Council cannot and should not turn a blind eye to what is happening in the Middle East and neglect its direct mandate of maintaining international peace and security for the benefit of one delegation. Nor should it forget its own decisions regarding the need to establish an independent sovereign Palestinian State within the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side in peace and security with Israel. No other outcomes or concepts should replace that foundation for a Middle East settlement. We are willing to cooperate with all those who share that approach.

Ms. Gatt (Malta): I too would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo and Director Lisa Doughten for their harrowing briefings today.

Malta condemns the horrific strike on the Al-Tabaen school in Gaza last weekend, which reportedly killed dozens of civilians, including

children. It is a continuation of the deeply concerning pattern of strikes on Palestinian educational facilities.

The Al-Tabaen school was a refuge for hundreds of displaced Palestinians. We urge Israel to cease attacks on civilians and civilian objects and to take immediate, decisive action so as to adhere to international human rights law and international humanitarian law.

It is unacceptable that the civilian casualties of the war have reached 40,000 — and, by some estimates, may be as high as 180,000 — and that several hostages, including children, have remained captive in Gaza for 312 days. Innocent lives, on both sides, should be safeguarded at all costs. The status quo reflects an apparent complete disregard for international law as the *modus operandi* of the conflict parties.

Hamás's use of civilian infrastructure for military purposes, including the firing of rockets into Israel, directly jeopardizes civilians, which we wholly condemn, just as we have consistently condemned terror attacks, including those of 7 October 2023.

Nonetheless, strict compliance with international law, including international humanitarian law, remains a paramount obligation of the conflict parties, including Israel. The principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution are not voluntary. The lives of civilians, women and children cannot be disregarded. Malta condemns the loss of all innocent civilian life, including the recent killing of Druze children in Majdal Shams, and we stress the obligation of the parties to the conflict to prioritize the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure.

The broad and systematic risks faced by Gaza's population remain severe. Humanitarian aid continues to be blocked, without any legitimate administrative or bureaucratic reason. Hunger; the growing threat of diseases such as polio, exacerbated by little to no access to medical aid; persistent displacement; and lawlessness have deepened insecurity, rendering the situation untenable. Humanitarian actors continue to inform us that what is being done to address those horrific conditions is nowhere near enough. A paradigm shift is necessary. Border crossings must be reopened, and effective measures need to be taken to ensure that aid is delivered into and across Gaza.

The carnage must stop, hostages must be released — they must be reunited with their families — and the humanitarian crisis must be

adequately addressed. The full, immediate and effective implementation of the relevant Council resolutions and the orders of the International Court of Justice is essential.

Malta reaffirms its categorical call for an immediate and permanent ceasefire. We fully support and commend the ongoing efforts by the United States, Egypt and Qatar to bridge gaps in the implementation of the framework agreement, which is in line with resolution 2735 (2024). We call on the conflicting parties to approach negotiations with a constructive mindset and to urgently implement the ceasefire deal. As regional escalations continue, we underline that concluding this deal is critical, as it would directly contribute to avoiding a broader conflict in the Middle East. We call on all parties in the region to commit to diplomacy, de-escalate and refrain from any attacks that could inflame regional tensions and undermine chances for a ceasefire deal.

For Israelis and Palestinians to know security and peace, a return to restorative dialogue towards a political horizon must become the core objective. Malta stresses that this must align with a comprehensive peace plan that paves the way towards a credible and irreversible realization of the two-State Solution.

Mrs. Baeriswyl (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Switzerland welcomes the convening of this urgent meeting of the Security Council on the situation in Gaza. I would like to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo, and the Director of the Financing and Partnerships Division of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Ms. Lisa Doughten, for their briefings — their appeals are clear.

Switzerland condemns the violations of international humanitarian law committed by all parties. It also condemns the fact that the hostilities continue to claim many civilian victims, as was reported on Saturday in Gaza.

A school is a place of learning. A school must enable children to learn, develop and build their future and, thus, contribute to a peaceful and prosperous society. In Gaza today, schools are often the last resort for finding food, water or shelter. But even those schools, which have become makeshift shelters, often offer civilians no refuge.

According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Israeli attack on the Al-Tabaen school killed at least 93 people and was the twenty-first attack in a single month on a school serving as a refuge. According to the same source, attacks on schools, universities, teachers and students are on the increase, and — as we heard today — more than half a million children have been unable to attend school since 7 October.

