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Eightieth year

9960th meeting

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Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Ahmad	(Pakistan)
<i>Members:</i>	Algeria.	Mr. Koudri
	China.	Mr. Geng Shuang
	Denmark	Ms. Lassen
	France	Mr. Bonnafont
	Greece	Mr. Gerapetritis
	Guyana	Ms. Benn
	Panama	Mr. Alfaro de Alba
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Sangjin Kim
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	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

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Israel, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia and Türkiye to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Khaled Khiari, Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific, Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations, to participate in this meeting.

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

I now give the floor to Mr. Khiari.

Mr. Khiari: I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this timely meeting as Syria contends with another episode of violence that puts at risk its path to a peaceful, credible, orderly and inclusive political transition. Before I brief the Council on the latest strikes on Syria's territory, allow me to first address the volatile context.

On 12 July, a series of mutual kidnappings in the Druze-majority governorate of Suwayda', southern Syria, escalated into armed clashes between Bedouin tribes and local Druze armed groups. On 14 July, the Syrian authorities started deploying security forces, under the auspices of the Ministries of Defence and Interior, with the stated aim of halting the clashes, restoring order, pursuing those responsible for the events and bringing them before the competent judiciary. The Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed Special Envoy Pedersen and diplomatic missions that some of those security forces were attacked by Druze armed groups, 10 were killed and others were abducted. There were also reports of the authorities' security forces committing violations against civilians as they entered Suwayda'.

The ensuing fighting resulted in hundreds of deaths among the Damascus security forces and Druze fighters and — tragically — among Druze and Bedouin civilians, including women, children and the elderly. Hundreds more were injured. There were further alarming reports of civilians, religious figures and detainees being subjected to extrajudicial executions and humiliating and degrading treatment. Footage of desecration and mutilation of corpses, as well as of incidents of sectarian incitement and looting of private property, was widely circulated on social and conventional media, causing further trauma and fuelling intercommunal tensions and violence.

According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), civilians caught up in ongoing violence continued to face serious risks, with significant displacement and reports of damage to critical infrastructure, including water, electricity and telecommunications networks. Medical facilities in Suwayda' and Dar'a are at or near capacity and are being further impacted by the cuts to electricity and water. Commercial supplies have been disrupted, and access to the impacted areas remains severely constrained due to insecurity and road closures. The World Health Organization has dispatched emergency medical supplies to Dar'a to support trauma care, but deliveries to Suwayda' remain pending due to security access. The United Nations and humanitarian partners are engaging with relevant authorities and are mobilizing to send teams in order to assess the needs and provide essential assistance as soon as conditions allow.

I reiterate the Secretary-General's unequivocal condemnation of all violence against civilians, including all acts that fan the flames of sectarian tensions and rob the people of Syria of their opportunity for peace and reconciliation after 14 years of brutal conflict. Special Envoy Pedersen and his team on the ground are actively engaged with all parties to address the situation.

Against that backdrop, I take note of the statement made by the Syrian Office of the Presidency, condemning the violations and committing to investigate and hold to account those responsible for them. I appeal to the Syrian authorities to ensure that the investigation is transparent and in line with international standards, and that is also completed quickly — not least to instil confidence among all Syrians that their State will guarantee protection and justice for all citizens, without distinction. As the Council underlined in its presidential statement of 14 March 2025 (S/PRST/2025/4), inclusive and transparent justice and reconciliation processes are both important and urgent for sustainable peace in Syria.

I further urge all parties to take constant care to protect civilians, including allowing them to move freely to seek safety and medical assistance. I call on all parties to safeguard infrastructure providing critical services like water and electricity, and to facilitate humanitarian access to people in need.

Against that complicated and volatile backdrop, Israel — citing the violations against the Druze community and pledging to protect them — resumed and intensified its air strikes on Syrian territory between 12 and 16 July. In that respect, I echo the Secretary-General's condemnation of Israel's escalatory air strikes, including on Suwayda', Dar'a and the centre of the capital, Damascus. The strikes targeted the Damascus authorities' forces and official buildings, including the Ministry of Defence and the vicinity of the presidential palace, as well as the Mezzeh military airport. In his letter dated 16 July (S/2025/470), the Permanent Representative of Syria informed the Secretary-General and the Security Council that those attacks resulted in casualties among civilians and security forces. Israel also made statements regarding the redeployment of additional Israel Defense Forces (IDF) troops to the Golan.

On 15 and 16 July, hundreds of members of the Druze community from the occupied Syrian Golan and Syria gathered on both sides of the ceasefire line, in the presence of the IDF, in solidarity with the Druze community in Suwayda'. Some from the occupied Syrian Golan crossed the ceasefire line and travelled to Hadar, on the Bravo side, before subsequently returning.

In addition to violating Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity, Israel's actions undermine efforts to build a new Syria at peace with itself and the region and further destabilize Syria at a sensitive time. It is essential that both Israel and Syria uphold the terms of the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement so as to preserve the ceasefire between both parties, and refrain from any action that would further undermine it and the stability in the Golan.

I take note of ongoing efforts to establish a ceasefire, including — as President Al-Sharaa stated — through American, Arab and Turkish mediation. The situation on the ground is fluid and, as I speak, there are troubling reports of renewed violence in some areas that appears to be targeting Bedouin communities after the withdrawal of the Damascus security forces. I hope that the situation will solidify into genuine and lasting de-escalation on the ground that includes all sides and stakeholders. I take note of the arrangement announced by President Al-Sharaa that security in the governorate will be maintained by some local factions and spiritual leaders. And I welcome his tribute to the Syrian people's sacrifice over 14 years and their aspirations for freedom, dignity and equality, and his assertion that the Druze community is an integral part of the Syrian social fabric.

Security and stability in Suwayda' — and indeed in post-Al-Assad Syria — can be achieved only through genuine reconciliation and with the participation of all components of Syria's diverse society. I urge all Syrian stakeholders to commit to dialogue and emphasize the Organization's readiness to work alongside the Syrian people to support an inclusive and credible political transition that ensures accountability, fosters national healing and lays the foundation for Syria's long-term recovery and prosperity.

Allow me to conclude by reiterating the Council's call, in the wake of another episode of sectarian violence and avoidable bloodshed in March, for the implementation of an inclusive, Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political process, facilitated by the United Nations and based on the key principles listed in resolution 2254 (2015). That includes safeguarding the rights of all Syrians, regardless of ethnicity and religion. The political process should meet the legitimate aspirations of all Syrians, protect them and enable them to peacefully, independently and democratically determine their futures. Only then can Syria truly emerge from the legacy of conflict and embrace a peaceful future. The United Nations, with guidance from the Council, stands ready to assist in that process.

The President: I thank Mr. Khiari for his briefing.

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

I call on His Excellency Mr. Georgios Gerapetritis, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece.

Mr. Gerapetritis (Greece): Allow me to thank Assistant Secretary-General Khaled Khiari for his detailed briefing.

Today's meeting comes at another critical moment for Syria. We share the deep concern expressed by the Secretary-General on the continued escalation of violence in Suwayda', a Druze-majority area in southern Syria, which has reportedly resulted in heavy casualties, including civilians, and numerous injured and displaced persons. We are all particularly disturbed by reports of humiliating treatment of civilians, the desecration and mutilation of corpses, sectarian incitement. Special Envoy Pedersen, in an issued statement, also characterized such reports as deeply disturbing.

We strongly condemn all attacks perpetrated against civilians and religious sites in Suwayda'. That includes arbitrary killings and acts inciting sectarian violence. I would also like to refer to yesterday's attack against the Mar Michael Greek Catholic Church in Sawara, another incident after the terrorist bombing attack against the Mar Elias Greek Orthodox Church, which the Council strongly condemned (see SC/16103). This further highlights the challenges for the Christian community in Syria and the need for full protection of all ethnic and religious components in a united Syria. In that context, special attention should be given to hate speech and incitement to violent actions against the aforementioned parts of Syrian society.

