



DIVISION FOR  
PALESTINIAN RIGHTS

# Bulletin

on action by the United Nations system and  
intergovernmental organizations  
relevant to the question of Palestine

**November 2023**  
**Volume XLVII, Bulletin No. XI**

## *Contents*

I. CEIRPP Bureau renews call for an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip.....	1
II. Gaza is ‘running out of time’ UN human rights experts warn, demanding a ceasefire to prevent genocide. ....	2
III. Women and newborns bearing the brunt of the conflict in Gaza, UN Agencies warn .....	3
IV. UN Secretary-General horrified by reported attack on an ambulance convoy in Gaza.....	5
V. WFP Chief makes urgent plea for safe, expanded humanitarian access to Gaza as food runs out .....	6
VI. Gaza ‘becoming a graveyard for children’, warns UN Secretary-General, calling for humanitarian ceasefire .....	7
VII. Secretary-General reiterates his total condemnation of the acts of terror committed by Hamas in Israel.....	9
VIII. UN Secretary-General’s message to the International Humanitarian Conference for the Civilian Population in Gaza.....	10
IX. WHO Director-General’s addresses the Security Council.....	10
X. UNFPA, UNICEF, and WHO call for immediate action to halt attacks on health care in Gaza .....	13

XI. Middle East violence could prompt dangerous expansion of conflict to wider region, UN Disarmament Chief warns.....	14
XII. Civilians are caught in collapsed buildings or trapped by ongoing ground battles, warns UN Human Rights Office .....	15
XIII. UNICEF Executive Director visits Gaza .....	15
XIV. All parties to comply with international humanitarian law, release of hostages, humanitarian pauses and corridors in Gaza – Security Council resolution 2712 (2023).....	17
XV. UNRWA warns that Gaza continues to have huge need for fuel amid siege and war .....	18
XVI. CEIRPP Bureau welcomes the adoption of Security Council resolution 2712 (2023) and reiterates its calls for a ceasefire .....	19
XVII. 36 UN human rights experts call on international community to prevent genocide against the Palestinian people in Gaza .....	20
XVIII. UNRWA Chief visits Gaza .....	22
XIX. UN Human Rights Chief Volker Türk briefs on his visit to the Middle East.....	26
XX. General Assembly hears briefings from the heads of UN human rights and humanitarian agencies .....	31
XXI. Following fatal attacks Secretary-General emphasizes UN premises ‘are inviolable’, calls for ceasefire .....	42
XXII. UN Women Executive Director briefs the UN Security Council.....	43
XXIII. UNFPA Executive Director briefs the Security Council.....	47
XXIV. UNICEF Executive Director briefs the Security Council .....	49
XXV. Secretary-General welcomes the agreement to release hostages in Gaza .....	53
XXVI. UN Special Coordinator welcomes the agreement to release hostages .....	54
XXVII. UN Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs concludes Middle East visit.....	54
XXVIII. Gaza: Humanitarians stand ready to ramp up aid deliveries in wake of Israel, Hamas agreement.....	55

XXIX. Following his second Gaza visit, UNRWA Commissioner-General renews calls for a ceasefire .....	55
XXX. Joint UN mission transfers critical patients from Al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza, under intense fighting .....	56
XXXI. Statement by UN Special Coordinator Tor Wennesland on the implementation of 22 November agreement.....	57
XXXII. UN human rights experts call for full and independent investigations into all crimes committed in Israel and the OPT .....	58
XXXIII. Secretary-General urges continued dialogue between parties aimed at full humanitarian ceasefire .....	59
XXXIV. Palestinian Rights Committee Chair issues urgent call for justice and peace on International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People amid escalating violence in Gaza.....	59
XXXV. World ‘must be united in demanding an end to the occupation, blockade of Gaza’, says Secretary-General, marking Day of Solidarity with Palestinian People .....	61
XXXVI. Security Council holds ministerial-level meeting on Israel-Gaza war.....	62

*The Bulletin can be found in the United Nations Information System  
on the Question of Palestine (UNISPAL) on the Internet at:  
<https://www.un.org/unispal/data-collection/monthly-bulletin/>*

*Disclaimer: The texts cited in this Monthly Bulletin have been reproduced in their original form. The Division for Palestinian Rights is consequently not responsible for the views, positions or discrepancies contained in these texts.*



<http://www.facebook.com/UN.palestinianrights>



<http://www.twitter.com/UNISPAL>



<http://www.youtube.com/UNpalestinianrights>



<https://www.instagram.com/unispal/>

## **I. CEIRPP Bureau renews call for an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip**

*On 1 November, the Bureau of the United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People issued the following [statement](#).*

The Bureau reiterates its appeal for an immediate, durable and sustained humanitarian truce in the Gaza Strip leading to a cessation of hostilities, as called for in its statement of 17 October and by an overwhelming majority in the General Assembly on 27 October.

Israel's relentless and heavy bombardment of densely populated areas in the Gaza Strip, since 7 October, and its recent ground invasion of northern Gaza has resulted in nearly 9,000 Palestinians killed, mostly women and children, some 22,000 others wounded and 2,000 are missing most likely under the rubble. These indiscriminate attacks on civilians and civilian objects constitute grave breaches of international law and must cease immediately. Israel, the occupying Power, must comply with its obligations, including to allow and facilitate immediate and unimpeded humanitarian aid for Palestinians civilians in Gaza including food, water, fuel, electricity and medical supplies.

The Bureau once more demands full respect for international humanitarian law and human rights law, and for a halt to the indiscriminate attacks against Palestinian and Israeli civilians and protected objects, including hospitals, schools, places of worship and UN facilities – some 70 UNRWA staff members have been also killed during the bombings. In line with the resolution adopted by the General Assembly, the Bureau also calls for the immediate and unconditional release of all civilians who are being illegally held captive.

The international community cannot stand by and watch as this horrific Nakba continues to be inflicted on the Palestinian people. The Bureau condemns the persistent voices in Israel inciting against and dehumanizing Palestinians as well as the provocative calls for their forced transfer from their ancestral land and for the “destruction” of the Gaza Strip. The Bureau stresses the urgency of the gathering of evidence by UN international mechanisms, including the International Criminal Court, to ensure accountability of all the crimes being perpetrated.

The Bureau is also gravely concerned about the escalation of tensions and settler violence in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Israeli government officials have openly distributed assault weapons to extremist Israeli settlers who have increased their attacks and forcibly displaced entire Palestinians villages in the South Hebron Hills, with the support of the Israeli occupation army. The Bureau cautions that such actions will further destabilize the West Bank and lead to more violence.