International humanitarian law prohibits actors—including armed groups, such as Hamas—from using civilians to protect a military objective from attack. Nevertheless, the violation of that rule in no way releases Israel from its obligation to comply strictly with international humanitarian law in the conduct of hostilities. That includes the principles of distinction, precaution and proportionality. Israel, as the occupying Power, is obliged to provide the population with basic humanitarian needs, including safe shelter.

The Geneva Conventions came into being 75 years ago yesterday. By adopting those Conventions, Member States committed to preserving their humanity, even in times of war. Those commitments must be implemented as a matter of urgency by all parties to the conflict. That is not the case today. The parties must respect international law, thereby helping to alleviate the suffering of civilians.

The humanitarian situation in Gaza remains unbearable. In addition to the risk of dying as a result of the fighting, people face multiple displacements, loss of shelter, disease and famine. The resurgence of polio shows the scale of the disaster. Polio is incurable. Prevention is therefore the only solution. To that end, the vaccination campaign by the United Nations and its partners must be facilitated, without delay, in order to avoid another perfectly avoidable disaster.

Famine continues to take hold in Gaza. Switzerland recalls that the use of starvation as a method of warfare against a civilian population is prohibited and constitutes a war crime under the Rome Statute. The immediate, safe and unimpeded delivery of humanitarian aid to all civilians in need throughout the Gaza Strip must finally be guaranteed. The recent remarks by the Israeli Minister of Finance are unacceptable, and we expect the Israeli Government to respect its obligations under international humanitarian law.

Switzerland demands the full implementation of Council resolutions, in particular resolutions 2712

(2023), 2720 (2023), 2728 (2024) and 2735 (2024), and of the provisional measures of the International Court of Justice. The war and suffering in Gaza must end, and all hostages must be released immediately and unconditionally. Switzerland calls on all parties to engage in good faith in the ceasefire talks under the auspices of the United States, Qatar and Egypt. A ceasefire in Gaza is also crucial to bring about regional de-escalation. The solution of two democratic States, Israel and Palestine, of which Gaza is an integral part, living side by side in peace within secure and recognized borders, remains essential for peace. It is the only conceivable political horizon that can guarantee the security and dignity of the people of the region and that can enable schools to once again become what they were meant to be — places to learn and to hope for a peaceful future.

Mrs. Broadhurst Estival (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo and Ms. Lisa Doughten for their briefings.

In Gaza, as expressed on a number of occasions by President Emmanuel Macron, the war must end, for the sake of the people of Gaza, that of the hostages and that of the stability of the region, which is presently at stake. In that context, France condemns in the strongest terms the Israeli strikes against the Al-Tabaheen school in Gaza City on 9 August. France sends its condolences to the families of the victims and its sympathies to the wounded. For several weeks, schools in which hundreds of displaced persons had sought refuge have been hit, causing an unacceptable number of civilian casualties. Those attacks against civilian infrastructure must stop. France recalls that compliance with international humanitarian law is required of all, including Israel.

France stresses the urgent need to establish an immediate and permanent ceasefire in the Gaza Strip in order to put an end to the suffering of the civilian population and to facilitate the massive and unimpeded delivery of humanitarian aid, in response to the enormous need of the civilian population of Gaza. France reiterates its call for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages and its condemnation in the strongest terms of the terrorist attacks committed by Hamas and other terrorist groups on 7 October 2023.

As it recalled yesterday alongside Germany and the United Kingdom, France supports the mediation efforts of the United States, Egypt and Qatar and calls for the immediate resumption of negotiations, which must be

brought to a successful conclusion without any further delay. It condemns all acts of provocation, and in that regard, it calls on the Israeli Government to take all necessary measures to ensure respect for the historical status quo on holy sites in Jerusalem.

France underscores the urgency of implementing the two-State solution, the only way to guarantee stability and security for all in the region. Given the heightened tensions in the Middle East, the Council must do everything in its power in order to prevent a regional conflagration. France is committed to regional stability and to the security of its partners in the region. We are working to achieve a prompt de-escalation, together with our international partners.

France expresses its deep concern about the continuing clashes along the Blue Line between Israel and Lebanon. France reiterates its full support of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, whose action is key. In that context, it will soon be proposing to the Council a draft resolution renewing the Force's mandate for another 12 months.