We stand in solidarity with Syria and all victims of that violence and express our condolences to their families. We call for de-escalation and for urgent measures to be implemented in order to restore calm and facilitate humanitarian access. Greece requests that Syria's transitional authorities contribute sincerely and effectively to immediate de-escalation, ensure accountability for the crimes committed and create a secure environment for all Syrians.

We take note of the statement by Syria's transitional authorities on a ceasefire reached in Suwayda', as well as on condemning the violations and committing to holding those responsible to account after proper investigation. We expect that process to be transparent, swift and consistent with international standards, as that is imperative for all Syrians to feel safe at home.

We reiterate our full support for Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as for the respect of the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement and the work of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force and its staff. Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity go hand in hand with the fundamental right of all Syrians — irrespective of religious and ethnic background — to live in peace and without fear.

As I mentioned earlier, it was less than a month ago that we convened the Council in a closed format on the abhorrent suicide bombing at the Mar Elias Greek Orthodox Church in Damascus — a terrorist attack that spread death and agony among peaceful civilians in their sacred place of worship. The Syrian people, with their rich and vibrant diversity, history and heritage will always be stronger than terrorism in all its forms.

Recent developments bear testament to the vigilance required of the Council as we go forward in a gradual, cautious, step-by-step approach on this file. As Syria stands at a crossroads, it is imperative that we support a credible, orderly, Syrian-led and -owned, inclusive political transition aligned with the key principles of resolution 2254 (2015).

The gravity of recent and ongoing developments demonstrates that promoting national reconciliation, tackling sectarian violence and the threat posed by terrorist foreign fighters in Syria, as well as ensuring the safety of all Syrians, are key to a united and prosperous Syria. Greece will continue its ongoing efforts to support the Syrian people and the United Nations in this endeavour for peace, stability and prosperity.

Mr. Kanu (Sierra Leone): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council, namely, Algeria, Somalia, and my own country, Sierra Leone, as well as Guyana (A3+).

At the outset, the A3+ extends its sincere appreciation to Assistant Secretary-General Khaled Khiari for his informative briefing.

The A3+ expresses its deep concern regarding the latest developments in the Syrian Arab Republic. We have consistently advocated a stable, sovereign and prosperous Syria. Its continued destabilization risks exacerbating tensions across an already fragile Middle East.

We condemn the Israeli air strikes that recently targeted multiple areas in Syria, including Syria's General Staff Command building, which was being used to temporarily house the Ministry of Defence, and locations in the vicinity of the presidential palace in Damascus. These acts further threaten an already fragile State. These attacks represent a clear violation of international law, including the Charter of the United Nations, particularly Article 2, paragraph 4, which prohibits the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State or in any manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations and the principles of international humanitarian law. Furthermore, those air strikes breached the terms of the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces.

We reiterate our call for full respect and implementation of the Agreement, as well as of relevant Security Council resolutions, including the most recently adopted resolution 2782 (2025), which stresses that both parties must abide by the terms of the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement and scrupulously observe the ceasefire.

The A3+ reaffirms its position in support of an inclusive, credible and Syrian-led political transition that allows all Syrians, regardless of ethnicity or religion, to participate in building the future of their country. A Syria built by all Syrians and for

all Syrians, without exclusion, is the only path to durable peace and remains pivotal to regional peace and security.

We are particularly alarmed by the recent escalation of violence in Suwayda', a majority-Druze region, which has reportedly resulted in the deaths of hundreds, including civilians, and has caused significant injuries and displacement.

On the protection of Syrian minorities, the A3+ wants to be clear that it is the responsibility of the Syrian interim authorities to protect all Syrians, including the Druze community. In that regard, we welcome the statement and commitment of the interim President in protecting communities and fostering national cohesion.

The A3+ unequivocally condemns these acts of violence and stresses that those responsible must be brought to justice. We express our heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims and wish a speedy recovery to those injured. We call upon the interim Syrian authorities to conduct a thorough, transparent and impartial investigation and to hold the perpetrators accountable. We also take note of the statement issued by the Office of the Syrian Presidency in that regard and look forward to seeing concrete steps taken in response.

The A3+ reiterates its support for efforts aimed at truth, reconciliation and accountability. After 14 years of conflict, the Syrian people — all of them — deserve peace, security and prosperity. There is no place for vengeance or retribution. What is needed now is national dialogue, reconciliation and unity.

The recent events underscore once again the fragile nature of the situation in Syria, which requires urgent and sustained efforts to foster coexistence among its communities. National ownership of an inclusive political process must be preserved and promoted. We further stress the need for regional de-escalation and reaffirm our support for Syria's sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity.

External interference continues to fuel instability and deepen Syria's fragility. We urge all actors to prioritize dialogue, refrain from actions that may further deteriorate the situation, uphold the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and work collectively to ensure the well-being and dignity of the Syrian people. The A3+ remains committed to engaging constructively in that regard.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank the Pakistani presidency for swiftly reacting to the request from Syria, supported by Algeria and Somalia, to convene today's emergency Council meeting in connection with the latest dangerous spiral of tension in the Middle East, this time affecting Syria. We would like to thank Mr. Khaled Khiari for his briefing.

We are deeply concerned about what is happening in Syria. We have historical ties of friendship and cooperation with the brotherly Syrian people, and we sympathize with them wholeheartedly. Syrians deserve a peaceful, calm life, free from fear of persecution due to their ethnic or religious affiliation. Sustainable normalization in Syria can be achieved only through an inclusive, Syrian-led and-owned dialogue in line with resolution 2254 (2015) and through strengthening national reconciliation by ensuring the genuine participation of all political, ethnic and religious groups, without imposing external formulas or excluding representatives of the various communities of the multireligious Syrian society from that process.

Syria has always been home to many peoples and religions. That is its strength and its historical significance. The international community must help the Syrian people maintain the integrity of their diverse nation and safeguard its rights to a peaceful future. Unfortunately, that process has not yet become irreversible.

Today, once again, the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic has garnered the attention of the Council following a sharp deterioration in conditions in southern

Syria, particularly in Suwayda' governorate. Setting aside for now Israel's unlawful actions, which we unequivocally condemn and will return to later, we would like to highlight the root causes of the current crisis. On 13 July, clashes erupted in southern Syria — initially between Druze community militias and Bedouin tribes. Subsequently, units from the Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Interior were deployed to the governorate's administrative centre. Fierce clashes involving security forces and local armed groups resulted in the deaths of dozens of people, including civilians and members of ethnic and religious minorities. Hundreds of civilians were wounded and had to flee their homes in search of safety. The footage circulating in the media and on social networks depicting the brutal atrocities committed by armed gangs, emboldened by their impunity, against defenceless people is shocking and evokes memories of tragic events in western Syria that gave rise to many questions yet to be answered. The silence of the international community in the face of such a situation is unacceptable.

We express our sincere condolences to all Syrians affected by the bloodshed. We strongly condemn all forms of violence against civilians, regardless of who is perpetrating it and under what pretext. We believe that attacks on the lives and safety of civilians are unacceptable. We call for immediate de-escalation, restoration of calm and unhindered humanitarian access to those in need. As rightly noted by Secretary-General António Guterres, what is happening there is not just clashes, but an open violation of humanitarian norms, including extrajudicial killings, acts of interreligious violence and the forced displacement of civilians. Such recurring outbreaks of violence not only undermine the ethnic and religious stability of a future Syria and trust in the transition process but also endanger the very existence of the Syrian State. It is important that the United Nations leadership, including Special Envoy Pedersen, whose staff are on the ground, are not afraid to provide an accurate assessment of the situation.