Force will not end the legitimate Palestinian national aspirations. Only the fulfilment of their inalienable human rights, including to self-determination and return, and a credible peace process leading to the implementation of the two-State solution will do. This reflects the overwhelming consensus of the international community, and its parameters are well known: two States, Israel and Palestine living side-by-side in peace and security, and with East Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Palestine. This formula, based on international law and UN resolutions is the most viable path to a just and lasting peace to the region.

## **II. Gaza is ‘running out of time’ UN human rights experts warn, demanding a ceasefire to prevent genocide.**

*On 2 November, Pedro Arrojo Agudo, Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation; Michael Fakhri, Special Rapporteur on the right to food; Tlaleng Mofokeng, Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, Paula Gaviria Betancur, Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons; Irene Khan, Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, Francesca Albanese, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967; Ashwini K.P. Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance issued a statement reflected in the following [press release](#).*

Time is running out to prevent genocide and humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza, UN experts warned today, expressing deep frustration with Israel’s refusal to halt plans to decimate the besieged Gaza strip.

“We remain convinced that the Palestinian people are at grave risk of genocide,” the experts said. “The time for action is now. Israel’s allies also bear responsibility and must act now to prevent its disastrous course of action,” they said.

The experts expressed “deepening horror” about Israeli airstrikes against the Jabalia refugee camp in northern Gaza since Tuesday (31 October) night, which have reportedly killed and injured hundreds of Palestinians, calling it a brazen breach of international law.

“The Israeli airstrike on a residential complex in the Jabalia refugee camp is a brazen violation of international law – and a war crime. Attacking a camp sheltering civilians including women and children is a complete breach of the rules of proportionality and distinction between combatants and civilians,” the experts said.

The experts welcomed the General Assembly resolution on protecting civilians and upholding legal and humanitarian obligations, approved by an overwhelming majority of member states on 27 October. “We received the resolution with hope, but the need for action is now,” they said.

“All signs are that we have reached a breaking point,” the experts warned, pointing to images of people desperately grabbing flour and other essentials from a UN warehouse on Sunday (29 October), alarming news of children being forced to drink sea water in the absence of clean water, distressing reports of patients including children undergoing surgery without anaesthetics, and persons with disabilities and older persons displaced and living in tents because houses have been turned to rubble.

“The situation in Gaza has reached a catastrophic tipping point,” they said warning of the dire need for food, water, medicine, fuel and essential supplies and the risk of looming health hazards. The absence of fuel and disruption of water infrastructure due to constant shelling over three weeks had destroyed access to safe drinking water for the population in Gaza, the experts said. “Water is

essential to human life and today, 2 million Gazans are struggling to find drinking water,” they said.

The experts strongly supported the UN Secretary General’s efforts to provide access to humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip. They also called for the immediate release of all civilians being held captive since Hamas militants attacked Israeli settlements on 7 October.

“All parties must comply with their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law. We demand a humanitarian ceasefire to ensure that aid reaches those who need it the most. A ceasefire also means channels of communication can be opened to ensure the release of hostages,” the experts said.

They expressed grave concern about the safety of UN and humanitarian workers and hospitals and schools that are providing refuge and life-saving medical services to the people of Gaza. They also raised the alarm at the safety of journalists, media workers and their family members while noting that internet and communications have been shutdown, disrupting essential communications and reporting on the situation in Gaza.

“We want to remind all parties that humanitarian and medical personnel and facilities are protected under international law. States have an obligation to ensure their safety and protection during times of war,” the experts said. “As the Secretary General has repeatedly reiterated, Israel and Palestinian armed groups must bear in mind that even wars have rules.”

An estimated 1.4 million people in Gaza are internally displaced, with approximately 629,000 seeking refuge in 150 UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) emergency shelters. The UNRWA reports that 70 UN workers have died as a result of Israeli bombardment in Gaza.

“The Palestinian people in Gaza, particularly women, children, persons with disabilities, youth, and older persons, have endured decades of hardship and deprivation,” the UN experts said. “We call on Israel and its allies to agree to an immediate ceasefire. We are running out of time.”

### **III. Women and newborns bearing the brunt of the conflict in Gaza, UN Agencies warn**

*On 3 November, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the United Nations Population Fund Agency (UNFPA), and the World Health Organization (WHO) issued the following joint [statement](#).*

Women, children and newborns in Gaza are disproportionately bearing the burden of the escalation of hostilities in the occupied Palestinian territory, both as casualties and in reduced access to health services, warn the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the United Nations sexual and reproductive health agency (UNFPA), and the World Health Organization (WHO).

As of 3 November, according to Ministry of Health data, 2326 women and 3760 children have been killed in the Gaza strip, representing 67% of all casualties, while thousands more have been injured. This means that 420 children are killed or injured every day, some of them only a few months old.

The bombardments, damaged or non-functioning health facilities, massive levels of displacement, collapsing water and electricity supplies as well as restricted access to food and medicines, are severely disrupting maternal, newborn, and child health services. There are an estimated 50 000 pregnant women in Gaza, with more than 180 giving birth every day. Fifteen per cent of them are likely to experience pregnancy or birth-related complications and need additional medical care.

These women are unable to access the emergency obstetric services they need to give birth safely and care for their newborns. With 14 hospitals and 45 primary health care centres closed, some women are having to give birth in shelters, in their homes, in the streets amid rubble, or in overwhelmed healthcare facilities, where sanitation is worsening, and the risk of infection and medical complications is on the rise. Health facilities are also coming under fire – on 1 November Al Hilo Hospital, a crucial maternity hospital, was shelled.

Maternal deaths are expected to increase given the lack of access to adequate care. The psychological toll of the hostilities also has direct – and sometimes deadly – consequences on reproductive health, including a rise in stress-induced miscarriages, stillbirths and premature births.

Prior to the escalation, malnutrition was already high among pregnant women, with impacts on childhood survival and development. As access to food and water worsens, mothers are struggling to feed and care for their families, increasing risks of malnutrition, disease and death.

The lives of newborns also hang by a thread. If hospitals run out of fuel, the lives of an estimated 130 premature babies who rely on neonatal and intensive care services will be threatened, as incubators and other medical equipment will no longer function.

Over half of the population of Gaza is now sheltering in UNRWA facilities in dire conditions, with inadequate water and food supplies, which is causing hunger and malnutrition, dehydration and the spread of waterborne diseases. According to initial assessments by UNRWA, 4600 displaced pregnant women and about 380 newborns living in these facilities require medical attention. Already more than 22 500 cases of acute respiratory infections have been reported along with 12 000 cases of diarrhoea, which are particularly concerning given the high rates of malnutrition.