We call on all parties to exercise the utmost responsibility and restraint in order to prevent any regional conflagration, which would have devastating consequences for the entire region. Iran and its allies must refrain from any attack that would further aggravate regional tensions and jeopardize the possibility of achieving a ceasefire and the release of the hostages.

Mr. Montalvo Sosa (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo and Director Doughten for the briefings that they provided to the Council. My country reiterates its support for the valuable and dedicated efforts of the United Nations and its agencies in the conflict zone.

It has now been more than 10 months since this war began. More than 10 months of violence, death and devastation. More than 10 months of devastating news, and last weekend was no exception. The shelling of a school in Gaza has once again led to the deaths of dozens of Palestinian civilians, many of them displaced several times while seeking, in vain, a modicum of safety and protection.

The sheer number of civilian deaths and injuries caused by this war makes it difficult to disagree with those who have said that the Palestinian people are facing collective punishment, as declared by Secretary-

General António Guterres and several world leaders. Meanwhile, more than 110 hostages are still being held by Hamas, after more than 300 days of captivity that began with the unjustifiable terrorist attacks of 7 October 2023. It is worth recalling that those attacks are the direct cause of the current violence, and we must not fail to condemn them, as my country does once again on this occasion.

With every passing day, it is civilians who continue to bear the brunt of this conflict amid the horror, displacement and endless suffering, as Special Coordinator Tor Wennesland has rightly pointed out. With every passing day, the threat of a regional conflict that would lead only to more deaths, more displacement and more suffering for civilian populations is also growing, and paradoxically so, given that just yesterday we commemorated 75 years of the Geneva Conventions. In short, there is an urgent need to reach an agreement that makes it possible to stop this war, free the hostages, alleviate the terrible humanitarian situation in Gaza and leave those who want more violence with no excuse.

On 8 August, the leaders of Qatar, Egypt and the United States issued a joint communiqué calling on the parties to resume discussion this Thursday, 15 August, and to finalize an agreement without delay. My country thanks the three mediator countries for their leadership and efforts and urges the parties to accept that call and seize that opportunity by demonstrating political will and good faith. Only then will it be possible, at long last, to finalize the negotiations on the agreement and to begin implementing it without further delay, as requested by the Council in resolution 2735 (2024). In the meantime, all regional actors that want peace must exercise maximum restraint and avoid any action or measure that may affect the negotiations. It is time to make a genuine collective effort to achieve peace. It is time for concrete actions and attitudes that contribute to changing the current grim reality. It is time for agreements and restraint.

I conclude these remarks with the hope that, the next time the Council deals with this issue, hostilities will have ceased and that it will be possible to move towards a peaceful, negotiated, definitive and just solution for the parties, with two States, Palestine and Israel, on the basis of the 1967 borders and the relevant resolutions, which is the only way to definitively end this conflict.

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

I thank Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo and Director Lisa Doughten for their important briefings and for the call to action, particularly in Director Doughten's statement, to leave no stone unturned. I also welcome the participation of the representatives of the State of Palestine, Israel and South Africa in this meeting.

After weeks of sustained escalation amid continued violence in the Gaza Strip and the wider region, it is tragic to hear another report of a direct attack on the Al-Tabaen school located in central Gaza, a place where hundreds of displaced Palestinian civilians found shelter.

We note that, in a press release, the Israel Defense Forces stated that, following intelligence, the Israeli Air Force precisely struck a Hamas command and control centre embedded in the Al-Tabaen school, located adjacent to a mosque, which serves as a shelter for the residents in Gaza city.

Sierra Leone deeply regrets that more than 80 civilians were killed, including a family of 10 persons, and that many more were injured. We deplore that tragic and unacceptable loss of civilian lives and the actions that led to such devastating consequences.

We reiterate our condemnation of attacks on United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) schools and civilian objects, including residential areas providing shelter to innocent civilians, in particular women and children. We call for an immediate end to indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks and violations of international law.

As reported by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in the occupied Palestine territory, the unfolding pattern in the recent weeks of direct strikes on schools in the Gaza Strip is unacceptable and cannot be justified under any circumstances. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has also reported that, over the past month, 17 schools have been struck, killing at least 163 Palestinians, including women and children.