References to the so-called “fight against the remnants of the regime” or “clashes with pro-Al-Assad elements” made by some representatives of the Syrian leadership and by representatives of other countries cannot serve as a justification for the persecution of religious and national minorities or ethnic and religious cleansing. Despite the claims that a number of armed groups with tarnished reputations were disbanded, many of them have, in fact, retained their autonomy and participated in the current escalation. We are particularly alarmed by the fact that foreign terrorist fighters are still present among the ranks of the security forces, who are tasked with ensuring the safety of the population, including that of ethnic and religious minorities. There is ample evidence that they are not citizens of Syria and often openly associate themselves with the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant or express sympathy towards it. That has been documented both in open sources and in videos posted by the fighters themselves. In a number of cases, these armed thugs openly threaten to assault Christians, Alawites, Druze and Kurds. It is obvious that this is not a foundation upon which one can build a strong, viable State where the interests of all Syrians are respected.

The current escalation is therefore not a tragic coincidence. The problem extends beyond the situation faced by ethnic and religious minorities. We have repeatedly warned about the risks of marginalizing entire segments of Syrian society. That was the case in Iraq, where the absence of national dialogue and mechanisms for social integration led to the destruction of State institutions, leaving thousands of armed individuals outside the State system. The campaign to prosecute the “supporters of the former regime” splits Syrian society, just as it once split Iraqi society, but it also creates fertile ground for the resurgence of radicals. We can see the consequences of that today. Spontaneously forming armed groups are again running the show on the streets of Syrian cities, creating an atmosphere of fear and impunity.

Let me recall here that it is imperative to ensure the safety of Russian nationals and facilities in Syria, and we demand that the Syrian authorities undertake appropriate measures in that regard.

According to our information, we managed to avoid the most destructive scenario for Syria's development. We took note of the announcement that a ceasefire agreement has been reached, and of the statement by the Syrian leadership condemning human rights violations and promising to investigate crimes against civilians. It is essential that this be followed by concrete steps, in accordance with the principles of transparency and accountability, as strongly urged by the Secretary-General. The Security Council should be informed about the outcome or progress of the investigation into the tragic events in western Syria and, in general, be kept abreast of the steps taken by the new authorities to protect the rights of ethnic and religious minorities.

We are equally concerned about the fact that these alarming developments have been compounded by intensified military operations by the Israeli Air Force in the Syrian Arab Republic. I am referring to new waves of Israeli air strikes against Damascus and the southern regions of Syria, which, according to West Jerusalem, were conducted in order to protect Syrian Druze communities. Among the targets hit were the buildings of the Syrian Ministry of Defence, including the General Staff Command building, located in the centre of the Syrian capital, as well as areas in the vicinity of the presidential palace. Those attacks resulted in fatalities and numerous injuries.

We have repeatedly shared our assessments of Israel's arbitrary use of force on Syrian territory. We have resolutely condemned such actions, which constitute a gross violation of international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement.

Russia consistently and steadfastly supports the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic. This is not merely a diplomatic formula, but the foundation for the country's future peaceful governance. These principles are non-negotiable and cannot be subjected to double standards. We must not allow external or internal players to exploit the fragile situation in Syria for their own geopolitical purposes, especially through fomenting ethnic and religious tensions and undermining the fragile Syrian statehood. Moreover, internal actors must not provide any pretext for such actions.

Dame Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Khiari for his briefing today.

I would like to make three points.

First, the United Kingdom is deeply concerned by the escalating violence in Suwayda'. We have urged all parties to de-escalate and take immediate action to protect civilians. We are alarmed by reports of attacks on medical personnel and facilities. Civilians and civilian infrastructure must never be targeted, and we call on all parties to ensure humanitarian aid can reach those who need it. We take note of President Al-Sharaa's comments on the importance of protection of Syria's Druze community and accountability for those who have committed attacks. We insist that investigations and steps towards accountability take place swiftly.

Secondly, we are deeply concerned by Israel's escalatory strikes in Damascus. We repeat our call for Israel to refrain from actions that risk destabilizing Syria and the wider region. Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity must be respected. We welcome the news that a ceasefire has been agreed, and we urge all parties to commit to maintaining it.

Thirdly, this is a critical moment for Syria and for the stability of the region. My Foreign Secretary travelled to Damascus earlier this month, where he held

productive talks and heard from the Syrian Government and ordinary Syrians about their aspirations for the country. A peaceful and secure future for the Syrian people requires all of Syria's communities to be protected and fully included in the political transition. We therefore call on the Syrian Government to prioritize genuine inclusivity and representation in the appointment and election to the People's Assembly and in all further elements of the political transition.

An accountability process is also critical to ensuring stability and lasting peace. We urge the Syrian Government to investigate human rights violations and abuses, by all parties, and to ensure that those responsible are held to account. We look forward to seeing the Syrian Government's report on the violence in the coastal areas in March. That is a crucial step towards justice and reconciliation for the Syrian people.

Mr. Alfaro de Alba (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): Panama is grateful for the convening of this emergency meeting, and we thank Mr. Mohamed Khaled Khiari, Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific, for his briefing.

In recent days, we have witnessed a severe escalation of violence in southern Syria. Sectarian clashes in the city of Suwayda'; followed by military confrontations, with civilians caught in the cross-fire; and air strikes in Dar'a and Damascus, which even affected buildings of the Syrian public administration, are all deplorable and constitute a worrisome setback that threatens the process of political transition in Syria, its reconciliation and its unity. The figures are devastating: since Sunday, at least 248 people have been killed in Suwayda', at least five in Damascus, and hundreds more have been injured.

Civilians — especially women, children and the elderly — must no longer be made victims of military or geopolitical agendas. We condemn all violence against civilians. That includes the arbitrary killings that have been reported and that merit investigation, as well as any acts that inflame sectarian tensions and undermine the Syrian people's chances of achieving peace, reconciliation and a sustainable political solution after 14 years of brutal conflict.

Panama supports the Secretary-General's call, which reiterates the urgent need for immediate de-escalation, full respect for Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and the facilitation of humanitarian access. We agree on the importance of a credible, orderly and inclusive political transition, in line with resolution 2254 (2015). The inclusion of all sectors of Syrian society in political decision-making is the only effective path to preventing further outbreaks of violence and instability.

While we acknowledge the complexity of Syria's social fabric, we are concerned about the instrumentalization of minority communities and their differences to erode social cohesion and fuel sectarian conflict. In this regard, we encourage adherence to the recently agreed ceasefire between the interim Syrian authorities and local Druze leaders, which marks a crucial starting point for de-escalation and stabilization in the region.

Ongoing violations of the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces threaten the safety of local populations and of international personnel deployed in the area. We urge all regional actors to refrain from deepening Syria's internal fragmentation, to respect the 1974 Agreement, and to ensure the full functioning of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force. We reaffirm our strong support for the work of the Observer Force, a vital mission for maintaining stability, preventing further escalation and fostering conditions conducive to dialogue.

Peace is built through dialogue, but also through mutual respect. As a country mindful of its own history, we reject any military action that undermines the territorial integrity or sovereignty of a State.

Syria's fate at this critical juncture puts to the test the international community's genuine commitment to upholding an order based on effective norms. After more than a decade of conflict, the Syrian people deserve lasting peace, and the United Nations must continue to play a central role in advancing this collective endeavour.

Mr. Geng Shuang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Khiari for his briefing.

Over the past week, the security situation in Syria's southern Suwayda' region has sharply deteriorated, with intensifying sectarian tensions and rapidly escalating armed conflict resulting in hundreds of deaths. All parties to the conflict are obligated to comply with international humanitarian law. Attacks on and killings of civilians are unacceptable and intolerable under any circumstances. The immediate priority is to stabilize the security situation and restore social order. We note that the Syrian interim authorities have reached a ceasefire with the relevant parties. We call on all parties to honour the agreement, remain calm, exercise restraint, cease hostilities and work towards an early de-escalation of the situation.

The conflict in Suwayda' once again highlights the complexity and fragility of the current situation in Syria and the formidable challenges to achieving peace and stability. The Syrian interim authorities should continue to promote an inclusive political process in line with the principles set out in resolution 2254 (2015), addressing all concerns through inclusive dialogue and effectively promoting internal unity and reconciliation.

