



Security Council

Eightieth year

9891st meeting

Thursday, 3 April 2025, 3 p.m.

New York

Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Bonnafont	(France)
<i>Members:</i>	Algeria	Mr. Bendjama
	China	Mr. Fu Cong
	Denmark	Ms. Landi
	Greece	Mr. Sekeris
	Guyana	Ms. Persaud
	Pakistan	Mr. Ahmad
	Panama	Mr. Alfaro de Alba
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Hwang
	Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
	Sierra Leone	Mr. Kanu
	Slovenia	Mr. Žbogar
	Somalia	Mr. Mohamed Yusuf
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Dame Barbara Woodward
	United States of America	Ms. Shea

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. *Corrections* should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room AB-0928 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (<http://documents.un.org>).



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 (*spoke in French*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Israel and Libya 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: Mr. Volker Türk, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights; and Dr. Younes Al-Khatib, President of the Palestine Red Crescent Society.

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

I give the floor to Mr. Türk.

Mr. Türk: It pains me to brief the Council once again on the catastrophic suffering of people in Gaza. The temporary relief provided by the ceasefire, which gave Palestinians a moment to breathe, has been shattered. Since 1 March, Israeli military operations have killed more than 1,200 Palestinians, including at least 320 children, according to the Ministry of Health in Gaza, and bombardments continue on residential buildings, tents, hospitals and schools, including places to which Palestinians had been ordered to move. There has been no let-up, not even as Palestinian families celebrated Eid el-Fitr. I am appalled by the recent killings of 15 medical personnel and humanitarian aid workers, which raise further concerns about the commission of war crimes by the Israeli military. There must be an independent, prompt and thorough investigation into the killings, and those responsible for any violations of international law must be held to account.

The Israeli military continues to strike camps for people who have been displaced numerous times and who have nowhere safe place to go. The Israeli military also continues to force civilians to move. Half of Gaza is now under mandatory evacuation orders or has been declared a no-go zone. Those orders fail to comply with the requirements of international humanitarian law. Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups continue to launch indiscriminate rockets from Gaza into Israel, in breach of international humanitarian law. I am also deeply concerned about the fate and well-being of Israeli hostages still held in Gaza.

(spoke in French)

It has now been one month since Israel imposed a complete blockade on all vital aid and supplies, including food, water, electricity, fuel and medicines, thereby harming the entire population of Gaza. The blockade and siege imposed on Gaza amount to a form of collective punishment and may also amount to the use of starvation as a method of war. On 1 April, the World Food Programme was forced to close its 25 bakeries throughout Gaza, leaving many families without bread. Social tensions over food shortages are palpable. There are also reports of excessive use of force by local police. As before the ceasefire, social order is once again breaking down before our eyes. I am alarmed by the inflammatory declarations made by senior Israeli officials about seizing, annexing and dividing the territory of the Gaza Strip and

about transferring Palestinians out of Gaza. All that raises grave concerns about the commission of international crimes and runs counter to the fundamental principle of international law against the acquisition of territory by force. In resolution 2735 (2024), adopted in June 2024, the Council rejected any attempt at demographic or territorial change in the Gaza Strip, including any actions that reduce the territory of Gaza.

(spoke in English)

The situation in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is also extremely alarming. Israeli operations in the northern West Bank have killed hundreds of people, destroyed entire refugee camps and makeshift medical sites and displaced more than 40,000 Palestinians. The announcement that residents must not return to their homes for a year raises serious concerns about long-term mass displacement. Since 7 October 2023, my Office has verified that State and settler violence has killed 909 Palestinians across the West Bank, including 191 children and five people with disabilities, and some of those cases may amount to extrajudicial or other unlawful killings. In the same period, 51 Israelis, including 15 women and four children, were killed in alleged Palestinian attacks or armed clashes — 33 in the West Bank and 18 in Israel. Illegal settlement expansion continues unabated, as some Israeli ministers advocate for Israeli sovereignty in the occupied territory. Dozens of Palestinian herding and farming communities have been forced to leave their homes and ancestral lands, while restrictions on movement have paralysed the economy and are shredding the social fabric. While hundreds of Palestinian detainees were released during the ceasefire, hundreds more people have been arrested and detained. Within Israel, the severe crackdown on civic space, including against organizations defending the human rights of Palestinians, is also alarming.

Nothing can justify the horrific attacks committed against Israeli communities on 7 October 2023, and nothing can justify the collective punishment of the Palestinian people. According to the Palestinian Ministry of Health, Israeli military operations since 7 October 2023 have killed more than 50,400 Palestinians in Gaza and injured more than 114,000 people. I call for the immediate restoration of the ceasefire and unimpeded humanitarian access throughout Gaza. I warn again that there is a high and increasing risk that atrocity crimes are being committed in the occupied Palestinian territory. Under the Geneva Conventions, States have an obligation to act when a serious violation of international humanitarian law has been committed. Under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, State parties have the responsibility to act to prevent such a crime when risk becomes apparent. I urge all those with influence to ensure the protection of civilians as a matter of absolute priority. It is essential that there be full accountability for all violations of international humanitarian and human rights law. All hostages must be released immediately and unconditionally. All those who are arbitrarily detained must also be released. Israel must refrain from any acts amounting to the forcible transfer of Gaza's population.

The past 18 months of violence have made it abundantly clear that there is no military path out of the crisis. The only way forward is a political settlement, based on two States living side by side in equal dignity and rights, in line with United Nations resolutions and international law.

The President *(spoke in French)*: I thank Mr. Türk for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Dr. Al-Khatib.

Dr. Al-Khatib: Attacks on aid workers must end, and perpetrators must be held to account. That was the message from Ms. Joyce Msuya, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, during yesterday's meeting of the Security Council (see S/PV.9889). We cannot but echo that important message and emphasize the critical

need for the Council to do all it can to protect those selfless volunteers and staff members whose main mission is to save lives during the darkest times of conflict and human suffering.

Last Saturday, we witnessed one of the darkest moments yet in a conflict that has shocked our common humanity to the core. Many appalling records have been broken in the war on Gaza — the highest number of aid workers killed in any single conflict, the number of children killed, the number of attacks on health workers and facilities, the extent of destruction of civilian infrastructure and homes and the list goes on. On Saturday, a Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) mission coordinated and accompanied by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs uncovered a mass grave where 15 first responders, including eight members of the Palestine Red Crescent Society paramedic team, six members of the Palestine Civil Defence and one United Nations officer, were killed and buried. They were killed while on a mission to save lives following reports of civilian casualties in Tal Al-Sultan in Rafah.

We have documented the mission timelines of the three ambulances, the communication between the first team and the dispatch centre, the time when we lost contact with the second and third teams and what the first team had witnessed when it went back to the scene and communicated with the dispatch centre. We have also documented the intense firing that the dispatch centre could hear while the very high frequency equipment was on, when team member Assad Al-Nasarsa reported that they were being fired at and that several colleagues had been injured. That same team member is still missing, and we have no information about his fate. We call on the Israeli occupation forces to provide information regarding Assad's fate and whereabouts. It is also worth noting that, during the communication with the team, the dispatch was able to hear a conversation in Hebrew between the Israeli forces and the team — meaning that some were still alive when they were under the control of the Israeli forces. Many Council members have called for a thorough and independent investigation. We reiterate that call and believe that that is the minimum that the Security Council and the international community should demand as part of the effort to hold those responsible to account.

This is not the first incident in which PRCS and United Nations aid workers and others have been killed while on mission to provide relief and life-saving assistance. We lost 36 PRCS colleagues before this horrible incident. We have also been documenting and sharing with partners and Member States all violations against PRCS teams, facilities and missions.

It has been a whole month since Israel resumed fighting and enforced total closure on Gaza, including a total blockade on all aid entering Gaza. Two million people in Gaza are denied food, water, medicine, shelter and electricity, in addition to the psychological trauma that they have been enduring for the past 18 months, in an Israeli strategy of collective punishment to achieve war goals. That is a grave violation of international humanitarian law. During the six weeks of ceasefire's implementation, humanitarian agencies, including PRCS, worked tirelessly to bring in relief and restore some level of basic services to the people in Gaza, including health and education services, only to see conditions worsen as violence returns to haunt the people of Gaza even more brutally than before.

Many Member States, organizations and experts have presented recommendations and action points throughout this conflict. Allow me to reiterate the following points.

First, we urge the Council to support the call for an independent and thorough investigation of this atrocious crime and for those responsible to be held to account.

Secondly, we call on Council members, individually and collectively, to take action to ensure respect for international humanitarian law,

Thirdly, there is a need to enforce the existing mechanisms and use the existing tools at the disposal of Member States in order to ensure the protection of humanitarian aid workers and end impunity.

Fourthly, we call on the Security Council and on the entire international community to spare no effort to resume the ceasefire and to end the violence immediately.

Fifthly, we call for the immediate resumption of aid delivery and the opening of border crossings.

The souls of Mustafa Khafaja, Ezz El-Din Shaat, Muhammad Bahloul, Muhammad Al-Hila and Raed Al-Sharif are asking for justice. Can the Council hear them?

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Dr. Al-Khatib for his briefing.

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

Mr. Bendjama (Algeria): At the outset, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to High Commissioner Volker Türk and to Dr. Younes Al-Khatib for their sobering briefings. Their words are a stark reminder of the immense suffering endured by the Palestinian people and the barbarity to which they are subjected. This is collective punishment. This is a war crime.

Algeria requested this meeting because we firmly believe that the Council must speak with clarity and strength. The Council must fully embrace its responsibilities. The Council must ensure the implementation of its own decisions. Failure to do so will result in the loss of any remaining authority and any remaining legitimacy, and the world — our constituency — will no longer respect the Council or its deliberations.

The people of Gaza are facing unthinkable hardship. Israel, the occupying Power, is responsible for Gaza becoming the deadliest conflict for aid workers, with more than 400 killed; the deadliest conflict for journalists, with 209 journalists killed; the deadliest conflict for medical staff, with more than 1,060 workers killed; and the deadliest conflict for children, with more than 17,000 children killed. Those people — those innocent civilians — deserve justice. In order to save lives, we must put an immediate end to the ongoing onslaught, and resolution 2735 (2024) should be fully implemented without delay.

Since the resumption of the Israeli offensive on 18 March, more than 103 Palestinians have been killed daily, and more than 223 have been injured daily. Being killed has become a daily routine for Gazans, while the international community watches a genocide unfold live. And, like all of us here, it remains passive.

This morning, Israeli air strikes targeted a school sheltering displaced people, killing dozens of civilians. Yesterday the bombing of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East clinic in Jabalia by Israeli forces resulted in the deaths of 22 people. The search for bodies after that massacre has been heartbreaking, with children identified only by their clothes — a red blouse for Abu Sa'ada, a brown blouse for Alian. The youngest of those children was a baby, two weeks old.

As if the killing were not enough, for more than a month now, Israeli forces have literally blocked any humanitarian aid from entering Gaza. According to UNICEF, more than 1 million people are starving to death inside the Gaza Strip. What is happening in Gaza is an absolute horror, and that criminal behaviour on the part of the Israeli authorities must not go unchallenged.

While we focus on the suffering in Gaza, we must not overlook the atrocities occurring in the West Bank. There, also, the Israeli war machine has spared no

part of the West Bank from its brutality. The figures for destruction, dispossession, annexation, arrests, forced displacement and, finally, assassination continue to rise daily. Israeli officials have publicly lauded their efforts, and they have made it clear that they will not allow the Palestinian Authority to effectively control the West Bank.

In 2024, the Israeli occupation forces seized 46 square kilometres of Palestinian land in the West Bank, and the settlement policy continues unabated, with settlements being described as the protectors of the heart of Israel. Furthermore, Israeli officials have repeatedly assaulted the Al-Aqsa Mosque, challenging the historical and legal status quo and the Hashemite custodianship of the holy sites. We strongly condemn all those actions.