In the span of 10 months, each day has brought new challenges, struggles and hardship for the

affected civilians who have witnessed and endured prolonged suffering.

The humanitarian situation remains a crisis of epic proportions as the supply of humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip remains challenging owing to access constraints and the high level of insecurity. Civilians are not only struggling to access basic amenities such as food, water and medication, but are also at risk of a surge in communicable diseases owing to overcrowding and poor living conditions.

Recently, the World Health Organization (WHO) confirmed the high risk of polio virus spreading within the Gaza Strip due to the unsanitary conditions in the confined space. As stated by a WHO expert, an outbreak of polio virus in the Gaza Strip may spill over internationally, at a very high point.

We therefore call for the safe, facilitation of unobstructed access into and within Gaza through all crossing points for all vaccinations and associated equipment, including cold chain storage and specialist staff. The well-being and health of children require far greater inputs than just vaccinations, and we reiterate our call for unimpeded access for all humanitarian activities.

It is heartrending at this stage to recount the series of threats and devastation civilians have faced in the Gaza Strip. While people still struggle to have an average proportion of a square meal per day and access to basic health care, there are also warnings of potential flooding ahead of the winter season.

Humanitarian experts in the field have highlighted that the repeated evacuation orders by Israel since the start of the conflict have been carried out in a manner that fails to prioritize the safety and well-being of civilians, as they fail to meet international humanitarian law criteria.

With regard to the wider region, the situation remains fragile as hostilities continue across the Blue Line in Lebanon, the Houthis continue their maritime attacks in the Red Sea and a potential attack on Israel's territory as a possible retaliation from Iran cannot be discounted. The West Bank is no exception, as there is an increase in attacks and civilian casualties.

Within the worrisome wider Middle East regional context, I would like to conclude with the following observations.

First, the cumulative toll of the conflict makes it even more essential at this stage to find a peaceful resolution. That can be achieved with an immediate ceasefire and the release of hostages, followed by parties to the conflict — Israel and Hamas — complying with the provisional measures ordered by the International Court of Justice in the case *Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip (South Africa v. Israel)* and resolutions 2712 (2023), 2720 (2023), 2728 (2024) and 2735 (2024).

Secondly, in adhering to the principles of international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law, civilian objects, including schools, cannot be legitimate military targets and cannot be used for any military purpose.

Thirdly, and despite the stalemate, Sierra Leone remains supportive of ongoing diplomatic engagements, which in our considered view is one of the effective tools to resolving the conflict. We once again call on the mediators — Qatar, Egypt and the United States — to foster an environment of constructive dialogue to rebuild trust and confidence.

Since resolution 2735 (2024) was adopted, more than 2,303 civilians have been killed. That cannot continue, as we note that the deaths are in addition to the 287 aid workers killed in Gaza since 7 October 2023, including 205 UNRWA staff members, and at least 39,699 Palestinians killed and more than 91,722 injured.

In that regard and in conclusion, we call on all sides to take steps to urgently finalize the deal being brokered by Egypt, Qatar and the United States, in line with resolution 2735 (2024). The parties must demonstrate good faith. Through sustained diplomatic efforts and negotiations, it is hoped that the collective conscience will rule over the actions of the parties and guide them towards doing what is right and just as against what they so desperately desire.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

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

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): As we gather here, for the tenth month in a row, to advance a ceasefire to save human lives, Israel continues taking human lives and every action possible to spread a wildfire across the Middle East. As we sit here on the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Geneva Conventions, which were

birthed in the ruins of entire cities, following the mass and indiscriminate killing of civilians in the death chambers and in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, as a pledge that light will emerge out of the darkest night and protect the dignity and humanity of all persons caught in armed conflict, Israel is tearing the Conventions apart in Gaza, along with every rule humankind has ever elaborated.

As we meet here in New York, there are Israeli Government and military officials, pundits and analysts explaining seriously that they are entitled to carry out indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks against the Palestinian civilian population to wage war against civilians. They explain that starvation is a legitimate weapon of war. They justify gang rape and torture against defenceless prisoners as a required deterrent. And that is not a theoretical exercise; that is what Israel is imposing against millions of Palestinians, with no man, woman or child spared.