Counter-terrorism remains a key component of Syria's path to peace and stability. The interim authorities must fulfil their counter-terrorism obligations and take effective measures to combat all terrorist organizations listed by the Council, including the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement.

Amid the unrest in southern Syria, Israel has recently carried out multiple air strikes on Suwayda', Dar'a, Damascus and other locations, even targeting key Syrian Government institutions. These actions constitute a serious violation of international law; infringe upon Syria's sovereignty, security and territorial integrity; and introduce new complexities to Syria's peace, stability and political transition. China unequivocally condemns these actions. We call on Israel to immediately cease its military strikes against Syria and withdraw from Syrian territory without delay.

The international community recognizes the Golan region as occupied Syrian territory. Syria's sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity must be respected. The relevant Council resolutions must be implemented, the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces must be upheld, and the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force must be guaranteed the ability to carry out its mandate.

In conclusion, I wish to emphasize that the Middle East continues to face a succession of crises, with old and new conflicts intertwined. From Gaza to the Red Sea, from Yemen to Iran, from Lebanon to Syria, conflict and warfare persist, and the situation remains complex and volatile. This state of affairs serves neither the interests of countries in the region nor those of the international community.

As the organ bearing primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, the Council must resolutely uphold the authority of the Charter of the United Nations, fulfil its responsibilities under the Charter and make full use of all available tools to actively contribute to resolving conflicts, restoring peace and stability in affected regions and achieving lasting peace and security in the Middle East. China stands ready to work with the international community to play a constructive role in this endeavour.

Mr. Žbogar (Slovenia): I would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Khiari for his briefing.

Let me begin by reiterating our support to the Syrian people in rebuilding their country to set it on a path towards a better future. Today, I wish to make the following remarks.

First, we are deeply alarmed by the escalation of violence in Suwayda' governorate, which has reportedly resulted in hundreds of deaths and left many more injured and displaced. We call on all parties to adhere fully to the ceasefire, to put an end to sectarian discourse and, instead, engage in constructive dialogue and prioritize the safety of civilians.

We strongly condemn all acts of violence targeting civilians, including arbitrary killings, which have been reported. These incidents demand immediate and transparent investigations and robust follow-up actions to ensure accountability, in line with international law and standards. We call on the Syrian authorities to deliver on their pledge to ensure accountability.

Secondly, we reiterate our urgent call for an immediate cessation of all violence across Syria. It is imperative for the Government to protect all communities and for all actors to refrain from any action that could endanger the diverse social fabric of the Syrian nation.

Thirdly, we call on all neighbouring countries and external powers to respect Syria's independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity and to contribute positively to the success of the transition in Syria, which remains of central importance for regional peace and stability.

We condemn the recent Israeli attacks on Syrian territory and the reported redeployments of Israel Defense Forces in the Golan. We call on Israel to respect, and withdraw from, the demilitarized zone and adhere to the 1974 Disengagement Agreement.

After the much-needed end to the war in Syria, the Syrian people need time, space and peace to recover, rebuild and reconcile. Unfortunately, none of these things can happen unless all Syrians feel truly safe and protected. This moment is also an opportunity to enhance cooperation with Lebanon in areas of common concern and for Syria to become a force for stability in a fragile region.

I wish to conclude by once again expressing our readiness to cooperate with Syria, the Council members and the wider international community in support of a genuine, credible, orderly and inclusive political transition, which the Syrian people truly deserve.

Mr. Bonnafont (France) (*spoke in French*): What Syria is experiencing today is both the resurgence of long-standing tensions after decades of oppression and the risk of being drawn into broader regional turmoil. This places two responsibilities before our Council, in line with its mandate: first, to help Syria swiftly build an inclusive and impartial State with a monopoly on the use of force; and secondly, to call on regional actors — starting with Israel — to refrain from any use of force against their neighbour.

In this context, France wishes to emphasize three points.

First, the priority during this transitional period must be to prevent Syria from descending into violence and fragmentation. France welcomes the ceasefire reached last night following the serious clashes in the Suwayda' region in recent days. We recognize the fragility of the agreement, and we call on all actors to respect it and take all necessary measures to ensure the safety of civilians, restore calm and promote peace among all segments of Syrian society, including between the Druze and other communities in Suwayda'.

The atrocities committed against civilians, which France has firmly condemned, must cease, and those responsible must be identified and brought to justice, in line with the commitment made by the interim Syrian President. Humanitarian access and the delivery of essential services must be restored.

France welcomes the resumption of dialogue between the Syrian authorities and the leaders of the Suwayda' region. The Council must support that dialogue in order to reach a lasting agreement that strengthens Syria's unity, stability and sovereignty and ensures the security of all Syrians.

Secondly, France calls on Israel to refrain from unilateral actions that could destabilize Syria. We refer in particular to the air strikes carried out by Israel on Syrian territory in the provinces of Suwayda' and Dar'a and in Damascus, as well as to reports of the redeployment of Israeli forces to the Golan Heights. We urge Israel, like all parties, to respect the ceasefire and to seize the historic opportunity presented by a Syria that is willing to normalize its relations with its neighbours. Israel must end its military operations on Syrian territory and withdraw from the separation zone established under the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces. Syria and Israel must take each other's security concerns into account. Everything must be done to help Syria become a hub of stability in the Middle East.

Thirdly, the Syrian authorities must do everything in their power to restore civil peace. The continuation of sectarian and communal violence in recent months highlights the scale of the challenges that lie ahead on the path to Syrian unity. The recent clashes in the Suwayda' region, the attacks on Druze communities south of Damascus in late April, the bombing of a church just days ago and the massacres committed against the Alawite community in March have revived the spectre of sectarian violence.

It is incumbent upon the Syrian authorities to take all necessary steps to foster harmony among the various components of Syrian society and to eliminate the terrorist threat. To that end, the principle of accountability and the establishment of transitional justice must serve as guiding principles for the transitional Syrian authorities. Those responsible for all sectarian and intercommunal violence must be held accountable.

In that regard, we note the commitment of Damascus to investigate the recent violence in Suwayda'. There are also extremely high expectations surrounding the findings of the commission of inquiry into the March massacres in the coastal region. Restoring civil peace and preserving social cohesion also require the establishment of a political dialogue with all segments of Syrian society. Their inclusion in the political transition process is essential to guaranteeing the rights of all Syrians.

The opportunity to build a new Syria is a unique one. France reiterates its readiness to support the Syrian authorities in ensuring a successful transition — one that is fully representative of the Syrian people and reflects their aspirations. The Council and the international community have a responsibility to assist the transitional Syrian authorities in restoring the country's economy and civil peace. Our Council must also be prepared to draw operational conclusions from the ongoing strategic review at the Secretariat so that the United Nations can most effectively support Syria.

Ms. Lassen (Denmark): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Khiari for his comprehensive briefing. Allow me to highlight three points today.

First, Denmark is deeply concerned by the recent escalation of violence in the Suwayda' region of Syria, with troubling reports of hundreds of people killed. We are alarmed by this tragic loss of life and strongly condemn all acts of violence against civilians. The immediate priority must be to halt the bloodshed. To that end, we call on the Syrian transitional authorities to take tangible steps, prioritize de-escalation and restore calm.

Reports about a newly announced ceasefire offer some hope, and we urge all parties to immediately stop the violence. All parties must exercise maximum restraint and uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law. This includes protecting all civilians, regardless of their ethnic or religious affiliation. It also includes facilitating rapid and unimpeded access for emergency humanitarian aid and ensuring safe passage for civilians to evacuate.