Despite the lack of sustained and safe access, UN agencies have dispatched life-saving medicines and equipment to Gaza, including supplies for newborns and reproductive health care. But much more is needed to meet the immense needs of civilians, including pregnant women, children and newborns. Humanitarian agencies urgently need sustained and safe access to bring more medicines, food, water and fuel into Gaza. No fuel has come into the Gaza Strip since 7

October. Aid agencies must receive fuel immediately to be able to continue supporting hospitals, water plants and bakeries.

An immediate humanitarian pause is needed to alleviate the suffering and prevent a desperate situation from becoming catastrophic.

All parties to the conflict must abide by their obligations under international humanitarian law to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure including health care. All civilians, including the hostages currently held in Gaza, have the right to health care. All hostages must be released without delay or conditions.

In particular, all parties must protect children from harm and afford them the special protection to which they are entitled under international humanitarian and human rights laws.

#### **IV. UN Secretary-General horrified by reported attack on an ambulance convoy in Gaza**

*On 3 November, Secretary-General António Guterres issued the following [statement](#).*

I am horrified by the reported attack in Gaza on an ambulance convoy outside Al Shifa hospital. The images of bodies strewn on the street outside the hospital are harrowing.

I do not forget the terror attacks committed in Israel by Hamas and the killing, maiming and abductions, including of women and children. All hostages held in Gaza must be released immediately and unconditionally.

Now, for nearly one month, civilians in Gaza, including children and women, have been besieged, denied aid, killed, and bombed out of their homes. This must stop.

The humanitarian situation in Gaza is horrific. Not nearly enough food, water and medicine are coming in to meet people's needs. Fuel to power hospitals and water plants is running out. UNRWA shelters are at nearly four times their full capacity and are being hit in bombardments. Morgues are overflowing. Shops are empty. The sanitation situation is abysmal. We are seeing an increase in diseases and respiratory illnesses, especially among children. An entire population is traumatized. Nowhere is safe.

I renew my earlier appeals for a humanitarian ceasefire. International humanitarian law must be respected. Civilians and civilian infrastructure, including humanitarian and medical workers and assets must be protected. Civilians must also not be used as human shields.

Essential supplies and services and unimpeded humanitarian access must be safely allowed into and across Gaza at a scale commensurate with this dramatic situation.

All those with influence must exert it to ensure respect for the rules of war, end the suffering and avoid a spillover of the conflict that could engulf the whole region.



## **V. WFP Chief makes urgent plea for safe, expanded humanitarian access to Gaza as food runs out**

*On 5 November, the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) Executive Director Cindy McCain issued a statement reflected in the following [press release](#).*

The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) Executive Director, Cindy McCain issued an urgent plea from the Rafah border crossing for safe, expanded humanitarian access to Gaza as humanitarian needs skyrocket and critical food supplies reach dangerously low levels.

For the past few weeks, entry points into Gaza have been virtually sealed except through the Rafah border crossing point. While there has been a steady increase in aid entering Gaza, it is nowhere near enough to meet the exponentially growing needs.

“Right now, parents in Gaza do not know whether they can feed their children today and whether they will even survive to see tomorrow. The suffering just meters away is unfathomable standing on this side of the border,” said Cindy McCain as she returned from the Rafah border crossing in Egypt.

“Today, I’m making an urgent plea for the millions of people whose lives are being torn apart by this crisis,” she added.

McCain is concluding a two-day visit to Egypt, during which she met with Egypt’s President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, senior government officials, and visited the Egyptian Red Crescent’s humanitarian staging hub in Al Arish. She also inspected the rapid expansion of logistical operations and monitoring systems at the Rafah border crossing, which are crucial for providing vital assistance to people within Gaza.

“We appreciate all efforts to facilitate a steady flow of humanitarian supplies through its border with Gaza, and the work of the Egyptian Red Crescent is remarkable. We need to continue to work together to get safe and sustained access to Gaza at a scale that aligns with the catastrophic conditions facing families there,” McCain noted.

During her visit, McCain explored opportunities for WFP to leverage its extensive expertise in logistics during emergencies to further strengthen collaboration with partners such as the Egyptian Red Crescent to scale up the delivery of humanitarian aid into Gaza. She applauded the efforts of their volunteers who have worked tirelessly to get lifesaving assistance to their neighbours.

“The crisis in Gaza is not just a local tragedy, it’s a stark reminder that our global food crisis is worsening. Not only does this crisis threaten regional peace and stability, it undermines our collective efforts to combat hunger worldwide,” McCain noted.

WFP is scaling up to reach more than one million people with urgent food assistance in the next few weeks. More than 650,000 people in Gaza and the West Bank have received food and cash assistance from WFP since 07 October. WFP is distributing fresh bread, date bars, and

canned food to families in UN shelters every day, and food parcels to displaced families in host communities. WFP continues to provide cash-based transfers to people residing in communities so they can buy the food available in shops that are still open.

## **VI. Gaza ‘becoming a graveyard for children’, warns UN Secretary-General, calling for humanitarian ceasefire**

*On 6 November, Secretary-General António Guterres delivered the following [remarks](#) at a press conference in New York.*

The nightmare in Gaza is more than a humanitarian crisis. It is a crisis of humanity. The intensifying conflict is shaking the world, rattling the region and, most tragically, destroying so many innocent lives.

Ground operations by the Israel Defence Forces and continued bombardment are hitting civilians, hospitals, refugee camps, mosques, churches and UN facilities — including shelters. No one is safe. At the same time, Hamas and other militants use civilians as human shields and continue to launch rockets indiscriminately towards Israel.

I reiterate my utter condemnation of the abhorrent acts of terror perpetrated by Hamas on 7 October — and repeat my call for the immediate, unconditional and safe release of hostages held in Gaza.

Nothing can justify the deliberate torture, killing, injuring and kidnapping of civilians. The protection of civilians must be paramount.

I am deeply concerned about clear violations of international humanitarian law that we are witnessing. Let me be clear: No party to an armed conflict is above international humanitarian law.

Gaza is becoming a graveyard for children. Hundreds of girls and boys are reportedly being killed or injured every day. More journalists have reportedly been killed over a four-week period than in any conflict in at least three decades. More United Nations aid workers have been killed than in any comparable period in the history of our organization.

I salute all those who continue their life-saving work despite the overwhelming challenges and risks.