The Security Council demands that Israel stop killing civilians, but it targets them in their shelters and tents. The Council demands that Israel allow food and medicine in, but it ensures that famine and diseases spread. The Council demands that Israel treat Palestinian prisoners humanely. Instead, Israel tortures them and allows the Israeli jailers to rape and abuse their Palestinian hostages. The Council calls on it to stop its settlements, but Israel rapidly accelerates its colonization of Palestinian land. The Council urges Israel to uphold the historic status quo of the holy sites, but its ministers and settlers desecrate Al-Haram Al-Sharif, each time more openly and provocatively.

Let me therefore state the obvious: Israel does not care about the Council's condemnations. It dismisses Council resolutions. It does not even listen to Council debates. Its representative plays with his iPhone while members are talking. The members of the Security Council — both as individual countries and, collectively, as the Security Council — had a responsibility to act months ago to stop this impunity. As the genocide continues, they have a responsibility to react, to save human lives and to preserve the foundations for peace and security for all — not just for some. Israel is a rogue State with a rotten Government, as a result of the unbridled impunity that it has enjoyed so far.

I have no doubt that the tide will turn, and we will not be deterred from ensuring that no one can act as if Palestinian lives are worthless. But Palestinians in

Gaza cannot wait for the tide to turn. Their agony must stop right now. They are wondering if the Council sees them.

Do members ever ask themselves — what if they themselves had been born in Gaza? What if the prisoner raped had been their son? What if the children starving to death had been their own? What if the woman killed had been their daughter or wife? What if disease had been riddling the body of their mother or grandmother? What if the family blown to pieces or burned to death had been theirs, killed in cold blood after running in desperation and hunger for months in order to survive? Just consider for one moment the sheer agony and despair that our people have suffered throughout these long months of deprivation and devastation inflicted on them while the world watched and left them to suffer, starve and die.

While we acknowledge and welcome the international consensus that has long called for an immediate ceasefire, it is clear that Israel has retained a veto right over that prospect. That must be brought to an end. Israel cannot continue to defy the world and every rule of humankind. It is not a coincidence that every time the world pushes for a ceasefire, Israel responds with a massacre, such as the one in the school. Israel is sending a message — each more gruesome than the one before — that it will not stop.

But there is obviously no right to commit genocide, and we warn all those who are contributing directly or indirectly to the emergence of such a right. Nothing can justify Israeli actions, and do not dare say that this is about the hostages. It is not about the hostages. It became apparent long ago that this Israeli Government could not care less about them. The hostages know it, their families know it, and Council members know it. Israel is killing them, abandoning them and playing with their lives. Netanyahu has other priorities — self-serving ones, maniacal ones. He is a maniac.

Something terrible is happening in Israel — something that has made justifying genocide, famine and gang rape a mainstream ideology. Something horrific is happening. The memory of the Holocaust, instead of serving as an unbreachable barrier against the commission of atrocities, has been instrumentalized to justify their commission. How is that possible, 10 months later, when the whole world is opposed to it? The answer is because that opposition has yet to lead to serious consequences for Israel. That is a hard fact

that members must face. If there are no consequences, it will not stop, and it will not listen to the Council.

To those who continue to arm Israel, to those who still have the audacity to call on Israel “to investigate” its own crimes, as if the actions of its soldiers did not reflect the actual policies of its military and political leaders, to those who dare to try and deter international courts from ensuring accountability instead of deterring the perpetrators of atrocities: wake up, I say. How long must they remain in denial? Wake up, stop finding excuses, stop imagining that they can reason with the Israeli Government and get it to stop killing civilians by the thousands, imposing famine, torturing prisoners and colonizing and annexing our land, simply by appealing to Israel, calling on it and demand that it stop. Members must tell them to stop, and they have the tools to make it stop — both as the Security Council and as countries in their national capacity. They must decide what they stand for and what they stand against. This is not a time for justifications and equivocations; it is a time for clarity and resolve, a time to shore up principles and morality. Members must not abandon their collective duties as a Security Council. If members so choose and have the political will, they have the tools to make what they decide a reality, to implement what they decide. No one should be above the law.

When will the Israeli Government be held accountable for its actions? When will the war criminals be sanctioned? As my brother from Algeria said, it is time to sanction. We reject a position whereby members are against hostage-taking except when the hostages are Palestinians or members sanction war criminals except when they are Israelis. We cannot come back here over and over again and pretend that we do not all know that Israel will not listen until it has no choice but to listen.