Syria has come a long way since the fall of the Al-Assad regime. However, there can be no meaningful recovery without genuine safety and protection for all Syrian communities. This need for security and restraint also applies to the broader region. Denmark is deeply concerned about Israel's escalating strikes on Syrian territory, including on Damascus just yesterday. We reiterate our full support for Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Secondly, the renewed violence underscores that while progress has been made, the status quo in Syria remains unsustainable. Further steps must be taken to ensure a genuine political transition, to integrate all security forces under one unified national command and to extend the Government's authority across Syria. We strongly encourage the Syrian transitional authorities to expeditiously implement these crucial measures. Such steps are vital to address the legitimate aspirations of all Syrians and to foster a truly inclusive political process, in line with resolution 2254 (2015), that can lead to a durable resolution of the conflict.

Thirdly and finally, we call for full accountability for all crimes committed in Suwayda'. Reports of civilian deaths, including through field executions, demand a thorough investigation. We urge the Syrian transitional authorities to ensure that accountability for any committed crimes is swiftly and transparently secured. This commitment to justice must also extend to past deplorable incidents, including the killings of Alawite civilians in Ladhikiyah and Tartus in March. Impunity only breeds further violence and erodes trust. Upholding accountability for all atrocities, regardless of the victim or perpetrator, is essential for building a foundation of peace and justice in Syria.

In closing, it is imperative that all parties prioritize de-escalation and dialogue at this critical moment. Syria — and indeed, the broader Middle East region — cannot afford another spiral of conflict and violence. The developments in Suwayda' underscore the need for urgent action. Let me reiterate Denmark's firm commitment to supporting all diplomatic efforts that can bring an end to the suffering, foster reconciliation and pave the way for a stable and prosperous future for all Syrians.

Ms. Shea (United States of America): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Khaled Khiari for his briefing, and I welcome the Syrian representative.

First, let me be clear. The United States unequivocally condemns the violence in Suwayda'. All parties must step back and engage in meaningful dialogue that leads to a lasting ceasefire. Over the past 48 hours, the United States has led diplomatic efforts to promote real de-escalation and peace. We are actively engaging all constituencies in Syria to navigate towards calm and continued discussions on integration and a stable, more prosperous future for all Syrians. To that end, we are calling on the Syrian Government to lead on determining the path forward. We have seen deeply troubling reports of atrocities committed against Syrian civilians. The Government must investigate all reports of abuse and hold the perpetrators accountable.

While the United States did not support recent Israeli strikes, we are engaging diplomatically with Israel and Syria — at the highest levels — both to address the present crisis and to reach a lasting agreement between two sovereign States. President Trump has outlined his clear vision of a prosperous Middle East and a stable Syria at peace with itself and its neighbours. Peace among neighbours, including Israel and Syria, is a critical component of this vision.

In closing, the United States supports Syria's national unity and seeks a peaceful and inclusive resolution with its minority constituents. We are actively working towards that end and have welcomed the support of our allies, including Türkiye, France, the United Kingdom, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, who are working towards the same goal.

Mr. Sangjin Kim (Republic of Korea): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Khiari for his briefing.

The violence in southern Syria this week epitomizes the major security challenges that Damascus faces, from continued foreign intrusion against its territory to ongoing sectarian conflicts aggravated by armed factions still not under control of the central Government.

Let me highlight the following three points in this regard.

First, all hostilities violating Syria's territorial sovereignty must stop. This bloodshed, which began as sectarian clashes that Damascus tried to contain, has now escalated into an inter-State armed conflict, underscored by Israel's intervention — marked most dramatically by its air strike on the Syrian Ministry of Defence building yesterday.

The protection of a specific sect is not a justifiable cause acknowledged by international law for violating the principle of non-aggression, especially when the Administration in charge of the civilians has intervened to subdue the clashes. We call for Israel to immediately cease any further intrusion against the territorial sovereignty of Syria and recommit to the 1974 Disengagement Agreement.

Secondly, we call for Damascus to take all necessary measures to prevent sectarian conflicts from erupting in violence. Since the fall of the Al-Assad regime, we have seen the emergence of a worrisome trend of sectarian conflict developing into widespread armed clashes among sects, claiming numerous civilian lives. From the March coastal massacres to this week's violence, reports repeatedly indicate that militants affiliated with Damascus often subject minority sects to sectarian insults, abuse and even extrajudicial killings, pouring fuel on existing volatile situations.

Such repeated trends demand that Syria take a systematic approach to preventing further atrocities. One of the first steps that merits consideration is prohibiting members of the army from using any sectarian words or deeds and holding perpetrators to account. Equally meaningful is the announcement by Damascus of its plan to achieve transitional justice in a transparent and inclusive manner. In any case, we believe that the Organization's technical expertise will be crucial in achieving these goals, and we call on the Secretariat to actively engage with Damascus to navigate solutions.

Thirdly, we call for all actors in Syria to recommit to dialogue, with the aim of achieving national reconciliation and building an inclusive nation. Repeated sectarian violence has shown that fragmented Syria is subject to turmoil and even risks illegitimate foreign intervention. Meanwhile, sectarian violence is caused by multiple factors that cannot be addressed through military means, including complex history among sects and the fear of insecurity among minority sects.

That shows why the ongoing political process must be inclusive in a manner that all Syrians can genuinely accept. Minority sects can be assured of their future and safety only if they sincerely believe that the process is truly inclusive. In this regard, we call on all actors, including Damascus, to recommit to a political process that includes the genuine and meaningful representation of all Syrians.

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

We thank Assistant Secretary-General Khaled Khiari for his comprehensive briefing. We echo the Secretary-General's concern about the continuing escalation of violence in Suwayda' and call for an immediate de-escalation and a return to normalcy. We welcome the ceasefire brokered by the United States, Türkiye and Arab countries for the maintenance of internal security in Suwayda'. We also take note of the statements made by the Syrian authorities on their efforts to effectively address the situation and to ensure the safety and security of all Syrians.

Pakistan condemns the recent Israeli air strikes on Suwayda', Dar'a and the centre of Damascus, as well as the reported redeployment of Israeli forces in the occupied Syrian Golan. These acts represent a grave and deliberate escalation and are a flagrant violation of international law, the Charter of the United Nations, relevant Security Council resolutions and Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

These Israeli attacks come at a time when Syria is navigating a delicate, yet meaningful transition. After more than a decade of conflict, the Syrian people are beginning to nurture a sense of renewed hope for peace, dignity and the reconstruction of their country.

There have been visible signs of political and economic re-engagement. Major sanctions have been lifted, offering much-needed economic relief, and a slow but discernible momentum is building towards national recovery. While the consolidation of security remains an ongoing and challenging task, the Syrian authorities have demonstrated a willingness — both domestically and in their regional and international outreach — to pursue stability and reconciliation. There have been clear signals and publicly expressed intentions by the Syrian leadership to pursue peaceful relations with the wider region. Against this backdrop, Israel's reckless attacks on Syrian State institutions are both counterproductive and irrational.

I would like to highlight four key points in that regard.

First, Israel's continued military aggression is not just irresponsible, but dangerous and deliberately destabilizing. We call for the immediate cessation of all violations of Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and respect for the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement and all relevant Security Council resolutions.

Secondly, Israel's repeated violations constitute direct interference in Syria's internal affairs, undermine national institutions, impede reconstruction and obstruct efforts at reconciliation. The current moment in Syria calls for solidarity and support, not aggression and sabotage. Fostering internal cohesion, harmony and inclusion by embracing Syria's rich diversity would pave the way for advancing genuine reconciliation and ensuring lasting stability across the country, in line with key principles under resolution 2254 (2015).

Thirdly, these continued violations by Israel exemplify impunity. Whether in Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, Iran or Yemen, Israel continues to act outside the bounds of international law, with complete disregard for the principles of State sovereignty, non-intervention and the prohibition on the use of force enshrined in Article 2, paragraph 4, of the Charter of the United Nations. The international community's failure to hold Israel accountable emboldens such violations and undermines the international order based on the Charter and the principles of international law. This impunity must end.

Fourthly, the erosion of Syria's State authority through external attacks creates dangerous security vacuums. These conditions further risk enabling the resurgence of terrorist and extremist groups, which could be a threat to the entire region and beyond. Israel's actions are not only unlawful but also ultimately self-defeating, as they breed the very instability they claim to resist.