In conclusion, history has taught us that no force can uproot people from their land, and the Palestinian people will not be displaced. They will remain on their land and, with the support of all those who cherish freedom, peace and justice, they will establish their independent State with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

Mr. Žbogar (Slovenia): I also thank the briefers today.

If the walls of this Chamber, the blue and gold tapestries with the symbols of faith, hope and charity, could speak, they would surely have many stories to share. Perhaps they would choose silence over words, for the many unfulfilled commitments made here. Perhaps they would cite resolutions of the Council never fully implemented. Perhaps they would quote statements of briefers shocking us with their accounts of the situation and the suffering of civilians on the ground. Whatever those words would entail, they would point in one direction — erosion.

What we see in Gaza is the erosion of humanity. We are appalled by the Israeli attacks on humanitarian workers in Gaza. The humanitarian workers of the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Palestine Red Crescent Society, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Médecins sans frontières and Nasser Hospital have been under fire since the hostilities resumed. We are shocked by the latest attack on the humanitarian convoy, killing 15 medical and humanitarian workers. To Dr. Al-Khatib and to the families and friends of those who have been killed, we offer our condolences.

We cannot choose to believe that those were simply mistakes. Slovenia condemns all attacks on all humanitarian, medical and United Nations personnel. They must be protected and supported in their missions, at all times. We call on Israel to re-establish humanitarian notification and deconfliction mechanisms. We call for an end to those attacks. Intentionally directing attacks against personnel involved in a humanitarian assistance mission is a war crime and must be prosecuted accordingly.

What we see is the erosion of the protection of civilians. We condemn the killings of civilians, particularly women and children, since the collapse of the ceasefire. We hear from humanitarian organizations that food and fuel are running out. We call on Israel to immediately lift the siege on Gaza and to ensure the safe and unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance at scale. We underline that starvation as a method of war is a war crime.

We are appalled by the issuance of new evacuation orders in Gaza. We caution against the implementation of the so-called humanitarian bubbles and the militarization of aid in Gaza. We once again appeal to Israel to reverse the implementation of legislation against UNRWA.

What we see is the erosion of respect for international law. International law, particularly international humanitarian law and human rights law, must be respected by all. We call for impartial and thorough investigations of all incidents involving humanitarian workers. We ask for the results of those investigations to be shared

with the Council. Violations taking place on and after 7 October must be prosecuted. Only accountability will ensure non-repetition.

The ongoing expansion of the Gaza war and the operations in the West Bank must stop. We are appalled by the situation in the West Bank, marked by settler violence, destruction, demolitions, movement restrictions, displacement and repeating violations of the status quo of holy sites. Occupation must end, as ordered by the International Court of Justice. We reject the seizure of Palestinian land and forced displacement of Palestinians. We emphasize that Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem form an indivisible whole of the Palestinian State, where governance must be under the Palestinian Authority.

What we see in Israel and Palestine is the erosion of peace and security. We repeat that there is no military solution to any conflict, including conflicts in the Middle East. More war does not bring more peace — not to Israel, Palestine, the region or the globe. With each passing day, the region is less secure and the future is more unstable. We once again call for an end to Israeli operations in Gaza and the West Bank and for an end to attacks on Israel.

We call on Israel and Hamas to return to the agreement made in line with resolution 2735 (2024), with the support of Egypt, Qatar and the United States. A ceasefire must be restored, hostages must be released, aid must flow, and dialogue must prevail. The only path to lasting peace can be one of diplomacy. The only solution for ensuring lasting peace is the two-State solution endorsed by the Council.

I recall the briefing of the Palestine Red Crescent Society in November 2023 (see S/PV.9472). Back then, the representative of the Palestine Red Crescent Society asked us to listen to the cries of children soaked in blood, asking why that was happening, what they have done and why the world was so indifferent to their lives. That feeling of abandonment by the international community, unfortunately, continues to this day. I can assure Dr. Al-Khatib that Slovenia is not indifferent. Yet almost a year and a half later, we are unable to answer his questions.

Erosion of this magnitude can lead to one thing only: chaos. Despite challenges we have faced, as the Council, throughout this war much has been done with clear united demands from the Council, including through four resolutions. Let us make sure that our demands are implemented to prevent further erosion of the international system we have built.

Dame Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom): I would like to start by thanking High Commissioner Volker Türk and Dr. Younes Al-Khatib for their sobering briefings.

Our thoughts and deepest condolences are with the families of the Palestine Red Crescent medics and other humanitarians who were killed while bravely working to save lives in Gaza. Their deaths are an outrage. We expect this incident to be investigated fully and transparently, and for those responsible to be held to account.

Gaza remains the most dangerous place for humanitarians in the world. If Israel does not respect deconfliction notifications from aid workers to allow them to operate without coming under attack, there will be more appalling deaths like these. Aid workers should not have to risk their lives to help those in need. We therefore urge Israel to cooperate with the United Nations fact-finding mission into the hit on a United Nations compound on 19 March, to conduct thorough investigations into all incidents involving aid workers and medical personnel and to ensure accountability for those responsible.

I have three points to make.

First, the United Kingdom reiterates its calls again for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages, including Avinatan Or, Yossi Sharabi and Shay Levinson, who have links to the United Kingdom. And we are clear — Hamas must be held accountable for its despicable actions. But the United Kingdom strongly opposes Israel's decision to resume and expand its military operations in Gaza. Since operations restarted, more than 1,000 Palestinians have lost their lives, including at least 322 children, and civilians are being compressed into ever-smaller areas. Further fighting and bloodshed is in nobody's interest and takes us further away from a deal to get the hostages home.

Secondly, the humanitarian situation in Gaza is horrific and there is reportedly less than a week of food left for distribution in Gaza. We urge Israel to immediately reinstate the flow of humanitarian aid. Blocking supplies and electricity from entering Gaza risks violating international humanitarian law. The United Kingdom is deeply concerned that the United Nations and humanitarian organizations have been forced to reduce operations in Gaza because it is so unsafe. Without their life-saving work, even more Palestinians will suffer.

Thirdly, the United Kingdom condemns remarks by Defence Minister Katz on the annexation of land in Gaza. There must be no forced displacement of Palestinians or reduction in the territory of Gaza. That will only further drive instability and undermine security for Israelis and Palestinians alike. And we condemn recent Israeli decisions to accelerate the establishment of settlements and outposts in the West Bank.

In conclusion, the lesson we have learned time and again in the Council is that diplomacy, not violence, is the only way to bring lasting peace. We urge the parties to return to a ceasefire, to end the appalling loss of life, to bring the hostages home and to make credible efforts towards a two-State solution.

Mr. Fu Cong (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Algeria for requesting today's meeting. I thank High Commissioner Türk and Dr. Al-Khatib for their briefings.

Shortly after the conclusion of Ramadan, the most sacred month for Muslims around the world, Gaza is once again shrouded in death and killing. Since 17 March, when Israel launched massive assaults, more than 1,000 Palestinians have been killed, including more than 300 children. The humanitarian situation on the ground has sharply deteriorated, with 2 million people deprived of essential supplies and many facing the prospects of yet another displacement. In the past two days alone, Israel's military operations have forced more than 100,000 people to flee Rafah. Gaza is plunging back into war. The priority now for the international community, especially the Security Council, is to step on the brakes before greater civilian casualties and humanitarian disasters occur.

I will make three points in that regard.

First, it is imperative to promote a lasting ceasefire in Gaza, with a maximum sense of urgency. Renewing hostilities will lead only to more killing and hatred and in no way represents the right approach to free the hostages. Achieving a lasting ceasefire is the best way to save lives and bring hostages home. Recently, Israel announced its plans to expand its ground offensive and occupy territory in Gaza. We express serious concerns about this development and urge Israel to immediately halt its military operations in Gaza. The guarantor countries of the agreement should adopt an impartial and responsible attitude, promote the continuous implementation of all three phases of the agreement and achieve a lasting ceasefire in Gaza.

Secondly, concrete actions must be taken to restore humanitarian access to Gaza. Since 2 March, when Israel cut off the flow of supplies into Gaza, no aid has reached it for an entire month. More than 2 million Palestinians, who are already

languishing in Gaza, now face yet another dire humanitarian crisis. China firmly opposes the use of humanitarian aid as a weapon and a bargaining chip. The lifting of the blockade on Gaza and the full restoration of humanitarian access are obligations under international humanitarian law that Israel must fulfil as the occupying Power.

Thirdly, attacks on humanitarian workers must be stopped. United Nations personnel and humanitarian workers must not be targeted. Yet this fundamental principle of international humanitarian law has been repeatedly violated in Gaza. Since the current conflict erupted, 408 aid workers have been killed in Gaza, making it the most dangerous place for humanitarian personnel. On 23 March, 15 humanitarian workers were killed by the Israeli military. It was not until 30 March that their bodies were found in a mass grave in Gaza, and damaged vehicles with clear humanitarian markings were found nearby. That is indeed shocking. We express our deepest condolences to the victims. We strongly condemn all attacks on United Nations personnel and humanitarian workers and call for a thorough investigation into the incident to ensure accountability.

While the conflict rages in Gaza, the situation in the West Bank is extremely tense. Israel continues to escalate its military operations in the West Bank, forcibly expelling refugees from multiple camps, causing heavy civilian casualties and displacing more than 40,000 people. Israel continues to expand settlements, condone settler violence and squeeze the living space of the Palestinian people, eroding the basis for the two-State solution. Settlement activity contravenes international law and Security Council resolutions and should cease immediately.

Implementing the two-State solution is the only viable way to resolve the question of Palestine. Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, are all integral parts of the State of Palestine. China opposes any forced relocation of Gazans and any attempts to annex the territories of Gaza and the West Bank. We support the Gaza recovery and reconstruction plan initiated by Egypt and other Arab countries, and we support the principle of Palestinians governing Palestine in the reconstruction process. The international community should redouble its efforts to advance the political process of the two-State solution and provide the necessary guarantees.

China will continue to work tirelessly with the international community to end the conflict in Gaza, alleviate the humanitarian plight, implement the two-State solution and ultimately achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine.

Mr. Ahmad (Pakistan): We thank France for convening this emergency briefing at the request of Algeria, supported by Pakistan, China, the Russian Federation and Somalia. We also thank Mr. Volker Türk, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and Dr. Younes Al-Khatib, President of the Palestine Red Crescent Society, for their sobering and very moving briefings. They provide just a little glimpse of the dire situation faced by the Palestinians and all civilians on the ground in the region.

The Security Council has convened repeatedly to address the humanitarian catastrophe in the occupied Palestinian territories, in particular Gaza. Yet, despite those discussions, the Council has failed to provide relief to the innocent Palestinians suffering from indiscriminate bombings, starvation, displacement and collective punishment, all of which are blatant violations of international law and international humanitarian law. This grave humanitarian crisis reflects the Council's inaction, setting a dangerous precedent. The Palestinian people are left questioning whether the Council will take meaningful steps or will merely lament their suffering. Our failure not only undermines the institution but also erodes the international order built on the Charter of the United Nations. The Council must assert its relevance by ensuring the implementation of its own decisions before it is rendered inconsequential.

Gaza has descended into an abyss of suffering, an unprecedented man-made catastrophe in which hospitals, schools and shelters are attacked indiscriminately. Children and women perish under the rubble. Humanitarian workers, including United Nations personnel, are targeted deliberately to cut off the lifeline of the affected populations, and journalists are targeted and silenced to prevent reporting on the atrocities being committed by the Israeli occupation forces. Nothing is spared, not even historic cultural sites. It is total annihilation, a situation in which the fundamental principles of humanitarian law are being disregarded with impunity. Israel's blatant violation of the ceasefire agreement brokered by Egypt, Qatar and the United States has unleashed a reckless wave of killings and devastation. Instead of heeding calls from the Council, the General Assembly and the International Court of Justice, Israel has expanded its bombardments and ground operations. Since the ceasefire was broken last month, more than 1,100 Palestinians have been killed, adding to the more than 50,000 martyred between October 2023 and January 2025, including 17,000 children.