The unfolding catastrophe makes the need for a humanitarian ceasefire more urgent with every passing hour. The parties to the conflict — and indeed, the international community — face an immediate and fundamental responsibility: to stop the inhuman collective suffering and dramatically expand humanitarian aid to Gaza.

Today, the United Nations and our partners are launching a \$1.2 billion humanitarian appeal to help 2.7 million people — that’s the entire population of the Gaza Strip and half a million Palestinians in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

Some life-saving aid is getting into Gaza from Egypt through the Rafah crossing. But, the trickle of assistance does not meet the ocean of need.

And let's be clear: the Rafah crossing alone does not have the capacity to process aid trucks at the scale required. Just over 400 trucks have crossed into Gaza over the past two weeks — compared with 500 a day before the conflict. And crucially, this does not include fuel.

Without fuel, newborn babies in incubators and patients on life support will die. Water cannot be pumped or purified. Raw sewage could soon start gushing onto the streets, further spreading disease. Trucks loaded with critical relief will be stranded.

The way forward is clear. A humanitarian ceasefire. Now.

All parties respecting all their obligations under international humanitarian law. Now.

This means the unconditional release of the hostages in Gaza. Now.

The protection of civilians, hospitals, UN facilities, shelters and schools. Now.

More food, more water, more medicine and of course fuel — entering Gaza safely, swiftly and at the scale needed. Now.

Unfettered access to deliver supplies to all people in need in Gaza. Now.

And the end of the use of civilians as human shields. Now.

None of these appeals should be conditional on the others.

And for all of this, we need more funding — now.

In addition, I remain gravely concerned about rising violence and an expansion of the conflict. The occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is at a boiling point.

Let us also not forget the importance of addressing the risks of the conflict spilling over to the wider region. We are already witnessing a spiral of escalation from Lebanon and Syria, to Iraq and Yemen. That escalation must stop.

Cool heads and diplomatic efforts must prevail. Hateful rhetoric and provocative actions must cease.

I am deeply troubled by the rise in antisemitism and anti-Muslim bigotry. Jewish and Muslim communities in many parts of the world are on high alert, fearing for their personal safety and security. Emotions are at a fever pitch. Tensions are running high. The images of suffering are heart-breaking and soul-crushing. But, we must find a way to hold on to our common humanity.

I think of civilians in Gaza — the vast majority women and children — terrified by the relentless bombardment. I join the UN family in mourning 89 of our United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) colleagues who have been killed in Gaza — many of them together with members of their family. They include teachers, school principals, doctors, engineers, guards, support staff and a young woman named Mai.

Mai did not let her muscular dystrophy or her wheelchair confine her dreams. She was a top student, became a software developer and devoted her skills to working on information technology for UNRWA. I am so deeply inspired by her example. I think of all those tortured and killed in Israel nearly one month ago and the hostages — abducted from their homes, their families, their friends while simply living their lives. Ten days ago, I met with some of the family members of those hostages. I heard their stories, felt their anguish and was deeply moved by their compassion. I will never relent in working for their immediate release. This is essential in itself and central to solving many other challenges.

One mother movingly shared with me her desolation over her abducted son, Hersh. She also spoke outside the Security Council — and on the subject of confronting hatred, she said: “When you only get outraged when one side’s babies are killed, then your moral compass is broken and your humanity is broken.”

Even in her utter despair, she stood before the world and reminded us: “In a competition of pain, there is never a winner.”

We must act now to find a way out of this brutal, awful, agonizing dead end of destruction. To help end the pain and suffering. To help heal the broken. And to help pave the way to peace, to a two-State solution with Israelis and Palestinians living in peace and security.

## **VII. Secretary-General reiterates his total condemnation of the acts of terror committed by Hamas in Israel**

*On 7 November, the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General, Stéphane Dujarric issued the following [statement](#).*

One month after the horrific events of 7 October, the Secretary-General reiterates his total condemnation of the acts of terror committed by Hamas in Israel for which there can be no justification. He will never forget the horrendous images of civilians being killed and maimed and others being dragged away into captivity. He reiterates his appeal for their immediate and unconditional release.

The Secretary-General remains extremely distressed by the killing of civilians in Gaza and the humanitarian catastrophe that continues to unfold in Gaza, with an unimaginable toll on civilians. He also reiterates his call for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire.

## **VIII. UN Secretary-General's message to the International Humanitarian Conference for the Civilian Population in Gaza**

*On 9 November, Secretary-General António Guterres sent the following video [message to the Conference held in Paris](#).*

We are here to support civilians in Gaza. Of course, nothing justifies the abhorrent acts of terror by Hamas in Israel on 7 October which I utterly condemn. Israelis and others were brutally killed or abducted – and I call once again for the unconditional return of all hostages.

Now civilians in Gaza – including children and women – face a never-ending humanitarian nightmare. Their neighbourhoods wiped out. Their loved ones killed. Bombs raining down, while being denied life's very basics – food, water, medicine, electricity.

Some life-saving aid is beginning to trickle into Gaza. But, let's face it, it's a drop in the ocean. The needs are enormous. We must step up to assist and protect civilians in Gaza.

That means an immediate humanitarian ceasefire. It means ensuring full respect of international humanitarian law. It means protecting hospitals, UN facilities, shelters, and schools.

It means unfettered, safe, and sustained access to bring in and distribute supplies at much greater scale, volume, and frequency – including fuel. And it means investing in the \$1.2 billion humanitarian appeal that the United Nations has just launched to help the people of Gaza.

I urge your support. Now is the time for concrete action. Together, we can help ease this terrible human suffering. We can help civilians in Gaza see at last, and at the very least, a glimmer of hope – a sign of solidarity – and a signal that the world sees their plight and cares enough to act.

## **IX. WHO Director-General's addresses the Security Council**

*On 10 November, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, World Health Organization Director-General, delivered the following [remarks](#) at the UN Security Council.*

Thank you for this opportunity to brief you on the health situation in Gaza.

Let me be clear from the outset that I fully understand the anger, grief and fear of the Israeli people following the horrific, barbaric and unjustifiable attacks by Hamas and other armed groups on Israeli civilians on the 7th of October.

The killing of 1400 people, and injuries to more than 7200 others, is incomprehensible. For the survivors and families of victims, the mental health consequences will endure for a long time to come.

WHO is gravely concerned for the health and well-being of Israeli hostages in Gaza, many of whom are older people, children and those with urgent medical needs.

Two weeks ago, I spoke with families of hostages, and I will meet them in Geneva next week. I feel their heartache and fear. I also understand the anger, grief and fear of the people of Gaza, who had already suffered through 16 years of blockade, and are now enduring the destruction of their families, their homes, their communities and the life they knew.