Syria needs space. It needs support for reform and recovery. The international community must come together to preserve regional stability and advance the prospect of a just and lasting peace. At this critical moment, Pakistan stands in full solidarity with the brotherly people of Syria.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Aldahhak (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, and your team for your prompt response to my country's request to convene this emergency meeting to discuss the repercussions of the brutal Israeli aggression against the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic. I also thank the delegations of Algeria and Somalia for supporting our request, and I extend my appreciation to Mr. Khaled Khiari, Assistant Secretary-General, for his briefing.

This meeting is convened in the light of the dangerous Israeli escalation, which has taken the form of a series of repeated aerial assaults on Syrian territory in recent days. These attacks have resulted in the martyrdom and injuries of both civilians and military personnel, and have caused extensive damage to government facilities.

The Israeli aggression reached its peak yesterday, Wednesday, when Israeli occupation forces launched air strikes and drone attacks on several sovereign official buildings in the heart of the capital, Damascus, including the presidential palace and the General Staff Command headquarters during rush hour, resulting in dozens of casualties. Government buildings in the governorates of Dar'a and Suwayda' were also targeted.

The Syrian Arab Republic strongly condemns this blatant Israeli aggression, which constitutes a flagrant violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, and an infringement of the sovereignty of a Member State of the United Nations. Syria categorically rejects the pretexts advanced by the Israeli authorities to justify their aggressive actions and affirms that these practices are merely a continuation of the occupation's systematic policies aimed at destabilizing Syria and dragging it into the arena of conflict. As members are all aware, recent months have witnessed repeated Israeli violations of the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces, including incursions across the separation zone into areas of Qunaytirah, Dar'a and rural Damascus; violations against civilians; the establishment of illegal military outposts; and the seizure of natural resources.

Worsening the situation further, these Israeli attacks are directly intended to obstruct the Syrian State's efforts to restore security and stability and to address internal tensions through a national approach. This was clearly demonstrated in the painful events that unfolded in Suwayda' governorate, where State institutions promptly responded to the unrest, intervened to de-escalate tensions, protect civilians, restore order and impose security and stability in coordination with the local notables and elders. However, the Israeli attacks undermined these efforts and exacerbated the situation, effectively waging an open war on Syria.

Despite the severity of the Israeli attacks, the Syrian leadership responded with the utmost wisdom, engaging with the mediation efforts of the United States, Arab countries and Türkiye, which were much appreciated and which helped to prevent the region from sliding into open conflict. The Syrian leadership took precise sovereign decisions, guided by the supreme national interest, to safeguard the unity of the country and the safety of its citizens, and affirmed its determination to prevent violations and ensure accountability.

Syria affirms that it will not hesitate to fulfil its responsibilities towards all its citizens, particularly in the light of the cumulative challenges caused by the chaos and the proliferation of weapons left behind by the defunct regime. It will continue

its determined efforts to uphold the rule of law throughout the entire country and to ensure that arms remain solely in the hands of State institutions. Syria is resolute in its refusal to turn back.

The Syrian Government's efforts have received support and endorsement from its regional and international partners, who share our concerns regarding the fight against terrorism, the elimination of its funding sources, border control and the fight against the scourge of arms and drug smuggling that has burdened both the Syrian people and the peoples of the region. Syria will remain a homeland for all, and this is the source of its dignity and pride. Syrians stand united without distinction and are determined to resist any attempts to divide them or sow discord among their people. They will not allow any external actor to drag them into a war aimed at fragmenting Syria and derailing its efforts. They reject all pretexts advanced by the occupying authorities to justify acts of aggression and violations of international law against their country.

My country's delegation affirms that condemning and confronting Israeli attacks and violations is a collective responsibility that lies at the core of this Council's mandate, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

I would like to draw the Council's attention to a note I received indicating that the Israeli bombardment has led to the postponement of a scheduled visit by teams from the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to Syria. This development undermines the positive and constructive cooperation between Syria and the OPCW.

While Syria calls upon the Security Council and the United Nations Secretariat to condemn the Israeli attacks, it also urges the international community to confront this grave threat to international peace and security and to the unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic and this serious breach of international law, the Charter of the United Nations and relevant Security Council resolutions, foremost among them resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 497 (1981).

Syria emphasizes the urgent need to halt the Israeli attacks, prevent their recurrence, compel Israel to withdraw its forces from the areas it has penetrated and end its occupation of the Syrian Golan. My country has consistently affirmed its commitment to establishing security and stability within its territory and across the region, and that it poses no threat to any country, whether in the region or beyond. At the same time, it has called on all Member States to refrain from any actions that would compromise Syria's sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity, or any attempts to interfere in its internal affairs and undermine its security and stability.

In its letter dated 3 March (S/2025/120), my country's delegation refuted the Israeli claims concerning the defence of a particular component of the Syrian population, and reaffirmed the Syrian Government's full commitment to protecting all Syrians, preserving national unity and fostering civil peace.

In conclusion, it is the Syrian people exclusively who bear the responsibility and possess the capacity to address their internal challenges and foster civil peace through intra-Syrian dialogue, free from destructive external interference that seeks to sow division and discord. Syrians have always lived together without ever recognizing the notion of minorities and majorities. Their religious, ethnic and cultural diversity has always been — and continues to be — a source of pride and honour steadfastly upheld, through which they have collectively overcome many hardships and serious challenges.

Today, more than ever, Syrians are united in rejecting Israeli aggression and all threats to the security and stability of their country. They firmly reject terrorism, hate speech, incitement to violence and anything that undermines their national unity. As you, Mr. President, rightly said, Syria needs support. It needs the solidarity

of the international community — not acts of aggression by the Israeli occupation or any other party.

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

Mr. Alwasil (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is my pleasure to extend congratulations to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on assuming the presidency of the Council for this month. We highly appreciate the outstanding efforts of the Pakistani mission in managing the Council's work. I also thank Assistant Secretary-General Khaled Khiari for his valuable briefing on developments in the Syrian Arab Republic.

The Kingdom reaffirms its unwavering commitment to supporting the brotherly Syrian people through the many hardships they have endured. It has stood by them at every critical juncture and has consistently sought comprehensive political solutions that preserve Syria's unity and territorial integrity and restore its security, stability and peace. Our position is grounded in firm principles, foremost among them respect for the sovereignty, unity and independence of the Syrian Arab Republic, and the rejection of all forms of external interference or encroachment on its sovereignty.

We express our deep concern about the continued escalation of Israeli air strikes on Suwayda', Dar'a and the centre of Damascus, including the targeting of civilian infrastructure and populated areas. These actions pose a direct threat to regional and international peace and security and undermine United Nations efforts to achieve a comprehensive political settlement in Syria.

My country condemns the ongoing blatant Israeli attacks on Syrian territory, interference in its internal affairs and the destabilization of its security and stability, in continued violation of international law and the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement of Forces between Israel and Syria. These repeated attacks cannot be viewed in isolation from Israel's broader policy of violating State sovereignty, disregarding international law and defying the will of the international community, as represented by the Council. The continued violation of the sovereignty of States by Israeli occupation forces, without accountability, are a direct result of the absence of international accountability, encouraging further violations — not only in Syria but across the region.

Accordingly, my country reaffirms its steadfast support for Syria and its rejection of any actions that threaten civil and social peace. We call on the Council to take a clear and firm stance against repeated Israeli violations of Syrian territory, enforce compliance with the relevant Council resolutions, ensure the immediate cessation of Israeli attacks and hold to account those responsible, and support international efforts to reach a comprehensive political solution in Syria, free from external interference.