The Council must leave Israel with no choice but to listen to it or face consequences for its crimes. One cannot commit a crime and get away with it. There have to be consequences for those committing crimes. For those who want to defend the four Geneva Conventions and all of its elements, article 1 states that compliance with its provisions must be ensured at all times.

Yet Council members see Israel getting away with murder, and the Council keeps repeating the same things. When are Council members going to enforce their decisions and international law? Council members need to impose sanctions on those criminals. If members do that, Israel will stop continuing to commit those

crimes, atrocities and genocide against the Palestinian people. As I said, we reject a position whereby members are against hostage-taking except when the hostages are Palestinians or members sanction war criminals except when they are Israelis

We cannot come back here over and over again and pretend that we do not all know that Israel will not listen until it has no choice but to listen, until there are consequences for its crimes. Palestinians are exhausted, surrounded by death and endless horrors. They know that the Council’s words are no match for the bombs and bullets taking their lives and limbs. But words are not all that the Council has. Words are not the only tool its countries have. Only some — the rare few — have gone beyond words. This is a time for action, as a number of members have stated. And Council members will be judged, not only for the eloquence of their speeches, but also — and more importantly — for the courage of their actions. I tell Council members to show some courage, show some bravery, take action and to stop the criminals from getting away with murder.

We do not want Israel to merely torture our prisoners a bit less, as some propose. We want to see them set free. We do not want Israel to make its occupation a bit less brutal; we want to see it end. Our people deserve freedom.

The International Court of Justice has been unequivocal in its determination that,

“[t]he sustained abuse by Israel of its position as an occupying Power, through annexation and an assertion of permanent control over the Occupied Palestinian Territory and continued frustration of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, violates fundamental principles of international law and renders Israel’s presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory unlawful.”

Its presence in the occupied Palestinian territory is unlawful. The Court therefore said that it has to end as quickly as possible. The illegal occupation and all the illegal, inhumane, racist and destructive policies that flow from it must end.

The Palestinian people will not disappear, and they will not surrender. They will not relinquish their legitimate aspiration to live in freedom and dignity in their ancestral land. I urge the Security Council to act. I urge it to act. And in the coming days, we will go to the General Assembly to make sure that it upholds its

responsibilities under the Charter of the United Nations so as to ensure that the ruling of the highest court in the world — the International Court of Justice — is translated into political will and momentum towards concrete actions to be pursued by the United Nations and its Members States in order to end these illegal actions as soon as possible in order to protect civilians' lives and to preserve and pursue peace and security.

Dag Hammarskjöld once stated,

“It has been said that the United Nations was not created in order to bring us to heaven, but in order to save us from hell.”

History will remember that the Palestinians were left to endure hell. Now the fire that they have painfully endured for almost a year is spreading to devour everything in our region. There is only one way to stop a human-made fire. It is not enough to tend to the flames. The arsonist needs to be stopped. Let me repeat what our people in Gaza are saying — and they cannot take it any longer — enough is enough.

Council members have to act to put an end to this cruel criminality and genocide against our people in Palestine, particularly in the Gaza Strip. Will members — all members — do that? They made beautiful statements. They showed unanimity in rejecting Israel's criminal actions. That is good, but not sufficient. They must show the will and the resolve to act on that basis with the tools of the Council, with the mandate conferred upon it by the Charter, in order to come to the Palestinian people and serve them justice and in order to stop the criminals from continuing their actions. Can we count on the Council?

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

Mr. Erdan (Israel): I am sure that many Council members were not aware — or did not care to check — but today is Tisha B'Av, the saddest day on the Jewish calendar, our ancient day of mourning. We are fasting today for the many tragedies in Jewish history that occurred on this day, including the destruction of our first and second holy temples in Jerusalem.

But let me be clear: Jerusalem will never fall again. Jerusalem — united Jerusalem — will never fall again, no matter how many times our enemies attempt to destroy us, no matter how many times the United Nations slanders us and distorts reality. We will stay in our homeland and we will prevail.

In the early hours of 17 October 2023, reports of an Israeli air strike on Al Ahli Hospital flooded in from the Hamas Ministry of Health. Council members probably remember that day. Those reports were then quickly — very quickly — parroted by United Nations officials, media outlets and several Governments. Not even 24 hours following those baseless claims, the Council convened to discuss what was exposed to be a terrorist propaganda operation (see S/PV.9443). As Council members probably remember, it was a Palestinian Islamic Jihad rocket that fell on the hospital parking lot, not an Israeli missile.