This is not just warfare; it is the systematic destruction of a people. For one month, Israel has sealed all border crossings, blocking humanitarian aid. No food or medical supplies have entered Gaza. UNICEF warns that 1 million children are without basic necessities, while the World Food Programme warns of imminent famine. Starvation as a weapon of war is a war crime. The deliberate targeting of aid convoys and medical personnel further dismantles international humanitarian law. More than 400 humanitarian workers, including 284 personnel of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, have been killed — the highest toll in modern history. Pakistan strongly condemns the attack on a medical emergency convoy on 23 March, which killed 15 humanitarian workers in Gaza. When United Nations staff and humanitarian workers are gunned down with impunity, we must ask what remains of the global order we built on the ashes of the Second World War.

While Gaza burns, the West Bank is witnessing its own Nakba. More than 40,000 Palestinians have been driven from their homes, the largest displacement since 1967. Ninety-nine lives have been lost since January, amid intensifying military raids and settler violence. Israel's intent to permanently colonize and annex the occupied West Bank is alarming and unacceptable.

Equally concerning are Israel's plans to seize territory in Gaza, including the establishment of a so-called security corridor. That would constitute a dangerous escalation and a violation of international law. We also condemn Israel's deliberate violation of the sanctity of the Al-Aqsa Mosque — an act of provocation and a clear breach of the protection of religious freedom under international law.

The international community, particularly the Council, must move beyond rhetorical condemnations to concrete action. Pakistan reiterates the following calls.

First, we call for an immediate cessation of hostilities, the full implementation of the January ceasefire agreement by the parties in all three of its stages and in accordance with resolution 2735 (2024) and an extension of the ceasefire to the West Bank.

Secondly, we call for the immediate lifting of the illegal Israeli blockade to allow full, unconditional and unimpeded humanitarian access. Starvation must not be allowed to be weaponized.

Thirdly, we call for guarantees for the protection of United Nations staff and aid workers in line with international humanitarian law. In that regard, we would like to reiterate our proposal and call for a global implementation dashboard for resolution 2730 (2024) to be set up under United Nations auspices. The dashboard would provide real-time public tracking, recording violations, investigations and

their outcomes. There must be accountability for those crimes. Impunity must be brought to an end.

Fourthly, we call for the prevention of any form of forced displacement of Palestinians from their land or any annexation of Palestinian territory.

Fifthly, we all agree that the two-State solution remains the only viable path to sustainable peace. There is a clear need to revive a credible and irreversible political process to that end. The June conference to be co-chaired by France and Saudi Arabia will be an important milestone in that regard. Pakistan reaffirms its unwavering support for an independent, sovereign and contiguous Palestinian State based on the pre-1967 borders, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

Israel's violations and disregard for international law and the resolutions of the Council also extend beyond Gaza and Palestine to Lebanon and Syria, where we are seeing repeated strikes in violation of the ceasefire, the Council's resolutions and international law. It is a familiar pattern that we have seen so often over time, challenging the Council and the international community. I think that that brings us back to the fundamental fact that a just and lasting peace in the region is possible only if we address the root cause, namely, the Israeli occupation of the Arab territories, and that occupation must end.

What is happening before our eyes is a travesty. It is simply unacceptable. The Council must act. We cannot be part of an organ that remains a mere spectator and does nothing. We refuse to be part of such moral bankruptcy and what our Slovenian colleague referred to as an erosion of humanity. We are at a crossroads. We clearly see from one side the occupying Power's deliberate attempts to sabotage the hard-won ceasefire, undermine the Gaza reconstruction plan endorsed by the Joint Arab-Islamic Extraordinary Summit and welcomed by the international community and sabotage the efforts to revive the peace process for the realization of a two-State solution. Yet the rest of the international community is clearly on the other side. It is clearly in support of peace, the ceasefire and humanitarian assistance, and I think that the international community represented by all regions around the world stands fully behind the imperative of a peace process and the June conference. We believe that, in so doing, the wider international community stands for international law, justice and peace. I think that, as members of the Council, it is our collective responsibility to translate the will of the international community into concrete action to finally move towards a just and durable peace in the region, and that is in the interests of all sides.

Ms. Landi (Denmark): I would like to thank High Commissioner Türk and Dr. Al-Khatib for their alarming briefings.

Let me convey my sincere condolences to all Palestine Red Crescent Society staff for those colleagues who were tragically killed recently as they dispatched aid to wounded civilians in Rafah. We support an independent investigation of the circumstances of the killings and expect those responsible to be held accountable.

Since hostilities resumed on 18 March, Security Council members have repeatedly sounded the alarm about the high numbers of civilian casualties in Gaza. According to UNICEF, as many as 100 children were killed or maimed every day last week. This is the third time in less than a week that the Council has met to debate the protection of humanitarian personnel. While we underline that the protection of humanitarians is not up for debate, the importance of the Security Council addressing the issue cannot be understated. Since October 2023, at least 408 aid workers have been killed in Gaza — at least 280 of them United Nations staff members. The severity of the situation warrants our utmost attention.

International humanitarian law also ensures special protection for healthcare workers and protects journalists, as civilians, from deliberate and direct attack. Yet in Gaza, we have seen the highest number of journalists killed in one year compared to any other conflict recorded, and we receive daily alarming reports about attacks on ambulances, hospitals and health workers. As many as 100 reportedly remain in Israeli detention. We condemn any attack on humanitarian workers, medical personnel and journalists. They must be protected in accordance with the parties' obligations under international law, including when detained. The safety and well-being of the remaining hostages illegally held since Hamas' brutal and indiscriminate terror attack on 7 October 2023 remains of grave concern to us. We call for their immediate and unconditional release and for Hamas to allow humanitarian access to them. The humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence are not empty words. They are key principles to be supported and respected at all times. Denmark reiterates that all parties to the conflict are bound by international law, including international humanitarian law. As part of that, the inviolability and neutrality of United Nations premises must be protected, including by refraining from their use for military purposes.

In addition to those killed by hostilities in Gaza, we are receiving alarming reports of wounded and sick people dying from conditions that would be treatable if it were not for the complete humanitarian blockade cutting off 2 million people from basic assistance. Water, electricity and medical supplies are lacking, and we are deeply concerned about reports from the World Food Programme that the last food parcels are now being distributed. We call on the Government of Israel to abide by its obligations under international law to ensure the full, rapid, safe and unhindered provision of humanitarian assistance to the population in Gaza. Humanitarian assistance must never be used as a political tool. Let me also reiterate that Hamas can play no role in the future of Gaza. We have recently witnessed the brutal crackdown on freedom of expression and assembly by Hamas. That is of course completely unacceptable.

In the West Bank, 40,000 Palestinians remain displaced as a result of Israel's military operations. We continue to see the rapid expansion of Israeli settlements and an alarming escalation in settler violence. We once again remind Israel of its obligation to protect Palestinians against settler violence and to hold the perpetrators accountable, putting an end to the environment of near impunity. And we call on Israel to immediately halt all settlement expansion, which is a clear violation of international law. In that regard, we strongly oppose a recent decision by Israel's security Cabinet to approve the separation and independence of 13 new settlements and its decision to allocate funds for the construction of a separate road for Palestinians that will close off a vast area in the heart of the West Bank to Palestinian residents.

In conclusion, we need a return to the full implementation of the ceasefire agreement. That includes the release of all the remaining hostages held by Hamas, a permanent end to hostilities and unhindered humanitarian access. In parallel, we must not lose focus of the worrisome situation in the West Bank. Israeli settlements are illegal under international law and undermine our common goal of a two-State solution and, with it, the prospects for sustainable peace.

Ms. Persaud (Guyana): I express appreciation to the delegation of Algeria for requesting this meeting. I also thank Mr. Volker Türk, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and Dr. Younes Al-Khatib, President of the Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS), for their sobering briefings.

At the outset, Guyana offers its sincere condolences to the United Nations and PRCS on the loss of staffers in Gaza and to the families of all those who recently died in very tragic circumstances.

The situation in the occupied Palestinian territory is deteriorating rapidly, creating a severe security and humanitarian crisis. That crisis has been spawned by the ongoing violation of international law, including international humanitarian law. There is a risk of the total collapse of international law in the region if the Council does not find the collective will to uphold the rule of international law. There must be consistent application of international law, and the States Members of the United Nations have a special responsibility to uphold the rule of law. Guyana therefore calls on the Security Council to address the anomaly in Palestine, where the occupying Power is inflicting immense hardships on Palestinians, including children, with no accountability.

The incidents in Gaza over the past days are devastating signs of the depths to which the situation in Gaza has sunk. The reported deaths of the United Nations and Palestine Red Crescent Society workers and other first responders and the burying of their bodies in shallow graves near to clearly marked, destroyed ambulances and a United Nations vehicle must elicit our collective outrage and a demand for justice and accountability. Medical personnel and humanitarian workers must be safe to undertake their functions. Functioning coordination and deconfliction mechanisms are critical to ensuring that, and parties to a conflict are obligated not to cause harm. Guyana supports High Commissioner Türk's call for an independent, prompt and thorough investigation into the incident on 23 March and for those responsible to be held to account.

We heard the vivid descriptions of the conditions to which Palestinians are being subjected both in Gaza and the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem — forced displacement on multiple occasions, deaths, starvation and disease. While it is a repeat of the horrendous situation we have witnessed since 7 October 2023, some humanitarians have reported a level of recklessness and a lack of restraint hitherto unseen. Yesterday marked one month since supplies were barred from entering Gaza, leaving 2.1 million people to perish. Sixty-four per cent of Gaza is under active forced displacement orders, with approximately 200,000 people having again been displaced since the ceasefire broke down. The Council must respond to those atrocities, in accordance with its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

In the occupied West Bank, the combination of settler violence and the ongoing Israeli military operations have also created a crisis for thousands of Palestinian civilians, who have been injured, rendered homeless following the destruction or damage to their homes or have suffered economic loss on account of the theft of their livestock or the destruction of their farmlands.

Allow me to reiterate the following appeals.

First, there must be an immediate cessation of all hostilities in Gaza and a return to the implementation of the ceasefire deal pursuant to resolution 2735 (2024). Guyana also calls for the end of Israel's military operations in the occupied West Bank. Civilians are bearing the brunt of the violence, and their situation is becoming increasingly intolerable as they endure hardship after hardship.

Secondly, the cessation of hostilities in Gaza must be followed by a permanent and unconditional ceasefire to create conditions for the recovery and reconstruction of Gaza.

Thirdly, all hostages still held in Gaza must be immediately and unconditionally released. The taking of hostages is a war crime, and those responsible must be held accountable.

Fourthly, Palestinians detained in Israeli jails without charge must be immediately and unconditionally released. We were saddened to learn of the death of Walid Ahmad, a 17-year-old Palestinian boy who had been detained in Israel since

September 2024. According to reports, Walid was the first Palestinian child known to have died in an Israeli prison. There must be accountability for his death and for the remaining Palestinians in Israeli custody without the administration of justice. They deserve accountability

Fifthly, as the occupying Power, Israel is obligated to ensure that humanitarian needs are met in Palestine. We therefore call on Israel to ensure that humanitarian workers can operate freely and safely, that humanitarian supplies are allowed to enter Gaza and that those supplies reach all civilians in need. We recall the relevant provisional measures ordered by the International Court of Justice in January, March and May 2024.

Finally, Guyana calls for accountability for all of the crimes perpetrated against Palestinians and Israelis in the context of the 7 October war. We also call for justice and accountability for all Palestinian people who have been disenfranchised for almost eight decades. A key element of justice is for Palestinians to be able to exercise their right to self-determination — specifically, to have a free and independent State of their own in accordance with the pre-1967 borders. That requires a political solution, and Guyana urges the Council and all States Members of the United Nations to act in support of that just objective.