The situation on the ground is impossible to describe. Hospital corridors crammed with the injured, the sick, the dying; Morgues overflowing; Surgery without anaesthesia; Tens of thousands of displaced people sheltering at hospitals; Families crammed into overcrowded schools, desperate for food and water.

More than 10 800 people have now been killed in Gaza, almost 70% of them women and children. On average, a child is killed every 10 minutes in Gaza. 1.5 million people have been displaced and are looking for shelter anywhere they can find it. But nowhere and no-one is safe. As more and more people move to a smaller and smaller space, overcrowding is increasing the risks of outbreaks of diarrheal and respiratory disease and skin infections.

WHO is on the ground in Gaza, alongside our partners, to support health workers, who are physically and mentally exhausted and are doing their best in unimaginable conditions. In addition to caring for the 27 000 people who are wounded, many of them with life-threatening injuries, they are trying to manage the regular health needs of more than 2 million people.

More than 180 women give birth in Gaza single every day. There are 9000 patients on cancer therapy. And there are 350 000 patients with diabetes, heart disease and hypertension.

I visited Al-Shifa hospital in Gaza five years ago, in 2018. I toured a dialysis ward and a neonatal intensive care unit and spoke with health workers and patients. Even then, in 2018 in Gaza, conditions were extremely difficult for health workers. Now their work is impossible, and they are directly in the firing line.

Since the 7th of October, WHO has verified more than 250 attacks on health care in Gaza and the West Bank, in addition to 25 attacks on health care in Israel – hospitals, clinics, patients, ambulances.

Last week, WHO documented 5 attacks on 5 hospitals in one day. In the past 48 hours alone, four hospitals have been put out of action, representing some 430 beds. More than 100 of our UN colleagues have been killed and counting.

And as we speak, there are reports of firing outside the Al-Shifa and Rantisi hospitals. Half of the Gaza Strip's 36 hospitals and two-thirds of its primary health care centres are not functioning at all. Those that are functioning are operating way beyond their capacities. The health system is on its knees, and yet somehow is continuing to deliver some lifesaving care.

The best way to support those health workers and the people they serve is by giving them the tools they need to deliver that care – medicines, medical equipment and fuel for hospital generators. Field hospitals and emergency medical teams can complement and support existing hospitals and health workers in Gaza, but they cannot replace them.

Supporting Gaza's health workers is at the heart of WHO's operational response plan. WHO was part of the first convoy of aid to enter Gaza through the Rafah crossing on the 21st of October, and since then we have delivered 63 metric tonnes of specialist medical equipment and supplies that health workers need to save lives, including to hospitals north of Wadi Gaza.

But this doesn't even begin to address the scale of need. It's too small. Before the 7th of October, an average of 500 trucks a day were crossing into Gaza with essential supplies. Since the 21st of October, instead of the expected 10 000 trucks, just 650 have entered.

A month ago, just two days after the violence started, I met with His Excellency President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi of Egypt, who agreed to support WHO and our partners to deliver aid through the Rafah crossing.

I thank Egypt for its support in getting aid into Gaza, and for establishing a medivac pathway to get the most critically sick and wounded patients out, including 12 children with cancer who are being transferred for treatment in Egypt and Jordan.

WHO continues to call for unfettered access to deliver humanitarian aid to the civilians of Gaza, who are not responsible for this violence, but are suffering in ways that we in this room cannot imagine. We continue to call on Hamas to release the hostages it took, many of whom need urgent medical attention. We continue to call on Israel to restore supplies of electricity, water and especially fuel. We continue to call on both sides to abide by their obligations under international humanitarian law. And we continue to call for a ceasefire, to prevent further deaths of civilians and further damage to Gaza's hospitals and health facilities.

I understand what the children of Gaza must be going through, because as a child, I went through the same thing.

The sound of gunfire and shells whistling through the air; the smell of smoke after they struck; tracer bullets in the night sky; the fear; the pain; the loss – these things have stayed with me throughout my life.

I know the smell, the image of war. I know what war means.

When my mother heard gunfire at night, she would make us sleep under the bed, with more mattresses on top of the bed, in the hope we might be protected if a shell fell on our house – the mother's instinct to save her kids.

I also understand what the parents of Gaza are going through, because in 1998, when war returned to Ethiopia, my country, my children had to hide in a bunker to shelter from the bombardment.

I experienced war both as a child and as a parent. I know how the children are feeling, and I know how the parents are feeling. The children and parents of Gaza and Israel want and need the same thing that my family wanted and needed: peace and security.

I never imagined that I would be the DG of the WHO, because my mother's prayer was that I would survive just one more day. That is what this council was established to achieve. But this

crisis underlines once again the need for reform of the Security Council. I felt nostalgic when I entered the room, because I used to come here when I was Foreign Minister.

It has long been my view that the Security Council no longer serves the purpose for which it was established – with all due respect. It represents the realpolitik of the Second World War, not the 21st century. As a Foreign Minister, I was part of a group working on reform of the Security Council. I am dismayed that no progress has been made.

To remain credible, relevant, and a force for peace in our world, Member States, especially the P5, must take seriously the need to reform the Security Council.

One more ask for today is a ceasefire and a path towards peace.

## **X. UNFPA, UNICEF, and WHO call for immediate action to halt attacks on health care in Gaza**

*On 12 November, Laila Baker, UNFPA Arab States Regional Director, Adele Khodr, UNICEF Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa; and Ahmed Al-Mandhari, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, issued the following joint [statement](#).*

The regional directors of UNFPA, UNICEF and WHO call for urgent international action to end the ongoing attacks on hospitals in Gaza.

We are horrified at the latest reports of attacks on and in the vicinity of Al-Shifa Hospital, Al-Rantissi Naser Paediatric Hospital, Al-Quds Hospital, and others in Gaza city and northern Gaza, killing many, including children. Intense hostilities surrounding several hospitals in northern Gaza are preventing safe access for health staff, the injured, and other patients.

Premature and new-born babies on life support are reportedly dying due to power, oxygen, and water cuts at Al-Shifa Hospital, while others are at risk. Staff across a number of hospitals are reporting lack of fuel, water and basic medical supplies, putting the lives of all patients at immediate risk.

Over the past 36 days, WHO has recorded at least 137 attacks on health care in Gaza, resulting in 521 deaths and 686 injuries, including 16 deaths and 38 injuries of health workers on duty.

Attacks on medical facilities and civilians are unacceptable and are a violation of International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law and Conventions. They cannot be condoned. The right to seek medical assistance, especially in times of crisis, should never be denied.