Fast forward 10 months and nothing has changed. In the early hours of 10 August, the Gaza Ministry of Health, which the representative from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs referenced while failing to mention that it is, in fact, Hamas, has concocted a new blood libel. Once again, United Nations officials and media outlets were quick to echo this campaign of lies. I simply cannot comprehend that the Security Council would hold an emergency meeting based on jihadist propaganda. Once again, the Council fell for terrorist narratives, amplifying them and neglecting its obligations to the truth. Some in the Chamber distort reality because of political interest, and we all understand those political interests.

I will set therefore record straight for the Council. On Saturday, 10 August, what Israel targeted was not an innocent school, but rather dangerous terrorists operating in a Hamas command-and-control centre within the Al-Tabaen school. As usual, Hamas cynically abused a civilian facility, which should be protected, as their terror base. The strike eliminated at least 31 Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad terrorists who carried out attacks from inside the compound. These vile terrorists included platoon commanders, mortar and rocket operatives, cell commanders and intelligence operatives. We neutralized dozens of vicious terrorists who used this school for their evil goals and were in direct violation of international law.

But does the Security Council hold Hamas accountable for the losses? No, of course not. And of course, the representative should not speak for Hamas because he does not represent them — how convenient. By the way, the building itself is still intact, which would be physically impossible if Hamas's claims are to be believed.

I ask the Council — did it learn nothing from Hamas's lies about Al Ahli Hospital or from their lies about Al-Shifa Hospital, which they also used as their headquarters or their lies about our daring hostage rescue or about many other instances? In what other context would the international community rush to propagate the lies of a terrorist organization attempting to malign a democratic State, as we take every possible measure to minimize collateral damage, while Hamas uses civilian shields, deliberately putting civilians in harm's way?

Not only are Hamas's lies echoed here, but the Council also ignores and enables their outrageous violations of international and humanitarian law. Instances of prohibited use of civilian infrastructure by Hamas terrorists are numerous and widespread. Everyone can see them — everyone except the United Nations, of course. Yet the briefer today only touched upon those violations, rather than investigating the twisted and immoral strategies of Hamas terrorists. But why should we be surprised if the United Nations itself has no data and has to rely on baby-killers and rapists to supply them the data?

Just 80 years ago, Nazi Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels used the language of race science as his weapon against the Jewish people, poisoning the minds of the German people. Sadly, his ilk, the people who are ideologically his descendants, are alive and well. Only now, it is Hamas, using the language of humanitarian and international law and modern blood libels to vilify Israel. Today the Council convened an emergency meeting to discuss Hamas's false claims. Shockingly, it seems that it has decided to dedicate its time to listen to the terrorist lies, while no real concern was shown when Israeli children were murdered recently by Hizbullah.

Let me show the Council the differences. The Council can see here the names and ranks of the terrorists eliminated in Gaza on Saturday. This is only a partial list, because, as a reliable country, we double-check our information and do not rush to conclusions. This is a partial list of the terrorists eliminated on Saturday — terrorists exploiting the Al-Tabaen school as a base for their murderous objectives. These are the people for which the Council called an emergency meeting.

These are 11 of the 12 Israeli children murdered by the Hizbullah terrorists. These children were playing a football game in Majdal Shams when Hizbullah

terrorists rained down death upon their sweet heads. In other words, while these terrorists used a school as their terror base, these children will never see their school again — but for them, the Council could not find the time for an emergency meeting. They do not deserve an emergency meeting, according to my Algerian colleague. Shame on him. What a disgrace. The Council should ask itself why the murder of 12 Israeli children in Majdal Shams was insufficient cause for a meeting, but the elimination of Palestinian terrorists operating out of a school is sufficient.

But the most unbelievable part is the Council's inaction to condemn and stop the biggest danger and threat to the entire region — Iran. Right now, as we speak, millions of Israelis are preparing for a direct attack from Iran, just as they did in April. Iran's aggression threatens the entire region with war — a regional war. Yet the Council is here wasting time on falsehoods spread by the words of terrorists. The fact that we are holding an emergency meeting because Hamas uses civilians as human shields, rather than discussing the real global threat, perfectly represents the distorted agenda within the United Nations — a significant break between the Organization's so-called agenda and the global reality.