Mr. Mohamed Yusuf (Somalia) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank Mr. Volker Türk, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and Dr. Younes Al-Khatib, President of the Palestine Red Crescent Society, for their valuable briefings, which clearly highlighted the magnitude of human suffering and the grave violations to which the Palestinian people are subjected. The convening of this meeting reflects the extent to which the humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, especially in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, has deteriorated.

We followed with deep concern and condemnation the recent Israeli air strike on a health centre of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in Jabalia, which was used as a shelter for more than 700 displaced Palestinians. The bombing killed 22 people, including nine children, one of whom was no older than two weeks of age. Those figures, although preliminary, represent a further tragedy in the ongoing tragedies to which Palestinian civilians are subjected on a daily basis, including the discovery of 15 emergency workers in a mass grave, and eight paramedics of the Palestine Red Crescent Society, with their protective gear. In that respect, we express our condolences to Dr. Al-Khatib and to the families of the victims of that flagrant attack.

The targeting of aid workers and centres, which are supposed to be a safe haven for civilians, is a blatant violation of international humanitarian law and the principle of the protection of civilians in wartime. More than 300 UNRWA facilities have been damaged since the beginning of the war, which must stop immediately, without conditions. We strongly condemn such attacks.

In the West Bank, the military operation known as Iron Wall, which began in the Jenin refugee camp and has spread to Tulkarm and Tubas, continues. The extensive systematic use of force, including air strikes, incursions by military tanks and systematic shelling, has led to the widespread destruction of civilian infrastructure and the displacement of more than 42,000 Palestinians, as well as the killing of 65 people, including eight children.

We are profoundly distressed by the collective impact of those operations, which amounts to collective punishment, especially the starvation and systematic displacement of Palestinians, the closure of 10 UNRWA schools and the disruption of basic health, education and social services.

Somalia firmly believes that respect for international law, especially international humanitarian and human rights law, is the indispensable foundation of international peace and security. Continued impunity for grave violations against Palestinian civilians undermines the credibility of the international system and increases the suffering of innocent people. Therefore, we emphasize that international tools to ensure accountability must be implemented and full support must be provided to relevant judicial mechanisms, including the International Criminal Court, to investigate violations and to bring those responsible to justice. There can be no just and lasting peace without true accountability.

The Federal Republic of Somalia stands united with the world in supporting the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and believes that the silence of the international community in the face of what is happening in the occupied Palestinian territories is a disgrace for all humankind and a threat to regional and international stability.

In this Chamber, we reiterate that statements alone are not enough. What is required today are practical and effective steps that lead to an immediate ceasefire, the protection of civilians, open independent and transparent investigations and a comprehensive political solution that fulfils the aspirations of the Palestinian people to freedom, dignity and peace.

We reaffirm our support for the rights of the brotherly Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination and the establishment of their independent State with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. We also call for an immediate end to the occupation of Palestinian territory and the immediate cessation of all military actions targeting civilians and emphasize the need to provide urgent international protection for the Palestinian people and to ensure unhindered access to humanitarian aid.

We call on the Security Council to fulfil its legal and moral responsibility to the maintenance of international peace and security and to take concrete steps to put an end to the ongoing violations that undermine international law and any chance for a just and lasting peace in the region.

Mr. Sekeris (Greece): I also wish to thank the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. Türk, and the President of the Palestine Red Crescent Society, Dr. Al-Khatib, for their detailed briefings.

It has been only a week since we mourned the loss of personnel of the United Nations Office for Project Services and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), who had been providing lifeline support in a region in which thousands of lives are put at risk. Nevertheless, the safety and security of humanitarian workers continue to be undermined on a daily basis. We were informed of the tragic loss of 15 Palestine Red Crescent Society and United Nations staff members who died during an Israeli ground operation in Rafah on 23 March. In that regard, I wish to reiterate our condolences. Our thoughts and prayers are with their families.

The protection of humanitarian and aid workers must remain a non-negotiable, absolute principle at all times, as proclaimed in international law and, more specifically, the Geneva Conventions. The same principles apply to civilians. Since the resumption of hostilities in the Gaza Strip, hundreds of Palestinians have been killed and thousands have been forced to flee owing to continued air strikes and new evacuation orders. All of them are in urgent need of food, medical treatment and shelter. Despite the reported dramatic 300 per cent surge in miscarriages during the war, children are still being born daily in Gaza, under a total siege and having been deprived of supplies for more than a month.

We regret the conditions that led the Secretary-General to take the difficult decision to reduce the Organization's footprint in Gaza, despite increased humanitarian needs and the growing concern over the protection of civilians. Non-governmental organization workers report that their sense of fear and risk has significantly increased since the end of the ceasefire in Gaza.

Greece has repeatedly condemned the terrorist attacks of 7 October 2023, perpetrated by Hamas, as well as the ongoing detention and cruel and inhumane treatment of its hostages. We reiterate our demand for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages, while unequivocally condemning Hamas' terror. It is the people of Gaza who suffer in the face of Hamas' intransigence and Israel's relaunching of operations.

In that context, we call on Israel to allow and facilitate the safe, unconditional, massive and unhindered delivery of humanitarian aid at scale, to restore access to electricity and water, as well as to ensure the protection of civilians and other protected persons, including humanitarian workers, in line with international humanitarian law.

The situation in the West Bank requires our urgent attention as well. While the focus of the international community is currently on Gaza, the security and humanitarian conditions in the West Bank are deteriorating. We are gravely concerned about reports of increasing violence, the displacement of more than 40,000 people from refugee camps in the north, attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure, as well as the demolition and seizure of Palestinian-owned properties. Such actions constitute severe violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law, and they undermine the prospects for a peaceful resolution of the Palestinian issue based on the two-State solution. Greece also deplores the increase in settlement activity in the West Bank. Its intended goals are contrary to international law and the relevant Security Council resolutions and have no legal validity.

At the same time, UNRWA's role remains pivotal and indispensable. We are particularly troubled by the continued attacks on United Nations premises, including yesterday's attack on an UNRWA health centre in Jabalia, which led to several casualties, including nine children. International law clearly proclaims the inviolability of United Nations premises, in the absence of which United Nations colleagues face severe risks as they work to save civilian lives and promote peace globally.

The resumption of hostilities and the death toll is cause for grave concern. We call on all parties to seize the opportunity to return to the negotiating table with the aim of achieving a permanent ceasefire and the immediate release of all hostages. We commend the mediators — Egypt and Qatar and the United States — for not giving up on their efforts.

Our discussion is always framed by the prospect of a two-State solution, in line with past Security Council resolutions and while recognizing the right of Israel to live in peace and security. The upcoming June conference, to be co-chaired by France and Saudi Arabia, could be a critical milestone in that regard. In addition, the Arab recovery and reconstruction plan for Gaza, as presented by Egypt, is a constructive proposal, as is the upcoming international reconstruction conference to be held in Cairo next month.

Ms. Shea (United States of America): I thank High Commissioner Türk and President Al-Khatib for their briefings.

Hamas is solely responsible for the resumption of hostilities since 18 March, refusing time and again to accept proposals to extend the ceasefire.

For too long, Hamas has abused civilian infrastructure and facilities, cynically using it to physically shield its personnel and weaponry. Hamas' reckless and

contemptuous behaviour has put civilians and humanitarian personnel at risk, purposefully placing them in the crossfire. The use of civilians and civilian objects to shield or impede military operations is a violation of international humanitarian law, which all parties to armed conflict must comply with.

I join others in expressing sincere condolences for the humanitarian workers who lost their lives in the conflict. Every death, including those of United Nations and humanitarian workers that many discussed today, would have been avoided had Hamas accepted the bridge proposal on the table last month.

Moreover, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) has reported — with respect to the incident on 23 March — that uncoordinated vehicles were identified advancing towards IDF troops, without headlights or emergency signals. Additionally, the IDF has indicated that earlier that day, vehicles passed safely on the route after they were coordinated with the IDF. The IDF and the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories established a deconfliction mechanism, and it is important that all actors use that mechanism to help ensure the safety of civilians and humanitarian workers.

Hamas' reckless decisions have caused enough bloodshed. Hamas has no right to represent Palestinians anywhere and must leave Gaza.

All of that violence could stop today if Hamas returned the hostages and the bodies it still holds and laid down its weapons. There is one entity that could stop violence for everyone in a moment and that is Hamas.

The Council should speak with one voice to apply pressure on Hamas to, for the first time, act in the interests of the Palestinian people it purports to represent and not in the interest of its own selfish ends.

We must recognize the bravery of Palestinian civilians in Gaza protesting against Hamas' despotic rule, calling for Hamas to release the remaining hostages, step down and leave Gaza forever. That flood of life movement reflects the civilian population's rejection of Hamas.

The Council's efforts should focus on applying pressure to dislodge Hamas, who responded to those organic challenges to its rule the only way it knows how, by murdering 22-year-old Palestinian Oday Nasser Al-Rabay and disposing of his body at his family's home. We must heed Palestinian voices that reflect Hamas' failures and deadly rule over Palestinians in Gaza. And our partners in the region must amplify those voices too and remove Hamas from Gaza, once and for all.

As it relates to the West Bank, the United States supports the efforts of the Israel Defense Forces to root out violent extremists in Jenin and Tulkarm.

We call on the Palestinian Authority to finally carry through on its announcement to end the practice of offering cash payments to the families of those who have carried out terrorist attacks, which for far too long incentivized violence against Israeli civilians and set back the prospects of peace. We will be closely monitoring the implementation of those recent commitments.

It has been nearly 18 months since Hamas started that horrific conflict, one that has upended so many lives and caused so much immense suffering.

Hamas must release the remaining 59 hostages, including five Americans — New Jersey resident Edan Alexander and the bodies of Itay Chen, Gad Haggai, Judi Weinstein Haggai and Omer Neutra, who were brutally murdered on 7 October 2023. President Trump has been clear that Hamas must release all remaining hostages immediately.

As we have repeatedly said, the future of the Middle East must also look different. Fresh thinking is needed, for a better tomorrow for Israelis, Palestinians and all the region's people.

We look forward to continued discussions with our Arab partners on the future of Gaza without Hamas.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We note the statement of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. Volker Türk. We thank the President of the Palestine Red Crescent Society, Dr. Younes Al-Khatib, for his thorough briefing on the situation in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict zone. We are also grateful to Dr. Al-Khatib for his additional briefings and meetings with delegations during his stay in New York. That enabled us to get the most recent information about the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory.

We supported immediately the request by Algeria for today's Council meeting, since the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank remains unacceptably critical. Following the breakdown in the agreement between Hamas and Israel, Palestinian civilians have been living, for over a month now, in conditions of full ground air and maritime blockade. Not only has West Jerusalem blocked the delivery of humanitarian supplies but also imposed restrictions on the work of United Nations humanitarian organizations, which has led to existential problems for 2 million people. A simple example is that all bakeries in the enclave have closed owing to a shortage of flour and fuel. How the lack of bread in Gaza will help Israel release the hostages, who are also not receiving bread, is puzzling.

Alongside the humanitarian catastrophe, we are seeing civilian infrastructure being destroyed and humanitarian workers dying. Since October 2023, at least 408 humanitarian organization staff members have been killed in Gaza, which makes the conflict the most lethal on record by that measure.

We have little hope that the situation will change for the better, since Israeli is continuing its strikes against Gaza almost constantly. On 2 April, at 10 a.m., the Israeli Air Force hit the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) medical centre in Jabaliya. Although that facility was no longer being used for medical purposes, it was serving as a shelter for more than 700 people. As a result of that most recent inhumane Israeli attack, dozens of civilians were killed, including a baby who was barely two weeks old. Despite the warnings from UNRWA about the risks of staying in the building after the attack, many displaced families remained there because they simply had nowhere else to go.