More than half of the hospitals in the Gaza Strip are closed. Those still functioning are under massive strain and can only provide very limited emergency services, lifesaving surgery and intensive care services. Shortages of water, food, and fuel are also threatening the wellbeing of thousands of displaced people, including women and children, who are sheltering in hospitals and their surrounds.



The world cannot stand silent while hospitals, which should be safe havens, are transformed into scenes of death, devastation, and despair. Decisive international action is needed now to secure an immediate humanitarian ceasefire and prevent further loss of life and preserve what's left of the health care system in Gaza. Unimpeded, safe and sustained access is needed now to provide fuel, medical supplies and water for these lifesaving services. The violence must end now.

## **XI. Middle East violence could prompt dangerous expansion of conflict to wider region, UN Disarmament Chief warns**

*On 13 November, the following [press release](#) was issued on the opening of the fourth session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction.*

Against the backdrop of escalating violence in the Middle East, the United Nations High Representative for Disarmament Affairs today warned of a dangerous expansion of the conflict in the wider region during the opening of the fourth session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction.

Izumi Nakamitsu, addressing the Conference on behalf of UN Secretary-General António Guterres, said she came to the Conference “with a heavy heart, anguish, pain and sorrow that I had never felt in my more than 30 years of UN career.” She noted the minute of silence among UN personnel today to mourn and honour the 101 brave colleagues from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) who have lost their lives in Gaza in service of others.

She expressed deep concern about clear violations of international humanitarian law in the ongoing conflict. “Let me repeat the clear, unequivocal position of the United Nations that no party to an armed conflict is above international humanitarian law. Even wars have rules,” she said, calling for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire to allow for life-saving aid to reach those in urgent and desperate need. “Cool heads and diplomatic efforts must prevail,” she said, emphasizing that no effort should be spared to help pave the way to peace, to a two-State solution with Israelis and Palestinians living in peace and security. Addressing the root causes of the conflict, including through a broader peace and security architecture in the region, is urgent, she said.

Given the current crisis in the Middle East, the decision to continue the important work of the Conference demonstrates a collective will to use dialogue and diplomacy in seeking common security and regional peace. “Any threat to use nuclear weapons is inadmissible [and] further illustrates the urgency and imperative to achieve the objective of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction,” she said.

...

## **XII. Civilians are caught in collapsed buildings or trapped by ongoing ground battles, warns UN Human Rights Office**

*On 14 November, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory issued the following [statement](#).*

Israel's ground incursion into northern Gaza has now continued for approximately two weeks and, despite the reported movement of many thousands of people from northern Gaza to the south, hundreds of thousands of civilians remain trapped in Gaza City and other parts of northern Gaza at risk of their lives from hunger, thirst, disease, and violence.

Desperate calls and urgent appeals are being made by civilians who are unable to move from the buildings where they are sheltering because of the presence of Israeli troops, ongoing ground battles or who have been caught in collapsed buildings. We hear of neighbours sending messages asking for help to get out of their basements; and then that their contacts have been lost. Some of the people report that they are trapped with their family members who have either been killed or seriously injured. We hear from people with disabilities trapped in a rehabilitation centre, not receiving any support for evacuation or any humanitarian aid. We hear that all calls are going unanswered as medical and rescue workers have no more capacity to help.

Ambulances, if any were running, would have nowhere to take the injured as hospitals are shutting down – under attack and with no fuel. Al Shifa Hospital, the largest hospital in Gaza, is now out of service; reportedly, its three ambulances sit on the premises dormant. An attempt by the Palestinian Red Crescent and the ICRC to evacuate Al Quds Hospital failed yesterday due to the intensity of the hostilities near the hospital. Civil Defence workers are no longer able to work – unable to identify victims or recover them. Urgent humanitarian access must be granted in the north and sufficient time and conditions for very difficult evacuations to take place. Any evacuations of hospitals must consider the ability of patients, medical staff, and other civilians to evacuate safely and to places patients can be properly cared for. This becomes more difficult by the hour as the condition of patients deteriorates and we hear reports even of hospitals in southern Gaza reducing operations due to lack of fuel.

## **XIII. UNICEF Executive Director visits Gaza**

*On 15 November, UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell issued the following [statement](#).*

Today I visited the Gaza Strip to meet with children, their families and UNICEF staff. What I saw and heard was devastating. They have endured repeated bombardment, loss and displacement. Inside the Strip, there is nowhere safe for Gaza's one million children to turn.

The parties to the conflict are committing grave violations against children; these include killing, maiming, abductions, attacks on schools and hospitals, and the denial of humanitarian access – all of which UNICEF condemns.

In Gaza, more than 4,600 children have reportedly been killed, with nearly 9,000 reportedly injured. Many children are missing and believed buried under the rubble of collapsed buildings and homes, the tragic result of the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. Meanwhile, newborn babies who require specialized care have died in one of Gaza's hospitals as power and medical supplies run out, and violence continues with indiscriminate effect.

At the Al Naser hospital in Khan Yunis, I met with patients and displaced families seeking shelter and safety. A 16-year-old girl told me from her hospital bed that her neighbourhood had been bombed. She survived but doctors say she will never be able to walk again.

In the hospital's neonatal ward, tiny babies were clinging to life in incubators, as doctors worried how they could keep the machines running without fuel.

During my time in Gaza, I also met with UNICEF staff who are continuing to deliver for children amidst the danger and devastation. They shared their own heartbreaking stories with me of the impact of the war on their children, of family members killed, and of how they have been displaced many times over.

Many people, including our staff and their families, are now living in overcrowded shelters with very little water, food or decent sanitation – conditions which could lead to disease outbreaks. The risk to humanitarian actors inside Gaza cannot be overstated. More than 100 UNRWA staff have been killed since October.

UNICEF and our partners are doing everything we can, including bringing in desperately needed humanitarian supplies. But diesel fuel has practically run out, causing some hospitals and health centres to stop functioning. Without fuel, desalination plants cannot produce drinking water and humanitarian supplies cannot be distributed.

The intermittent opening of Gaza's border crossings to shipments of humanitarian supplies is insufficient to meet the skyrocketing needs. And with winter around the corner, the need for fuel could become even more acute. When I left Gaza today, the rain was pounding down, adding to the misery.

I am here to do whatever I can to advocate for the protection of children. I once again call on all parties to ensure that children are protected and assisted, as per international humanitarian law. Only the parties to the conflict can truly stop this horror.