My country stresses the importance of respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic, refraining from interference in its internal affairs and supporting the Syrian Government's efforts to achieve security and stability. In this context, we welcome the announcement by the President of the Syrian Arab Republic regarding measures to contain recent events in Syria and the efforts made to keep the country on the right path — one that preserves its unity and territorial integrity, strengthens national cohesion and promotes solidarity among all segments of the brotherly Syrian people — by preventing any signs of sedition that could undermine the country's security and stability in order to achieve the aspirations of its people.

My country renews its call for the international community to stand by the brotherly Syrian Arab Republic and support it during this sensitive period. It urges action to confront the ongoing Israeli attacks and violations and warns that the continuation of these violations and Israel's extremist policies will only heighten the risks of violence, extremism and instability in the region.

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

Mr. Miller (Israel): Allow me to thank Assistant Secretary-General Khiari for his briefing this afternoon.

Today we once again find ourselves in an urgent Council meeting. A serious crisis has been unfolding in Syria over the past couple of months that too many choose to ignore: the systematic persecution of minorities in Syria and the dangerous consequences that extend far beyond its borders. Unsurprisingly, that is not why the relevant Council members called for this emergency meeting today. Instead, they convened this meeting in a politically motivated move to condemn the State of Israel, while ignoring the brutal massacre being carried out against Syria's people.

Over the past six months, we have witnessed the return of targeted violence against Syria's most vulnerable communities: mass killings of Alawites in north-western Syria, entire villages and neighbourhoods wiped out, then brutal aggression against the Kurds in the north.

Just last week, the ancient Mar Michael Greek Catholic Church in the southern city of Suwayda' was razed, burned to the ground. Just days earlier, armed rebels carried out a deadly assault on another church, continuing their campaign of terror and destruction. And in the past few days, we have seen a new wave of violence being unleashed against the Druze community in southern Syria, a region close to Israel's northern border. The images emerging from that area are horrifying: civilians murdered and slaughtered in cold blood, communities decimated, elders stripped of their humanity and mocked, and cultural heritage erased. This is not incidental. Unfortunately, it is emerging as a pattern. It is a persecution carried out in stages by violent mobs inflamed and directed by organized Jihadist militias who massacre the Druze population and other minorities who simply want to live their lives. This needs to stop now, and those responsible must be held accountable.

What else needs to happen before the members of the international community raise their voice and give their attention, this time in the right direction? What more must we see? Another massacre, another village reduced to ashes, another wave of Druze civilians dragged from their homes and publicly humiliated?

In the book of Leviticus, God orders: you shall not stand idly by the bloodshed of your fellow. This is not just our religious obligation but a moral one. We will not stand idly by as our close brothers and sisters are being slaughtered. This moral obligation is enshrined as formal law in Israel's legal code, and for this very reason, Israel carried out these precise strikes against Jihadist militants in southern Syria.

Israel's position is clear: we have a commitment to preserve the south-western region of Syria as a demilitarized area and to prevent the rise of terrorist threats along our border. But we also have an unwavering moral obligation to safeguard the Druze population with whom we share deep historic and national bonds. Their pain is our pain. Their safety is our concern. Just two and a half months ago, an earlier campaign of violence against the Druze near Damascus was halted because of our actions, both diplomatic and military. And yet here we are again. History has repeated itself in a matter of months. As a result of the actions of Israel this week, a ceasefire was achieved yesterday, and the armed forces withdrew to Damascus.

Let me emphasize: we do not seek to involve ourselves in Syria's internal politics. Our interests are limited, clear and legitimate. We seek to maintain reasonable stability on our northern border. We are determined to prevent terrorist infrastructure from taking root close to our borders and wherever terror poses a threat. And we are committed to protecting the lives and dignity of the Druze people in Syria, who are targeted simply because of who they are. This is also part of our commitment to the Druze community who live in Israel, who are an integral part of the vibrant Israeli

society, including its culture and traditions, and who are also significant contributors to the safety and security of the State of Israel.

To those who speak of winds of change in the Middle East, the international community must act not only in statements. The international community must act against the perpetrators behind this violence in Syria and hold them accountable. And the international community must make it clear that the persecution of minorities in Syria will not be tolerated. It is not too late, but the time to speak out and to act is now. Let us hope the ceasefire in the south of Syria holds and that our Druze brothers and sisters get to live in peace and prosperity.

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

Mr. Ammar (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is an honor for me to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

The Arab Group strongly condemns the blatant violation of Syrian sovereignty by the occupying authorities through the airstrikes carried out by their forces over the past two days in the heart of the capital, Damascus, including targeting the General Staff Command headquarters and the vicinity of the presidential palace. These attacks have resulted in the martyrdom and injury of numerous civilians and military personnel, as well as severe damage to property and infrastructure already weakened by years of war and international sanctions.

The Arab Group condemns in the strongest terms this flagrant aggression, which constitutes a blatant violation of the sovereignty of an Arab State. It emphasizes that these airstrikes represent a grave violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, as well as an unforgivable disregard for the principles of the international order based on respect for state sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs.

The Arab Group also considers the actions of the occupying authority to be military bullying that cannot be tolerated, necessitating a firm international stance to halt those repeated aggressions aimed at sowing chaos, undermining stability in Syria and posing a direct threat to regional security and stability. The recent attack by the occupying army on Syrian territory marks yet another episode in a series of serious and repeated violations of the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, in particular Article 2, and the 1949 Geneva Conventions. These violations, as usual, blatantly disregard Security Council resolutions concerning Syria, including resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 497 (1981), all of which affirm Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity and reject the forcible annexation of any part of its territory.

Once again, the Arab Group categorically rejects all the flimsy pretexts promoted by the occupying authorities to justify their aggressive actions against the Syrian State, in particular claims of protecting minorities or countering alleged security threats. The Group warns against the occupying entity's shameless attempts to incite discord and exploit sectarian tensions within Syrian society, as well as its exploitation of on-the-ground conditions to entrench a new reality of occupation. Such actions will drag the entire region into further chaos and tragedy, which terrorist groups lurking in our region will seek to exploit.

In this context, the Arab Group firmly rejects the occupying regime's attempt to exploit military escalation against Syria and to use aggression as part of its overt calculations. In support of Syria's unity and stability, the Arab Group reaffirms its commitment to a political solution and the necessity of continuing dialogue under the auspices of the United Nations, free from external dictates that serve agendas not in the interests of the Syrian people. It strongly rejects any attempts to divide Syria or impose a new reality lacking international legitimacy.

The Arab Group also welcomes the agreement reached to resolve the crisis in Suwayda' governorate, emphasizing the need for its implementation to protect Syria and its unity for its citizens, prevent Syrian bloodshed, ensure the protection of civilians and uphold State sovereignty and the rule of law.

Furthermore, the Group commends Syrian President Ahmad Al-Sharaa's commitment to holding accountable all those responsible for violations against Syrian citizens in Suwayda' governorate, supporting all efforts to establish security, State sovereignty and the rule of law in Suwayda' and across all Syrian territories, and rejecting violence, sectarianism and attempts to incite discord, hatred and sedition.

The continued occupation's unchecked violations of the sovereignty of Arab States and its systematic use of military force in blatant disregard of international norms and conventions pose a grave threat to regional and international collective security and undermine the credibility of the international system and its institutions. The Arab Group condemns these aggressive policies and calls on the Security Council to take immediate and effective action, fulfilling its legal and moral responsibilities to address these violations. It demands that the occupying Power cease its aggression immediately, fully comply with international law, including through withdrawal from all occupied Syrian territories, in particular the Syrian Arab Golan, and take measures to ensure accountability and deterrence in accordance with international legal and judicial mechanisms.

In conclusion, the Arab Group affirms that Syria's security and stability are integral to the regional and international security framework, and that preserving its sovereignty and territorial unity constitutes an uncompromisable Arab and international commitment.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Iravani (Islamic Republic of Iran): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this urgent and important meeting to address the ongoing acts of aggression by the Israeli regime against the Syrian Arab Republic.