Indiscriminate Israeli air strikes across the Strip have killed at least 100 people today alone. Bombs have been dropped on residential buildings, a school that was being used as a shelter and tent camps. Witnesses report that in Gaza City, where 58 people died, local residents — in the absence of any rescue equipment — had to dig through the rubble with their bare hands in the hope of, by some miracle, finding survivors. We express our sincere condolences to the families of those who were killed and wish a speedy recovery to those injured. We underscore that the so-called security zones established by the Israelis themselves are also being hit. Such blatant disregard for the norms of international humanitarian law deserves our strongest condemnation. In total, since the beginning of the war, more than 300 United Nations facilities have been attacked, some of them repeatedly so.

We were shocked by the news of the discovery, on 31 March, of a mass grave with the bodies of 15 aid workers, including a United Nations staff member and eight medics from the Palestine Red Crescent Society. Officials of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs have already placed the responsibility for the crime on Israel. According to the United Nations, after the first group of medics and aid workers went missing on 23 March, the Israelis methodically eliminated anyone who tried to go to the rescue of their comrades. And yet the ambulances were clearly marked, as were the doctors' uniforms. There can be no justification for

such actions. While discussing that specific subject, we call upon all parties to make every effort to find the one member of the Palestine Red Crescent team who is still missing — Assad Al-Nassasra — whose body has not been found among the dead.

The protection of humanitarian personnel, which the Council discussed in detail in this Chamber just yesterday (see S/PV.9889), is an absolute imperative and obligation under international humanitarian law.

Following the completion of the first phase of the agreement with Hamas, Israel, having put forward new demands regarding the further implementation of the agreement, resumed its military operation and has been gradually expanding its control over the Gaza Strip. On 1 April, Prime Minister Netanyahu announced the creation of a second Philadelphi Corridor — the Morag axis, which will cut off Rafah from Khan Younis. The statement by Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz about the expansion of the military operations in the enclave and the creation of additional security zones should be considered in the same context. Thus, the territory in which the Gazans must huddle is steadily shrinking. People are compelled to choose whether to leave their homes in Gaza or remain there without water, electricity and sufficient food in the hope that the Israeli operation will eventually cease, and they will not become the victims of another air strike. Of course, under such conditions, there can be no discussion of either evacuation or voluntary emigration. We reaffirm our position of principle that territorial or demographic changes are unacceptable in Gaza, which is and has always been an integral part of the Palestinian State.

In the context of the catastrophic humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip, specifically under the full blockade introduced since 2 March, we are seriously troubled by the signals coming from various sources about Israel's plans to establish full control over the supply and distribution of assistance in the enclave. We hope that West Jerusalem will not proceed with those measures, as they would run counter to the reports to the Security Council by the Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza, Ms. Sigrid Kaag, about the functioning of the one-stop shop mechanism agreed with Israel, which we all supported. We also reaffirm our strong support for UNRWA, which plays an indispensable role in providing assistance to the Palestinians. The Agency's expertise, its extensive system of humanitarian assistance and the infrastructure built up over decades are vital in the current critical situation in the enclave. We call on the Israeli authorities to reconsider their discriminatory and prohibitive decisions regarding UNRWA and to return to compliance with the relevant international legal obligations.

The situation in the West Bank is also worrisome. Israel's Iron Wall operation is expanding. In Jenin alone, 34 people were killed and dozens were injured, 21,000 people became internally displaced and over 600 homes were destroyed. Since 7 October 2023, some 16,000 people have been detained in the West Bank. Provocations by settlers are continuing. For example, 50 extremist settlers carried out a pogrom in the Palestinian village of Duma. Unfortunately, the Israeli authorities not only fail to punish the offenders but also often encourage them.

Israeli settlement expansion in the West Bank is proceeding at a relentless pace, with 47 per cent of land having already been taken away from the Palestinians. Over the first three months of this year, the construction of 10,503 housing units have been approved, which is higher than the same figure for the whole of 2024. By some estimates, if the settlement activity continues at that pace, any prospects for the two-State solution will be entirely wiped out within just two years. Even today, the West Bank is essentially divided into two parts owing to Israel's infrastructure projects in Jerusalem, and hundreds of checkpoints throughout the West Bank are severely restricting daily activities of Palestinians.

Such actions are fully in line with the tactics that Israel has pursued over the past decades in the West Bank to preclude the territorial contiguity of the occupied Palestinian territory. The key steps here are constructing settlement blocs and related infrastructure, erecting a dividing wall, creating a system of roadblocks and checkpoints, demolishing Palestinian buildings, confiscating land and conducting regular security raids, which are now spilling over into full-fledged operations in Jenin, Tulkarm and other cities. We are also extremely concerned about further regionalization of the conflict by the resumption of arbitrary Israeli strikes on Beirut, ongoing air strikes on Syria, United States strikes on Yemen and the preparations of public opinion for a full-scale operation against Iran. As a result, today the entire Middle East region has come closer to a large-scale armed conflict, which may result in catastrophic consequences. We urge everyone to step back from that dangerous brink.

The logic of war rules out any possibility for the return of Israeli hostages. In the war paradigm, there is space only for further senseless deaths and destruction, for mass graves of doctors and the killing of thousands of children. The same logic rules out any prospects for the reconstruction of Gaza, which were realistically outlined in the plan proposed by the Arab States. The inhumane conditions in which the enclave's residents are forced to survive, and which are being created in the West Bank, provide a breeding ground for radicalization and cultivating hatred towards Israel and its people. What is the point for West Jerusalem of getting rid of Hamas if it is likely to be immediately replaced by another group of people under a different name for whom fighting Israel will appear to be the only way to restore justice? In fact, the decades-long inability to find a just solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is precisely what led to the current tragic situation.

We are convinced of the need to establish an immediate and unconditional ceasefire, to release all forcibly detained persons and provide safe and unhindered humanitarian access. At the same time, it is important that the agreements reached be sustainable. As practice shows, without guarantees and oversight on the part of the international community, any truce can collapse overnight. In that regard, the Security Council must play a key role in the negotiation process and in ensuring compliance with its outcomes by all parties. We call on international mediators to prioritize the return to a peaceful settlement. In that context, we would like to reaffirm our unwavering commitment to the establishment of an independent Palestinian State within the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. It must coexist with Israel in peace and security, in accordance with the internationally recognized legal decisions.

Under the current circumstances, it could be extremely dangerous to have continued vacancies for the key United Nations posts in the region, namely, the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and the Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza. We call on the Secretary-General to present the Security Council with the candidates to that effect as soon as possible.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that when it comes to possible practical steps by the Council and the adoption of its products related to the worsening crisis in Gaza, we are guided by the position of the Group of Arab States. We also stand ready to work with all those who seek to achieve a just, lasting and sustainable peace in the Middle East on the basis of the well-known Security Council decisions with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

Mr. Kanu (Sierra Leone): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting at the request of Algeria with support from the Russian Federation, China, Pakistan and Somalia on the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory. I thank United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. Volker Türk, for his comprehensive and sobering briefing. I commend Dr. Younes Al-Khatib, President

of the Palestine Red Crescent Society, for the selfless humanitarian work in the most difficult and dangerous circumstances and thank him for his compelling contribution.

Sierra Leone is gravely alarmed by the rapidly deteriorating situation in the occupied Palestinian territory. The humanitarian catastrophe unfolding in Gaza and the surge in violence across the West Bank demand urgent and sustained attention by the Security Council. Every additional day of conflict means more lives lost, more families shattered. The killing must stop. We must uphold our collective responsibility to protect human life and dignity under international law.

For weeks, Gaza has endured a total blockade coupled with relentless bombardment. For over a month, no food, water, fuel or electricity has entered Gaza, creating a man-made crisis of epic proportions. Approximately 90 per cent of Gaza's population is now displaced, and many people have been displaced multiple times. The entire population depends on humanitarian assistance for survival. Despite soaring needs, life-saving relief has been obstructed. Hospitals have shut down for lack of fuel and security, while thousands of wounded civilians go untreated. Water, food and medicine are critically scarce. The civilian population is exhausted, starving and desperate.

Humanitarian workers have not been spared. Since October 2023, at least 369 aid workers, including 263 United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East staff, have been killed. Those are among the highest casualty figures ever recorded for humanitarian personnel in any conflict. Most were Palestinians, serving their own communities. We express our deepest condolences to the family of the aid workers killed. Sierra Leone strongly deplores those killings and all attacks on humanitarian personnel. Those actions are not just violations of international law, they are violations of our shared humanity.

The legal obligations are clear. Under the Fourth Geneva Convention and customary international humanitarian law, the State of Israel, as the occupying Power, is responsible for the safety and welfare of the civilian population in the occupied Palestinian territories. That includes ensuring access to food, water, medicine and other essentials. Those are not aspirational principles; they are binding rules that save lives.

We therefore draw attention to the binding provisional measures ordered by the International Court of Justice in the *Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip (South Africa v. Israel)* case. The International Court of Justice has ordered the State of Israel to ensure the provision of basic humanitarian necessities to Gaza. The provisional measures are binding under international law. To date, those measures have not been respected. The defiance and seeming impunity undermine the credibility of the international legal system and even the Council.

Even as Gaza has been plummeted by bombs, the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, has been witnessing an alarming escalation. Since 7 October 2023, settler violence against Palestinians has more than doubled. Attacks include assaults, arson and the destruction of homes and livelihoods, often reportedly carried out in the presence or with the acquiescence of Israeli security forces. We are deeply concerned about reports of entire Palestinian villages being emptied following settler threats, violence and forced displacement. Those acts are occurring in a climate of impunity, defying the State of Israel's obligations as the occupying Power to protect civilians under international humanitarian law. We recall the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice regarding the *Legal consequences arising from Israel's policies and practices in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem* (see A/78/968) and the clear view of the world's Court that "the State of

Israel is under an obligation to bring to an end its unlawful presence in the occupied Palestinian territory as rapidly as possible” (*para. 285*).

The Government of the State of Israel, however, is acting to the contrary. Sierra Leone is therefore gravely alarmed by the grave breaches of international law, including excessive force, punitive military raids and settler violence. Those abuses are part of a broader crisis and must be addressed accordingly and immediately. Without accountability, tensions will continue to rise, impunity will become entrenched and prospects for peace will further diminish.

Respect for international law is not optional. We reiterate that all parties must comply. That includes Palestinian armed groups, notably Hamas. We continue to strongly condemn the deliberate targeting of Israeli civilians, the killing of non-combatants and the taking of hostages. Those actions violate international law and must cease. All hostages must be released immediately and unconditionally.

The principle of humanity applies to all. There can be no double standards. Israeli and Palestinian lives are equally valuable, and no civilian anywhere should live in fear of violence, starvation or displacement.

The Security Council cannot remain a passive observer. We have heard the Secretary-General’s calls for a humanitarian ceasefire. We have seen the International Court of Justice issue binding orders. We have witnessed immense courage from humanitarian workers facing fire to deliver aid. The Council must continue to act, even if within the framework of resolution 2735 (2024).

Sierra Leone therefore calls for the following urgent steps.

First, there is a need for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire. The Council must call for all hostilities to stop and now. The continuation of military operations in densely populated areas only guarantees further death and destruction. There is no military solution. A political process must begin with silencing the guns.

Secondly, the Council should demand unimpeded humanitarian aid and access. Gaza must be fully and consistently accessible to humanitarians and for humanitarian aid. Safe corridors must be established for the delivery of food, fuel, medicine and the treatment or evacuation of the sick and wounded. All obstacles to aid, including blockades and administrative delays, must be removed immediately. In that regard, we call for the full implementation of all resolutions 2712 (2023), 2720 (2023) and 2728 (2024).