I also call on the parties to implement an immediate humanitarian ceasefire, to safely release all abducted and detained children, and to ensure that humanitarian actors have safe, sustained and unimpeded access to reach those in need with the full range of lifesaving services and supplies."

#### **XIV. All parties to comply with international humanitarian law, release of hostages, humanitarian pauses and corridors in Gaza – Security Council resolution 2712 (2023)**

*On 15 November, at its 9479th meeting the Security Council adopted the following [resolution](#) by a vote of 12 in favour to none against, with 3 abstentions (Russian Federation, United Kingdom, United States)*

*The Security Council,*

*Reaffirming* the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations,

*Reaffirming* that all parties to conflicts must adhere to their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law,

*Stressing* that international humanitarian law provides general protection for children as persons taking no part in hostilities, and special protection as persons who are particularly vulnerable, and recalling that the taking of hostages is prohibited under international law,

*Recalling* that all parties to armed conflict must comply strictly with the obligations applicable to them under international law for the protection of children in armed conflict, including those contained in the Geneva Conventions of 12th August 1949 and the Additional Protocols of 1977, as well as the relevant conventions regarding the involvement of children in conflict situations,

*Expressing deep concern* at the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip and its grave impact on the civilian population, especially the disproportionate effect on children, underlining the urgent need for full, rapid, safe, and unhindered humanitarian access, and stressing the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence and the obligation to respect and protect humanitarian relief personnel,

*Rejecting* forced displacement of the civilian population, including children, in violation of international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law,

*Expressing deep concern* that the disruption of access to education has a dramatic impact on children, and that conflict has lifelong effects on their physical and mental health,

*Commending* the ongoing efforts of several regional and international actors as well as of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to address the hostage and humanitarian crises,

1. *Demands* that all parties comply with their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law, notably with regard to the protection of civilians, especially children;

2. *Calls for* urgent and extended humanitarian pauses and corridors throughout the Gaza Strip for a sufficient number of days to enable, consistent with international humanitarian law, the full, rapid, safe, and unhindered humanitarian access for United Nations humanitarian agencies and

their implementing partners, the International Committee of the Red Cross and other impartial humanitarian organizations, to facilitate the continuous, sufficient and unhindered provision of essential goods and services important to the well-being of civilians, especially children, throughout the Gaza Strip, including water, electricity, fuel, food, and medical supplies, as well as emergency repairs to essential infrastructure, and to enable urgent rescue and recovery efforts, including for missing children in damaged and destroyed buildings, and including the medical evacuation of sick or injured children and their care givers;

3. *Calls for* the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages held by Hamas and other groups, especially children, as well as ensuring immediate humanitarian access;

4. *Calls on* all parties to refrain from depriving the civilian population in the Gaza Strip of basic services and humanitarian assistance indispensable to their survival, consistent with international humanitarian law, which has a disproportionate impact on children, welcomes the initial, although limited, provision of humanitarian supplies to civilians in the Gaza Strip and calls for the scaling up of the provision of such supplies to meet the humanitarian needs of the civilian population, especially children;

5. *Underscores* the importance of coordination, humanitarian notification, and deconfliction mechanisms, to protect all medical and humanitarian staff, vehicles including ambulances, humanitarian sites, and critical infrastructure, including UN facilities, and to help facilitate the movement of aid convoys and patients, in particular sick and injured children and their care givers;

6. *Requests* the Secretary-General to report orally to the Security Council on the implementation of this resolution at the next mandated meeting of the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East, and further requests the Secretary-General to identify options to effectively monitor the implementation of this resolution as a matter of prime concern;

7. *Decides* to remain seized of the matter.

## **XV. UNRWA warns that Gaza continues to have huge need for fuel amid siege and war**

*On 15 November, UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini issued the following [statement](#).*

UNRWA received today just over 23,000 litres of fuel to the besieged Gaza Strip. The Israeli Authorities have restricted the use of this fuel only to transport the little aid coming via Egypt. This fuel cannot be used for the overall humanitarian response, including for medical and water facilities or the work of UNRWA.

It is appalling that fuel continues to be used as a weapon of war. For the past five weeks, UNRWA has been pleading to get fuel in support of the humanitarian operation in Gaza. This seriously paralyses our work and the delivery of assistance to the Palestinian communities in Gaza.

By the end of today, around 70 per cent of people in Gaza will not have clean water. Key services including water desalination plants, sewage treatments and hospitals have ceased to operate.

To have fuel for trucks only will not save lives anymore. Waiting longer will cost lives. Much more fuel is needed. We need 160,000 litres of fuel every day for basic humanitarian operations.

I call on the Israeli Authorities to immediately authorize the delivery of the needed amount of fuel as is required under international humanitarian law.”

## **XVI. CEIRPP Bureau welcomes the adoption of Security Council resolution 2712 (2023) and reiterates its calls for a ceasefire**

*On 16 November, the Bureau of the UN Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People issued the following [statement](#).*

The Bureau welcomes the adoption of Security Council [resolution 2712](#) (2023) concerning the crisis facing the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip and its demand that all parties comply with their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law, notably with regard to the protection of civilians.

The Bureau urges respect for this demand and for the implementation of resolution 2712 (2023) in its entirety, including the call for “urgent and extended humanitarian pauses and corridors for a sufficient number of days throughout the Gaza Strip to enable, consistent with international humanitarian law, the full, rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access for United Nations humanitarian agencies and their implementing partners”.

The Bureau remains extremely concerned at the ongoing attacks on civilian areas and infrastructure, including UN premises, hospitals, schools and places of worship where civilians are taking refuge. In line with international humanitarian law, these sites must be protected at all times.

Humanitarian pauses are not a solution to the collective suffering imposed on the Palestinian civilian population of the Gaza Strip. They will not stop the killing of civilians witnessed for the past 40 days. While welcoming the adoption of the resolution, the Bureau reiterates its calls for an immediate and durable ceasefire and for Israel, the occupying Power, to stop and reverse the forcible transfer of civilians, lift the full siege of the Gaza Strip and allow a regular and steady flow of humanitarian supplies, at the scale that meets the enormous needs.

The Bureau also calls for the immediate and unconditional release of all Israeli hostages in Gaza and all Palestinians who are arbitrarily detained in Israel.

Fulfilling the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination and their legitimate aspirations for an independent State, is paramount to achieve a just and lasting peace in accordance with international law and on the basis of the two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders.