At the outset, I would like to extend our sincere congratulations to Pakistan on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of July. We are confident in your able leadership. We also commend Guyana for its effective and successful leadership of the Council during the month of June. I thank Assistant Secretary-General Khiari for his briefing.

We strongly condemn the recent large-scale military attacks by the Israeli regime against the Syrian Arab Republic. These deliberate acts of aggression — including against the capital, Damascus — targeted infrastructure and public and Government facilities. This marks a dangerous escalation by a regime that still illegally occupies parts of Syrian territory, in flagrant violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

I wish to make the following points in that regard.

First, these military attacks are occurring alongside Israel's ongoing occupation of the Syrian Golan. For decades, Israel has pursued illegal annexation and settlement expansion in this occupied territory, defying the United Nations Charter and numerous Security Council resolutions.

Secondly, the Israeli regime has become the gravest and most serious threat to regional peace and security. This is due to its continued acts of aggression and the constant and unconditional political and military support it receives from the United States and some Western countries. These States must bear responsibility for

enabling Israel's illegal actions and atrocious crimes, which endanger not only the region but also international peace and security.

Thirdly, the attacks on Syria are a direct result of the Council's silence and the international community's failure to act. Israel has faced no consequences for its repeated systematic violations of international law and continues to act with complete impunity. This aggression follows Israel's 12-day military acts of aggression against Iran, in a flagrant violation of the United Nations Charter and international law. With full and unconditional support from the United States, the Israeli regime deliberately targeted Iran's peaceful nuclear facilities under the safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency, along with civilian infrastructure, including hospitals and residential neighbourhoods. These illegal attacks resulted in the martyrdom of more than 1,100 civilians, among them 41 children and 126 women. Seven hospitals, 11 ambulances and more than 3,500 homes were destroyed. These undeniable facts reveal the criminal and aggressive nature of the Israeli regime.

Fourthly, the root causes of instability are clear: Israel's illegal occupation, repeated aggression, systematic and widespread violations of international law and the United Nations Charter, and the unconditional support it receives from a permanent member of the Council. It is time for the Security Council to act. The Council must fulfil its Charter responsibilities by ending Israel's impunity and holding it accountable for its repeated violations. Continued inaction has only emboldened the aggressors. This silence is especially alarming as Israel commits mass atrocities in Gaza, using starvation as a method of war and killing tens of thousands of civilians, including women and children, and systematically destroying vital infrastructure. Only through justice, accountability and an end to Israel's occupation and aggression can our region move towards real peace, stability and collective security.

Finally, we reaffirm our unwavering support for the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic. We urge the interim Government of Syria to fully respect the rights of all minorities and to resolve internal differences through inclusive dialogue and peaceful means. The fundamental principles of international law and the United Nations Charter — particularly, the prohibition of the use of force, respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, and the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of States — must be strictly observed. The Israeli regime has absolutely no legal or moral justification to violate Syria's sovereignty or interfere in its internal affairs under the false pretext of protecting minority rights. Such illegal actions constitute blatant violations of international law and the United Nations Charter, and must be unequivocally condemned by the Council.

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

Mr. Alqaisi (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to extend my congratulations to the brotherly Islamic Republic of Pakistan on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for this month. We wish it every success.

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has been following with deep concern the unfortunate developments in the brotherly Syrian Arab Republic over the past days. We all agree that its security and stability are fundamental pillars of regional security and stability and are a shared priority.

We condemn the repeated Israeli attacks on the brotherly Syrian Arab Republic and reject them as blatant violations of international law, the 1974 Disengagement Agreement and a flagrant assault on Syria's sovereignty. These actions represent a dangerous escalation aimed at undermining Syria's stability, sovereignty and security. It is the responsibility of the international community, particularly the Security Council, to exert pressure on Israel to immediately cease its repeated aggression against Syria and to compel it to refrain from interfering in its internal affairs.

While the Syrian Government has been working, since December 8, to build a new, free, sovereign, stable and secure Syria for all its citizens, Israel has unjustifiably continued its aggression by violating Syrian territory and airspace and sowing seeds of discord and division — actions that will only bring chaos, conflict and tension.

The security of Syria is integral to our security; its southern region constitutes an extension of our national security and strategic depth. Syria represents a promising opportunity in our region and a beacon of hope to turn a dark page in our region's history. Syria must succeed and stabilize. The cornerstone for achieving that stability lies in ending all external interventions in its affairs and halting Israeli aggression.

We welcome the agreement reached to resolve the crisis in Suwayda' governorate and emphasize the necessity of its implementation in order to preserve Syria's unity, protect its citizens, prevent Syrian bloodshed, ensure civilian protection, uphold State sovereignty and enforce the rule of law. We also welcome the Syrian Government's commitment to hold accountable all those responsible for violations against Syrian citizens in Suwayda' governorate. We support all efforts aimed at restoring security, State sovereignty and the rule of law throughout this governorate and across all Syrian territories.

We reiterate our support for the Syrian Government in its efforts to rebuild the country in a manner that ensures its security, stability, unity and sovereignty, while safeguarding the security, safety and rights of all Syrians. We want Syria to rise and recover. We want it to be a success story. We want it to shake off the dust of destruction, killing and displacement that Syria and its resilient people have endured for years. The Kingdom will spare no effort in supporting Syria and assisting it towards a future that is bright and accomplished for all its people.

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

Mr. Yıldız (Türkiye): On 8 December, Syria began a historic transformation. After 14 years of suffering, the Syrian people now have a chance for peace and stability. Despite many challenges, they have taken swift steps towards this goal. They have achieved remarkable progress in seven months.

The Syrian leadership has shown its commitment to an inclusive political transition and national reconciliation under Syrian ownership. It has engaged in dialogue with diverse segments of society to ensure meaningful participation in shaping the country's future. It has taken concrete measures to bring together all components of Syrian society on the basis of equal citizenship.

From the beginning, Türkiye has supported Syria's efforts for peace, recovery and reconstruction. Many countries have taken a similar approach. We are observing growing international alignment in this direction.

Türkiye has consistently advocated lifting sanctions on Syria. We welcome the recent progress, as decisions to ease substantial sanctions are already producing tangible effects.

However, Israel has continued its relentless attacks since 8 December, seeking to obstruct Syria's path to stability. Israel's ongoing aggression directly undermines Syria's efforts to rebuild on the basis of social cohesion. Its military interventions and provocative statements threaten the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity. These attacks, targeting Syria's presidential palace complex and Ministry of Defence, clearly demonstrate that Israel has no interest in the peace and stability of Syria or the region. We must reject all forms of Israeli aggression. These attacks destabilize the region and increase civilian casualties and displacement. It is also concerning that the scale and geographic scope of these attacks have surpassed those previously directed at the fallen regime.

The Syrian administration has stated that it poses no threat to its neighbours. It is committed to fighting illegal armed groups and traffickers. Supporting those efforts would contribute far more to regional stability than undermining them.

The Syrian people should not be deprived of the opportunity for peace. The Security Council should therefore stand united for: first, ensuring immediate de-escalation and ceasing Israeli aggression; secondly, supporting the Syrian Administration's efforts to restore calm in Suwayda' and prevent civilian casualties; and thirdly, assisting the Syrian Administration in ensuring accountability for those triggering violence in Suwayda' governorate.

Reports of further Israeli deployments to the Golan remain a cause for serious concern. It is essential to uphold the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria and to ensure full respect for the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement.

We should support all efforts for national accord in Syria. We welcome efforts towards achieving a ceasefire and stabilizing the situation in the south, reflecting the consent of the Syrian Government and relevant Syrian elements. We hope the ceasefire reached today will be lasting.

Türkiye firmly believes that the determination of the Syrian people and their Government, forged through years of hardship, will not be broken by these attacks. While the resilience of the Syrian people is clear, it is the duty of the international community to demonstrate that Syrians will not walk this path alone. We remain committed to supporting Syria's efforts to secure a future of peace, stability and prosperity for all Syrians.

The meeting rose at 4.55 p.m.