Thirdly, with regard to the release of hostages and detainees, all hostages held by armed groups must be freed without delay. No cause justifies the captivity of civilians. At the same time, we cannot ignore the thousands of Palestinians, including children, held in detention, often without due process. Their rights must also be respected. We encourage all parties to re-engage in the mediation efforts leading to mutual releases.

Beyond those steps, Sierra Leone urges renewed international commitment to a just and lasting peace based on international law and the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council. The current escalation has again demonstrated that the status quo of occupation, blockade and repeated violence is untenable. We must redouble efforts towards a political solution that ends the occupation and secures the legitimate rights and security of both Palestinians and Israelis.

The devastation in Gaza and the West Bank is a blight on the conscience of the world. The Council must not look away. The violence must end. The collective punishment must end. The suffering must end. Let us act – not only with words but through clear and principled actions. Let us demonstrate that the United Nations still stands for the protection of the vulnerable and the upholding of international law.

Sierra Leone stands ready to support all efforts towards de-escalation, humanitarian relief and a path to peace.

Mr. Alfaro de Alba (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): Panama thanks the representative of Algeria for his initiative to convene this briefing and appreciates the statements by Mr. Volker Türk, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and Dr. Younes Al-Khatib, President of the Palestine Red Crescent Society, who described in detail the already protracted humanitarian crisis in Gaza and the West Bank, which continues to deteriorate, with increasingly devastating human consequences.

One month after the total closure of the crossings into Gaza, humanitarian agencies warn that stocks of food, medicine, fuel and drinking water have been depleted. The World Food Programme has confirmed the closure of the 25 bakeries that were still operating with its support, due to a lack of supplies, and UNICEF has warned that nearly 130 children are being born every day in extremely vulnerable conditions without food, medical care or access to functioning hospitals. We call for, in what would be an ennobling gesture, the granting of urgent access to vital humanitarian aid.

Since the resumption of hostilities on 18 March, more than 1,000 people have been killed. At least 322 of them were children, while 609 others were injured. To date in this tragic war, more than 1 million children have been repeatedly displaced, surviving in makeshift shelters, amid piles of garbage and lacking basic services. Just yesterday, a health centre of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) located in Jabalia, in the north of the Strip, which operated as a shelter for more than 700 displaced people, was hit, killing 15 people, including nine children — among them a newborn baby just two weeks old — and two women. According to UNRWA, many families are reluctant to leave the centre, simply because they have nowhere else to go.

Panama deeply regrets the loss of innocent lives and urgently calls for an immediate halt to hostilities and the protection of the civilian population, especially women, children and humanitarian workers. In addition, the conditions for providing humanitarian assistance have become not only unfeasible, but also extremely dangerous for those working on the ground. It is worrisome to learn of news such as that which circulated on 31 March pertaining to the discovery in Gaza of more than a dozen victims found under rubble and sand, identified as members of the Palestine Red Crescent Society, the Palestine Civil Defence and, among them, a United Nations official — all of whom had been reported missing since 23 March. We extend our condolences to their families.

As we have previously stated, we reiterate that serious events like those require exhaustive investigations in order to clarify the circumstances in which they occurred, dispel doubts and determine the corresponding responsibility, as they constitute regrettable examples of incidents that should not occur and that dramatically underscore the need to protect civilians and humanitarian personnel in contexts of armed conflict.

Since the conflict in Gaza began, at least 408 humanitarian workers have lost their lives. Those workers died while trying to save lives. Panama insists on the call for the protection of humanitarian personnel and the inviolability of their installations to be guaranteed at all times and by all parties.

We call for the urgent restoration of the ceasefire in Gaza. The days in which the truce, although weak, held showed that humanitarian assistance can arrive and that it is possible for hostages — who, we must not forget, are still being held by Hamas in Gaza — is possible. The situation of those hostages remains uncertain. Once again, we demand their immediate and unconditional release and that they be urgently guaranteed protection, medical attention and contact with their families.

As is the case in Gaza, Panama notes with concern the growing deterioration of the situation in the West Bank. Recent reports describe an increasingly coercive environment, marked by forced displacement, house demolitions, recurring violence and severe restrictions on movement that affect the daily lives of thousands of people. We reiterate the importance of the strict compliance of all actions taken on the ground with the norms of international law, including international humanitarian law, and with the resolutions adopted by the Council; compliance with those resolutions is essential to preserve human dignity and move towards a comprehensive solution.

The prolonged suffering in both Gaza and the West Bank is overwhelming and cannot be understood apart from the extremist decisions and actions that have exacerbated the conflict, foremost among them the 7 October 2023 attack and the taking of hostages by Hamas. Panama has consistently condemned those inhumane acts. The tragic result of that barbarity is that today thousands of Palestinian families face critical conditions, women are forced to give birth in makeshift shelters and without postnatal care, and children are losing their lives to preventable causes amid a collapsed health system and a severe shortage of basic services for the population. Each of those realities demonstrates that insisting on military means and extremism only perpetuates suffering.

Only a political solution — one that is deeply humane and morally inescapable, devoid of Hamas' extremism — can lay the foundations of a lasting peace for Israelis and Palestinians. Along that road, Panama will support all initiatives that contribute to making such a solution possible.

Mr. Hwang (Republic of Korea): I would like to thank High Commissioner Volker Türk and the President of the Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS), Dr. Al-Khatib, for their detailed briefings.

The Republic of Korea reiterates its deep concern about the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, where innocent Palestinian civilians are incessantly suffering under prolonged and intense hostilities and a lack of basic necessities. In Gaza, we are appalled by the repeated incidents in which civilians and humanitarian workers were hit by deadly Israeli strikes. Yesterday's announcement that Israel will seize more land in Gaza militarily further deepens our concern about the endless suffering of Palestinian civilians. The targeting of a clinic building of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East clinic in northern Gaza just yesterday and a school in Gaza City today, resulting in dozens of casualties among children, and the discovery of a mass grave filled with the bodies of aid workers, including eight PRCS members, are outrageous and tragic developments.

We note Israel's announcement indicating that the Israel Defense Forces intended to target Hamas operatives. However, the clear fact is that the majority of those killed in such incidents were innocent civilians, including children and humanitarian workers. Such an attack is simply unacceptable. Hamas is also violating international humanitarian law. The firing of rockets by Hamas and other militants from civilian infrastructure targeting population centres in Israel is unjustifiable. We therefore reiterate our demand that the parties to the conflict, notably Israel, adhere to the principles of international humanitarian law, including those of distinction, precaution and proportionality. Thorough and credible investigations into all alleged violations of international law should follow, and the perpetrators must be held accountable. We also stress that it is the occupying Power's legal obligation to permit the free passage of humanitarian relief. We therefore once again call on Israel to allow the entry of aid and commercial goods into Gaza. Hamas' refusal to an immediate and unconditional release of hostages is unconscionable, but that refusal does not legitimize the blocking of humanitarian aid.

As other colleagues here in this Chamber have pointed out, the situation in the West Bank is also disturbing. The current military operations being conducted by Israel in the northern West Bank are causing large-scale death, destruction and displacement for civilians. The expansion of settlements, in violation of international law and resolution 2334 (2016), as well as rampant settler violence, are driving Palestinians off their land and must be stopped. Moreover, inflammatory statements and actions, such as visits by senior Israeli officials to holy sites, are further worsening instability in the West Bank and beyond.

Since the collapse of the ceasefire in Gaza last month, we are witnessing a repetition of the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza, as well as dangerous escalation and further disruption in the broader Middle East, including Lebanon, Syria and Yemen. Therefore, we call on both parties to listen to the desperate voices of innocent Palestinian civilians, the voices of Israeli hostages still held in Gaza and the voices of Palestinian civilians protesting against the brutal rule of Hamas, including Uday, a young participant at anti-Hamas protests, who was then tortured to death.

Israel has the right to protect itself, in line with international humanitarian law. However, military means cannot secure sustainable peace and stability for Israelis and their neighbours. Considering the overarching importance of a resolution to the Palestinian question for sustainable peace in the region, we strongly believe that forging a long-term peaceful political environment in the Middle East is directly interconnected with the advancement of the two-State solution. We hope that, starting with the successful ceasefire-hostage release deal, a sincere discussion for the reconstruction of Gaza and for coexistence between Israel and Palestine, based on the two-State solution, can follow in a meaningful way.

The President (*spoke in French*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of France.

France thanks the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. Volker Türk, and the President of the Palestine Red Crescent Society, Dr. Younes Al-Khatib, for their briefings, which were enlightening.

The Council has met on numerous occasions in recent weeks to discuss the fate of the hostages, the situation in Gaza, settlements in the West Bank and the protection of humanitarian personnel. The extreme gravity of the situation demands it, as the briefers recalled. But the current situation calls above all for action by the Council, both in the immediate term, to silence the guns and resume humanitarian aid, but also in the long term — a political horizon must be restored for both the Israelis and the Palestinians. And to that end, the Israeli offensive must stop. The President of France has said that there will be no military solution in Gaza.

The breakdown of the ceasefire and the resumption of Israeli strikes in Gaza constitute a dramatic step backwards. There is an urgent need for hostilities to cease, and we welcome the mediation efforts made by the United States, Egypt and Qatar.

All hostages must be released, without further delay and with dignity. They have suffered for too long. Hamas must put an end to the inhumane, degrading and humiliating treatment they have suffered. We stand in solidarity with them and with their families in their ordeal. We stand in solidarity with the Israeli people in the face of the terrorist attacks committed by Hamas and other terrorist groups on 7 October 2023, which France will continue to condemn.

In the immediate term, the blocking of humanitarian aid must end. We said it on Friday (see S/PV.9888) and yesterday (see S/PV.9889), and we say it again today — the protection of humanitarian workers, who have already paid a heavy price in Gaza, must be guaranteed in all circumstances, in accordance with international law.

We condemn Israel for firing on ambulances, killing 15 paramedics in Gaza. As the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Mr. Jean-Noël Barrot, has said, that is unacceptable — humanitarian workers should never be considered targets. France extends its condolences to the families of the eight Palestine Red Crescent Society paramedics, the six Palestine Civil Defence paramedics and the staff members of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. The full facts of that attack must be established and the fate of the missing person must be clarified.

We must start work today to define Gaza's tomorrow. We reiterate that the future of Gaza must be Palestinian, and we oppose any forced displacement of the population and any form of territorial annexation. Arab leaders have presented a credible plan for the reconstruction of Gaza, with concrete proposals to guarantee security and establish a new Palestinian Government, from which Hamas must be excluded. France, alongside with its European partners, supports that plan and contributes to the discussions on its implementation.

In the West Bank, the prospect of a two-State solution is becoming less feasible by the day. France reiterates its condemnation of the settlement policy, which is illegal under international law, as well as the violence committed by extremist settlers. It reiterates its opposition to any form of annexation and, in Jerusalem, the status quo on the holy sites must be respected.

Finally, Palestinians and Israelis have the right to live in peace and security. That requires credible security guarantees for Israel and the building of a viable and contiguous Palestinian State. Only the two-State solution will lead to a just and lasting peace, and it is with that conviction that France is preparing, together with Saudi Arabia, in accordance with the decision of the General Assembly (General Assembly resolution ES-10/24, para. 13) a conference in New York in June on the implementation of that solution.

At the moment, the urgency of the situation demands the release of the hostages, the resumption of the ceasefire, an inquiry into the attacks against humanitarian personnel, the immediate resumption of humanitarian aid and the cessation of settlement activities. That must be the urgent message of the Council.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

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

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting, at the request of Algeria and with the support of China, Pakistan, Russia and Somalia. I want to thank Mr. Türk, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, for his presence among us and for his briefing. Allow me also, at the outset, to salute Dr. Younes Al-Khatib and, through him, the heroes of the Palestine Red Crescent Society and the other humanitarians who are also victims, rescuers needing to be rescued.