As this might be the last time I address the Security Council as Israel's Ambassador — but perhaps another meeting will be called because of terrorist propaganda — I would like to leave the Council with a message: I have been immensely proud to represent my country — the most moral country in the world — at the United Nations, in this warped place. Does the Palestinian representative hear me? I hope one day the Council will also see the bias and perversion of morality here, and I pray that it will see the truth — that the terrorist organization that this man here represents and tyrannical regimes should be condemned, not protected, and that Israel should be praised. We are today the vanguard of civilization. But until then — the people of Israel live.

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

Mr. Bendjama (Algeria) (spoke in French): Very briefly, I would like to bear witness here that the 16,000 children killed since 7 October did not commit suicide, and the more than 10,000 women who have been massacred did not commit suicide.

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

Mr. Van Schalkwyk (South Africa): I thank you, Mr. President, for giving us the opportunity to participate in this urgent meeting, which is most likely not going to be the last on the same matter while civilians continue to be massacred by the implacable Government of Israel.

Unfortunately, some in this Chamber continue to support and defend Israel as it commits the most despicable crimes against humanity the world has seen in recent times, with impunity. It is indeed an indictment on the Security Council that a solution has to date not been found on the intractable conflict that has been on the agenda of this Organization since time immemorial.

Just yesterday, lamenting the inefficiency of the Security Council, the Secretary-General remarked,

“[s]ince 1945, the Security Council has been a bedrock of global peace and security. But the cracks in its foundation are becoming too large to ignore, contributing to deadlock, stalemate and stagnation around today’s most pressing crises.” (S/PV.9702, p.2)

In that regard, the inability of the Council to put an end to the genocide that continues to be carried out by Israel against the people of Gaza is a case in point.

Israel’s impunity and apparent political protection is not perceived; it is real. That impunity calls into question the whole meaning of “legally binding”, because the Organization has adopted numerous resolutions since the establishment of the United Nations that have been undermined by Israel for decades.

To affirm its status as a legal delinquent, immediately following its receipt of armed support from those who support it, Israel committed yet another massacre on 10 August, when it bombed the Al-Tabaen school in central Gaza City, where thousands of displaced families had sheltered. More than 100 Palestinian children, women and men were killed and many were injured as a result.

The assassination of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh, in Tehran last month, and the continuous targeting of civilians in Gaza will likely further compound the situation in an already volatile region. We hope that the investigation into his assassination will soon be concluded and call on all parties to exercise the utmost

restraint and avoid any acts that would escalate tensions in the already fragile region.

As an avid believer in the rule of law, in December last year South Africa approached the International Court of Justice seeking an order to prevent Israel from committing genocide against the Palestinian people. Israel defied the Court’s order and launched an offensive in Rafah. Once again, South Africa put its trust in the global Court system and sought additional provisional measures to prevent Israel’s persistent acts of genocide against the Palestinian people in Gaza. Deciding on the matter, the Court proclaimed that the Palestinians have a legal right to protection against genocide and that South Africa had shown that there was a real and imminent risk of the irreparable violation of that right. That also fell on deaf ears.

In addition to the evidence presented at the International Court of Justice, South Africa submitted to the Security Council a body of evidence in support of its argument that Israel is committing genocide in Gaza. It was circulated as document S/2024/419, and we encourage all Member States to study the document and acquaint themselves with its contents.

There must be an immediate cessation of hostilities across the whole of Gaza, and all attacks on humanitarian workers and medical staff must cease immediately and permanently. The continued occupation of Palestine, the destruction of infrastructure, the obliteration of livelihoods, the displacement, the collective punishment and the extrajudicial assassinations will undoubtedly make the realization of a peaceful solution to the Palestinian question, and the situation in the Middle East in general, much more difficult to achieve.

We reiterate that the international community cannot proclaim the importance of international law, including respect for the Charter of the United Nations, in some situations and not in others. The ability of Israel to simply ignore binding decisions from international organizations, with no consequences, is unacceptable. The Council must immediately ensure respect for its resolutions in line with its mandate, if it is to successfully mend the “cracks in its foundation” and avert a situation where those cracks become too large to ignore.

The meeting rose at 5.35 p.m.