While the Council was meeting to address the protection of humanitarians and its resolution 2730 (2024) yesterday (see S/PV.9889), we were mourning 15 humanitarians, including eight members of the Palestine Red Crescent Society, killed and buried under the sand, together with their ambulances, a United Nations vehicle and a fire truck, shot in the head and chest multiple times, several of them with their hands and legs tied. They were executed for performing their sacred mission, killed for trying to save lives.

A few minutes ago, I sent you, Mr. President, a tape that was sent to me that was found on the body of the one of the martyrs who videotaped the attack against the convoy. All of the vehicles had their lights and sirens on when they were ambushed by the Israeli army. I leave it up to your discretion to share it with our colleagues to

see with their own eyes exactly what happened. I was also told that there is another, longer, tape. They are trying to make it available to all members of the Council to see the evidence of this crime through the eyes of one of the victims.

This is a multi-layered siege, blocking humanitarian aid completely, but also making sure the civilian population is denied any assistance by killing humanitarians, destroying hospitals and bombing shelters. Yesterday the world watched again as Palestinian civilians, including children, were burned alive after the bombing of a clinic of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, where they had found refuge. And today an Israeli strike on a school in Gaza City sheltering displaced families killed — according to the latest figures — at least 31 people and wounded more than 100, the majority of them women and children. We see massacre after massacre after massacre. Israel's objective is clear: maximum despair to convince the Palestinian population that the only alternative to death is displacement out of Gaza.

That is what Israel claims is “pressure”: killing tens of thousands of innocent Palestinians and denying them humanitarian aid indispensable to their very survival. Minister of War Katz confessed to this policy of collective punishment, stating that “expanding the operation ... will increase the pressure on the Hamas murderers and also on the population in Gaza”. He is not hiding that the target of that so-called pressure is the entire civilian population. What he dubs “pressure being applied on the Palestinian population in Gaza” is mass starvation, killing, destruction and displacement. He goes on to call on “the residents of Gaza to act now to remove Hamas and return all the hostages”, saying “this is the only way to end the war”. The civilians being killed, maimed and displaced are therefore the ones who bear the responsibility to end the war?

Palestinians want life. They want the genocide to end; they want the horrors to stop. They want to be treated as human beings. They want to mourn their dead and try to find a way back to life. They are shouting it out to anybody willing to hear. Israeli bombs make no distinction. For them, all Palestinians are guilty and all of them deserve to die.

This morning, I listened to a speech delivered by my brother Younes Al-Khatib in a meeting organized by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. In that meeting, he said many moving things, but one sentence captured my attention. He said that, as humanitarians, our job is to save lives. He said, “we do not make peace. That is your job.” He was referring to delegates. I thought that was very telling. He and his colleagues are in the business of saving lives, even as they lose their own lives in the process. But it is the business of all of the delegates to make peace. That is what he said, and I thought it would be appropriate to repeat it for the benefit of all those gathered here in the mighty Security Council.

Israel's true objective is not the release of the hostages but the theft of Palestinian land. After having spread death and devastation across Gaza, Netanyahu announced that he is now “dissecting Gaza”, cutting through the territory and splitting it into pieces in order to annex it. Netanyahu spoke of seizing territory openly and unapologetically. Israel's Minister of War confessed to that too saying that Israeli occupation forces will “capture extensive territory that will be added to the State of Israel's security areas”. In parallel, Israeli leaders continue taunting and taking every action to advance the so-called voluntary migration, the code name for the forcible transfer of Palestinians.

The widespread condemnation of Israel's actions has yet to translate into effective pressure to force it to stop. It is mind-boggling that these outrageous confessions to such terrifying crimes, which have been taking place for such a long time, with such an impact on millions of Palestinian civilians can still go unanswered.

In the West Bank, the same ideology is at play, with 40,000 Palestinians displaced within weeks. There is destruction and devastation of civilian infrastructure and an unprecedented push for emptying land of its Palestinian population in the pursuit of permanent annexation.

The E1 plan, which has been denounced internationally for 25 years is now moving forward at an accelerated pace. It would further sever East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank, cut the West Bank in two and amounts to annexation of vast areas in the heart of the West Bank, thus dealing a fatal blow to peace efforts.

We often speak of displacement of communities, but it is important that those sitting around this table fully grasp that reality. I wish that they could hear directly from Basel Adra from Masafer Yatta, who is sitting behind me today. He is the main protagonist and co-director of the Oscar-winning documentary “No Other Land”. I wish they could hear about all the Palestinians across the occupied Palestinian territory who just want to be able to live in their ancestral land and what they face every day — how armed settlers, protected and enabled and accompanied by soldiers, attack Palestinian families and communities and terrorize them to push them to leave; how those communities build homes to see them destroyed, build them again to face destruction anew or to see them burned by settlers; how families end up living in caves to stay on their land; how they face the Israeli occupation army, the Israeli settlers and the Israeli courts, which coalesce to push them out.

I began with Younes and ended with Basel; I began with Gaza and ended with the West Bank. But I cannot forget Walid Ahmad, the 17-year-old boy who died in an Israeli prison last week. His autopsy showed severe muscle loss, colitis and scabies, indicating that he, like many other Palestinian prisoners, was subjected to starvation, medical neglect and ill-treatment. Everywhere, Palestinians are being treated as sub-humans, killed and maimed and starved and tortured. When will the world’s outrage lead to resolute action?

Palestinians are standing tall in the face of this occupation-made storm to uproot them or kill them where they stand. But they are tired, exhausted, mourning and suffering. They are heroes, but not superheroes. They are humans, and they are victims. They need support and protection now more than ever. Will the Council listen to their calls, as my brother Dr. Younes Al-Khatib asked at the conclusion of his statement — “[they] are asking for justice. Is the Council listening to them?”

In Masafer Yatta and in Gaza, in Nablus and in Jenin, in Tulkarem, in Al-Khalil and in Jerusalem and beyond, Palestinians recorded live the crimes committed against them, thinking that if the people of the world saw what Israel was doing, they would hold it accountable. The most recent evidence is the videotape that I sent you, Mr. President. There are thousands, maybe tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands, of such videotapes by Palestinians in Gaza, documenting the crimes against them.

This morning, I was among a group of Ambassadors who listened to Mr. Lazzarini speak about the situation of UNRWA and other issues. He made an appeal to us. He said that we need international journalists to go and document what is happening in Gaza, so that it is not only the Israeli army taking them to see what it wants to show them. Do all of us — the Security Council, all the European countries and the United States of America, which has the fourth power in its system, namely, journalism and the media — have a spine? Do they have the courage to send journalists to all parts of the Gaza Strip to document what is really happening to the Palestinian people and the genocide that they are being exposed to? “Send journalists” is what Mr. Lazzarini urged us — the more than two dozen Ambassadors, mostly from the European Union — to do. Why are we not sending journalists to document what is real and what is fake news in the Gaza Strip? We urge Council members to add

their voices to the demand and the call from Mr. Lazzarini. Send journalists, send international journalists from *The New York Times*, from all media, from the BBC, to go and document what is really happening in the Gaza Strip.

The Palestinian people now, I suppose, are wondering if impunity will ever end, if their lives will ever matter enough to trigger an appropriate reaction. That despair was reflected recently by a child, who shouted at a man who was filming him after the bombing of his house: "What the hell are you filming? What for? Nobody is looking at us."

Do members want the message that the world is abandoning them, that the international community is abandoning them, that the Security Council is abandoning them to resonate deeper and deeper in the heads of the Palestinian people? Members see their images, their broken lives, their blood, their tears, their remains. Those images move Council members; I know that they do. But what matters to Palestinians is that they not only move Council members, but make them move — resort to action, do something, stop this tragedy, stop the killing of the Palestinians, stop the firing and demand a ceasefire, a permanent ceasefire now, as the Council decided in many resolutions, including resolution 2735 (2024) and the agreement that was brokered by the current Administration of the United States of America, a few days before the inauguration of President Trump, together with Egypt and Qatar. It was an agreement between Israel and Hamas, and those countries are the guarantors. Implement what was negotiated, what was agreed to and what the Security Council in essence reflected in resolution 2735 (2024).

The images of Palestinians need to make Governments across the world dare to do all the things that they are still unwilling to do in order to bring this nightmare, this catastrophe, to an end. Enough with occupation and wars. Enough suffering. Enough bloodshed. We need a ceasefire now. Support the Arab reconstruction plan, — concrete and decisive measures — at the International Conference for the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution, to be held in June and co-chaired by Saudi Arabia and France. The Council must clearly support such an immediate ceasefire, in line with resolution 2735 (2024). It must support reconstruction, freedom and peace, in line with its mandate.

Let life prevail. Let justice, freedom and peace prevail. Let two States live side by side. Let all civilians be safe. Let our region unleash its true potential through shared peace, security and prosperity. Younes and Basel and so many others are doing their part. They need Council members to do their part.

The President (*spoke in French*): The video provided by the Permanent Observer of the Observer State of Palestine has been made available to the Permanent Missions of members of the Security Council.

I now give the floor to the representative of Israel.

Mr. Danon (Israel): Let me start with my conclusion reached at our most recent debate (see S/PV.9883): the war will not end until the 59 remaining innocent hostages are released and Hamas is driven from Gaza. Yet every few days, the Council convenes again to address the situation in Gaza, and every time the same pattern unfolds: Hamas commits an atrocity, Israel takes action to defend itself and somehow the story that gets told in the Chamber is turned upside down. Allow us to set the record straight.

Take the incident on 23 March concerning the Palestine Red Crescent Society. Inside those vehicles, which were supposed to save lives, were active Hamas terrorists. Nine terrorists were eliminated, including Mohammad Amin Ibrahim Shubaki, a Hamas terrorist who had taken direct part in the 7 October 2023 massacre. I ask Dr.

Al-Khatib what that man was doing there. What was a Hamas terrorist, who was in Israel on 7 October, doing in an ambulance? Why was he connected to that? What is the connection between humanitarian work and Hamas terrorists?

Israel mourns the loss of innocent life wherever it takes place. We especially mourn the loss of any humanitarian workers. However, there must be a reframing of the approach that the Council and humanitarian agencies are taking. How did nine Hamas terrorists find themselves travelling inside Palestine Red Crescent Society ambulances in the middle of the night? The presence of those terrorists puts everyone's lives at risk. If we really want to protect civilians and humanitarian workers, such organizations' vetting systems must improve immediately; otherwise, we will find more taxpayers' money in the pockets of terrorists and more innocent lives in danger.

As I have said, we are investigating all of those incidents, and we respect the work of United Nations personnel. However, the Council must acknowledge that some agencies and their activities have been infiltrated by bad actors.

A prime example of the need for better vetting was discovered just two weeks ago. A United Nations worker was being treated in Israel and something deeply disturbing was uncovered: this man had Nazi tattoos across both his arms. As Council members can see, one arm of the man — a United Nations employee — bore the motto of the *Schutzstaffel* (SS). The other arm bore a tattoo of the face of an SS soldier, wearing a Nazi hat and a collar with Nazi symbols. It is hard to see, but that is what he had on both of his arms. Let me repeat that: underneath a shirt bearing the United Nations emblem were markings that glorified the Nazis. Who is approving these people? Who is conducting their interviews? The presence of such disgusting symbols on United Nations personnel should shock every member of the Council. Let us therefore be clear that, when terrorists operate in active combat zones while using humanitarian vehicles as taxis, we will do whatever it takes to protect our soldiers and our citizens, in accordance with our international obligations. That is the price of defending human life in a war that Hamas started and refuses to end.

Of course, this is not a one-off — it is part of Hamas' system. Just days ago, as some members mentioned earlier, our forces carried out a precise strike on Hamas terrorists in Jabalia. The terrorists were hiding inside a command-and-control complex built inside a United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East clinic. That terror hub was used by Hamas' Jabalia battalion to plan and coordinate attacks against Israeli civilians and the Israel Defense Forces. So, what does one do when one finds a command centre of terrorists? One attacks them. Our strike was a deliberate, intelligence-based operation. Prior to the strike, many steps were taken to reduce the chance of harming civilians, including aerial observation and additional intelligence verification.

However, the truth is that the Council simply cannot relate to the complexity of the situation Israel faces. We are facing a terrorist organization that carried out the worst massacre of Jews since the Holocaust, raping, murdering and burning alive entire families. And today they continue to hold our people in tunnels, subjecting them to torture, starvation and psychological torment. They promise to commit such atrocities again and again and again. Not only that, but Hamas' entire strategy depends on the Council reacting exactly as it is. They steal aid trucks. they launch rockets from hospitals and United Nations facilities. And they mobilize in ambulances. Today members should ask themselves how they go from one place to another. Members cannot testify to that. Sometimes they force their way in, sometimes they infiltrate the Organization, but they do not move with taxis, Uber or the military — they use ambulances and United Nations vehicles. They exploit humanitarian infrastructure as a shield because they know the Council will rush to blame Israel for responding.

Hamas has studied the United Nations and built its war plan based on the moral confusion of the United Nations.

Once again, we are seeing that tactic play out. The United Nations did not wait for an investigation into any of the incidents discussed today. It did not wait for verified evidence. It did not check the facts. It rushed to the microphones to condemn Israel before knowing anything at all, while ignoring the terrorist organization, using its resources for evil. No other country on Earth is subjected to that kind of treatment. So many of the actions and statements here are political theatre. They are not out of concern for the well-being of Gazans, because if that were truly the priority, we would be discussing the mass anti-Hamas protests taking place in Gaza. In the past few weeks, tens of thousands of Palestinians have taken to the streets — not to protest against Israel, but to protest against Hamas — in Jabalia, Rafah, Khan Younis and Gaza City.

Allow me to share the sounds filling the streets of Gaza over the past 48 hours. In the audio, we can hear the incredible bravery of some Gazans — something that many in this building are lacking. Those brave people are chanting: *Hamas itla barra, barra, barra, barra* — “Hamas get out, out, out, out”. Members can imagine how Hamas responded — not with dialogue, not with reform, not by releasing our hostages and ending the war, but with public executions and torture. Odai Al-Rabei, a 22-year-old from Gaza City, was kidnapped, beaten with iron rods and dragged through the streets with a rope around his neck. What was his crime? It was speaking out, organizing peaceful protests and demanding a future without Hamas. He was returned to his family moments before his death — broken and lifeless. Still, the mourners at Odai’s funeral shouted in defiance against Hamas. Again, they shouted. Another brave young man, Hussam Al-Majdalawi, was shot in the legs and abandoned in Nuseirat square.

I say to Mr. Mansour that those two young men, Odai and Hussam, have shown more bravery than he ever has. He speaks here every time, for years, and he still cannot bring himself to even mention Hamas, let alone condemn them. How many times has he spoken in the Council, but he cannot mention Hamas or tell them the truth. I ask him here and now: can he show some of the bravery shown by those young demonstrators? Can he condemn Hamas? Can he say *Hamas itla barra, barra, barra, barra* — out, out, out? By his shameful silence, he stands with Hamas. By his shameful silence, he stands against the people of Gaza. By his shameful silence, he desecrates the Charter of the United Nations and its values.

The Council and the entire United Nations have a choice to make. They can continue to shield Hamas under the cover of neutrality, or they can finally listen to the people of Gaza and support their cries for liberation from Hamas. Members spoke about the occupation of Gaza. I am telling them here, and it is recorded, that we have no intention of staying in Gaza. We left Gaza in 2005, completely. We did not leave one community, not one soldier. We removed the cemeteries from Gaza. We left 20 years ago. We have no desire to go back.

Israel will continue to defend its people. We will continue to take every measure possible to protect civilians and humanitarian workers, and we mourn every innocent life lost. However, we will never allow Hamas to rebuild under the false cover of human rights. Those days are long gone. We will not apologize for striking terrorist commanders. We will not hesitate to dismantle Hamas’ terror machine, piece by piece, neighbourhood by neighbourhood, until the threat is gone. That is not our right — it is our obligation to our people, our children and our future.

In conclusion, this war will not end on the United Nations timeline. It will end when the 59 remaining hostages are released and Hamas is removed from power. There is no easy solution to a terrorist problem. There is no ceasefire agreement that can hold while innocent people remain in captivity. We are dealing with a vicious,

sophisticated enemy with no red lines, no limits, no value for human life. We will do everything that is necessary to defeat this dark force. We will act with determination until we bring back our hostages — every single one of them.

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

Mr. El-Sonni (Libya) (*spoke in Arabic*): I deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for responding positively to the request by Algeria, the Arab representative on the Security Council, for the holding of this important meeting. I would also like to thank Mr. Volker Türk and Dr. Younes Al-Khatib for their briefings, which highlighted the magnitude of the tragedy and the level of deterioration today, which has surpassed all bounds.

We are meeting today as the crisis has reached its peak. Making statements and choosing words are of no use. Before the Council today, we speak our minds and our feelings. We need not convince the Council of the magnitude of the violations and massacres that have been committed every day for more than 15 months and counting.

Today we heard the testimony of Dr. Al-Khatib about the situation on the ground, including about another massacre committed by the Israeli occupation forces involving cold-blooded killing. As they themselves admitted today, they killed members of teams from the Palestine Red Crescent Society, the Palestine Civil Defence and the United Nations, under the pretext that there were Hamas fighters among them. We are talking about a deliberate massacre, after which the bodies were thrown into a mass grave in an attempt to obliterate evidence and hide what was done. This is yet another crime added to a series of crimes against humanitarian workers that totals more than 600 killed, including media workers. When Mr. Mansour is asked why he does not have journalists come from other countries, the answer is because they will of course be accused of joining Hamas and be killed accordingly. We heard today calls for a transparent and independent investigation into this matter. A question: what happened to previous calls for similar investigations, and where are their results? Unfortunately, nothing has been done.

These testimonies are but a mere sample of other stories and events and the systematic campaign against our people in Gaza and the West Bank — not just today, but for decades now. And while we are focused on what is happening in Gaza and casting all the blame on Hamas, we also ask about the West Bank and the events there prior to 7 October 2023. The campaign of blockading, starving and bombing of displaced people and burning of children and women is further evidence of genocidal approach by the occupying army, with full impunity, while everyone stands by watching and listening. And everything is being communicated live, broadcast live. What will those here do about it?

Among the most recent violations is yesterday's desecration of the Al-Aqsa Mosque by the so-called Minister of National Security of Israel, in yet another attempt to provoke everyone. The Arab Group condemns those acts of provocation in the strongest terms. They will serve no purpose other than to increase the tension. And when there is a natural reaction to that, the victims will be blamed and the perpetrator of those acts will be forgotten.

From the very beginning, the Arab Group has endeavoured to communicate with all countries and with the members of the Council, the most recent illustration of that being our communication with you a day or two ago, Mr. President, and with the 10 elected members of the Council. We are still working on this track to find a way

out of this crisis and towards a solution, so as to set out the facts and find practical solutions to end these massacres immediately.

Through the communiqué of the extraordinary Arab summit held in Cairo, we have spoken in one voice against these violations, emphasized the need for an immediate ceasefire and an end to any attempt at forced displacement and the necessity for the delivery of immediate humanitarian aid. That is not just the position of the Arab Group, but also that of the Islamic Group and the free world.

The acts that are being committed serve to put the Council before a historic responsibility. The inability to come up with any Council product would be disgrace that will be remembered for decades in history. Now is the time to act — immediately.

The Arab Group has supported the ceasefire agreement reached via the mediation of Egypt, Qatar and the United States. That agreement was something that everyone considered an optimistic step. It was implemented seamlessly in the first phase. However, it was clearly violated due to the intransigence of the Israeli side. That is because of a political decision by the occupation Government to continue its aggression and its riding roughshod over any attempt at the international level to end this. In addition to supporting the ceasefire agreement, the Arab group welcomed the efforts of the United States and its new Administration in January to implement it, which were initially successful. The question is: what went wrong, and why did it end? We ask the United States Administration to continue its negotiations with Qatar and Egypt to implement the agreement.

In conclusion, the Arab Group believes that the Security Council needs to work to achieve and support the following three points.

First, it should work to immediately adopt a Security Council resolution to end the aggression and call for a full, comprehensive ceasefire.

Secondly, it should call for the delivery of humanitarian aid without interruption. Furthermore, it should call for a resumption of negotiations on the phases of the agreement so as to resolve the issue concerning detainees, hostages and prisoners.

Thirdly, it should support the conference being held in Cairo next month on rebuilding Gaza, which will be held in coordination with the Palestinian Authority and the United Nations.

Fourthly, it should support the conference to be hosted in June by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and France to discuss the two-State solution.

What we are living through today is not something about which we can be silent any longer. The Council is being tested by history. Either it passes the test of history and supports the rules of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, or it is silently complicit in the face of this genocide against the people of Palestine. Nevertheless, the annals of history are being written, and this will be on everyone's shoulders. This is not just the responsibility of Arab and Islamic States. It is the responsibility of the entire world.

The President (*spoke in French*): The Permanent Observer of the Observer State of Palestine has asked for the floor to make a further statement. I now give him the floor.

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): I respect the ruling of the President in maintaining decorum in the meetings of the Security Council. But I do not think that the speaker on the other side has the credibility to judge others about bravery and cowardly behaviour. The one whose Government and its forces' hands are dripping with the blood of tens of thousands of Palestinians, including more than 17,000 children, does not have the moral authority to judge anyone. I respect our people immensely, including in the Gaza Strip. They are the ones to judge Palestinians' leaders, not

those who are killing them and killing their women and children and destroying their houses over their heads.

It would be appropriate for such a representative to review the conduct in his own house regarding their activities, as is now taking place in their own courts concerning their corruption and relationships. In addition, there is the fact the Prime Minister of that occupying authority is considered a war criminal by the International Criminal Court. And he is also being sought to appear in front of the International Court of Justice for the crimes committed against the Palestinian people.

Therefore, those who live in glass houses should not throw stones at others.

The President (*spoke in French*): The representative of Israel has asked for the floor to make a further statement. I now give him the floor.

Mr. Danon (Israel): I would continue to remind Mr. Mansour that we are not his enemy. His enemies are Hamas. The day that he has the courage, strength and bravery to face the Hamas radicals, then he can speak about the future for the Palestinians. But as long as he continues to blame Israel for everything — whether it is he here or somebody else here attacking Israel — there will be no future for his people and no future for the region. The enemies of the Palestinian people are the radicals who started the war against Israel on 7 October 2023, the same radicals whose name he is afraid to mention or condemn. That is his problem.

The President (*spoke in French*): The Permanent Observer of the Observer State of Palestine has asked for the floor to make a further statement. I now give him the floor for a final statement.

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): I apologize, Mr. President, for going through this episode. But let me just say to the representative of the occupying authority: when you stop killing our children and our people in the unprecedented numbers we see in the Gaza Strip, and imprisoning them — as I said before, 1 million Palestinians have been imprisoned since 1967 — then there will be a chance that I might believe him. But when they behave like that, they cannot even convince a child among the Palestinian people that they mean well for the Palestinian people. End the killing and the occupation. Pave the way for ending the occupation — to have the two-State solution, living side by side. Then there will be an opening for peace. But their conduct does not qualify them to be a partner. We do not have a partner for peace on his side. They should clean up their act through action, not through empty words. Then they might qualify to be a partner for peace.

The President (*spoke in French*): The representative of Israel has asked for the floor to make a further statement. I now give him the floor for a final statement.

Mr. Danon (Israel): I will be very brief, Mr. President.

On 6 October, we had a ceasefire. On 6 October, it was peaceful in Israel. It was peaceful in Gaza.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.