## **XVII. 36 UN human rights experts call on international community to prevent genocide against the Palestinian people in Gaza**

*On 16 November, Francesca Albanese, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967; Margaret Satterthwaite, Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers; Dorothy Estrada Tanck (Chair), Claudia Flores, Ivana Krstić, Haina Lu, and Laura Nyirinkindi, Working group on discrimination against women and girls; Surya Deva, Special Rapporteur on the right to development; Ravindran Daniel (Chair-Rapporteur), Sorch MacLeod, Chris Kwaja, Jovana Jezdimirovic Ranito, Carlos Salazar Couto, Working Group on the use of mercenaries; Barbara G. Reynolds (Chair), Bina D'Costa, Dominique Day, Catherine Namakula, Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent; Pedro Arrojo-Agudo, Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation; Olivier De Schutter, Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights; Farida Shaheed, Special Rapporteur on the right to education; Damilola Olawuyi (Chairperson), Robert McCorquodale (Vice-Chairperson), Elżbieta Karska, Fernanda Hopenhaym, and Pichamon Yeophantong, Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises; Siobhán Mullally, Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children; Livingstone Sewanyana, Independent Expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order; Balakrishnan Rajagopal, Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing; Ashwini K.P. Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance; Paula Gaviria Betancur, Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons; Mary Lawlor, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; Claudia Mahler, Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons; Ben Saul, Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism; Irene Khan Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Opinion and Expression; Reem Alsalem, Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences; Tomoya Obokata, Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences issued the following [press release](#).*

Grave violations committed by Israel against Palestinians in the aftermath of 7 October, particularly in Gaza, point to a genocide in the making, UN experts said today. They illustrated evidence of increasing genocidal incitement, overt intent to “destroy the Palestinian people under occupation”, loud calls for a ‘second Nakba’ in Gaza and the rest of the occupied Palestinian territory, and the use of powerful weaponry with inherently indiscriminate impacts, resulting in a colossal death toll and destruction of life-sustaining infrastructure.

“Many of us already raised the alarm about the risk of genocide in Gaza,” the experts said. “We are deeply disturbed by the failure of governments to heed our call and to achieve an immediate ceasefire. We are also profoundly concerned about the support of certain governments for Israel’s strategy of warfare against the besieged population of Gaza, and the failure of the international system to mobilise to prevent genocide,” they said.

The bombardment and siege of Gaza have reportedly killed over 11,000 people, injured more than 27,000 and displaced 1.6 million persons since 7 October 2023, while thousands are still under the rubble. Of those killed, about 41 per cent are children and 25 percent are women. On average, one child is killed and two are injured every 10 minutes during the war, turning Gaza into a



“graveyard for children,” according to the UN Secretary-General. Almost 200 medics, 102 UN staff, 41 journalists, frontline and human rights defenders, have also been killed, while dozens of families over five generations have been wiped out.

“This occurs amidst Israel’s tightening of its 16-year unlawful blockade of Gaza, which has prevented people from escaping and left them without food, water, medicine and fuel for weeks now, despite international appeals to provide access for critical humanitarian aid. As we previously said, intentional starvation amounts to a war crime,” the experts said.

They noted that half of the civilian infrastructure in Gaza has been destroyed, including more than 40,000 housing units, as well as hospitals, schools, mosques, bakeries, water pipes, sewage and electricity networks, in a way that threatens to make the continuation of Palestinian life in Gaza impossible.

“The reality in Gaza, with its unbearable pain and trauma on the survivors, is a catastrophe of enormous proportions,” the experts said.

“Such egregious violations cannot be justified in the name of self-defence after attacks by Hamas on 7 October, which we have condemned in the strongest possible terms,” the experts said. “Israel remains the occupying power in the occupied Palestinian territory, which also includes the Gaza Strip, and therefore cannot wage a war against the population under its belligerent occupation,” they said.

“In order to be legitimate, Israel’s response must be strictly within the framework of international humanitarian law,” the UN experts said. “The presence of underground tunnels in parts of Gaza does not eliminate the civilian status of individuals and infrastructure that cannot be directly targeted nor suffer disproportionately,” they said.

The experts also raised the alarm about the escalation of violence against Palestinians in the occupied West Bank, by soldiers and armed settlers. Since 7 October 2023, at least 190 Palestinians have been killed, more than 2,700 injured, and over 1,100 individuals displaced in the occupied West Bank. On 9 November, Israeli forces also bombed, for the second time, the Jenin refugee camp with heavy artillery and airstrikes, killing at least 14 Palestinians. The increasingly coercive environment has also led to forcible displacement of several communities of pastoralists and Bedouin People in the Jordan Valley and south of the Hebron Hills.

“We are deeply distressed at the failure of Israel to agree to – and the unwillingness of the international community to press more decisively for – an immediate ceasefire. The failure to urgently implement a ceasefire risks this situation spiralling towards a genocide conducted with 21st century means and methods of warfare,” the experts warned.

They also expressed alarm over discernibly genocidal and dehumanising rhetoric coming from senior Israeli government officials, as well as some professional groups and public figures, calling for the “total destruction”, and “erasure” of Gaza, the need to “finish them all” and force Palestinians from the West Bank and east Jerusalem into Jordan. The experts warned that Israel has demonstrated it has the military capacity to implement such criminal intentions.

“That is why our early warning must not be ignored,” the experts said.



“The international community has an obligation to prevent atrocity crimes, including genocide, and should immediately consider all diplomatic, political and economic measures to that end,” the experts said. They urged immediate action by UN Member States and the UN system as a whole.

In the short-term, the experts reiterated their call to Israel and Hamas to implement an immediate ceasefire, and:

1. Allow unimpeded delivery of desperately needed humanitarian aid to the people in Gaza;
2. Ensure the unconditional, safe and secure release of the hostages taken by Hamas;
3. Ensure that Palestinians arbitrarily detained by Israel are released immediately;
4. Open humanitarian corridors toward the West Bank, east Jerusalem and Israel, especially for those that have been most affected by this war, the sick, persons with disabilities, older persons, pregnant women and children;

They also recommended:

5. The deployment of an international protective presence in the occupied Palestinian territory under the supervision of the UN;
6. Collaboration of all parties with the Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel, and the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court on the investigation opened in March 2021, as well as crimes arising from the recent events, underlining that the crimes committed today are partly due to a lack of deterrence and continued impunity;
7. Implement an arms embargo on all warring parties;
8. Address the underlying causes of the conflict by ending the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territory.

“The international community, including not only States but also non-State actors such as businesses, must do everything it can to immediately end the risk of genocide against the Palestinian people, and ultimately end Israeli apartheid and occupation of the Palestinian territory,” the experts said.

“We remind Member States that what is at stake is not only the fate of Israelis and Palestinians, but a serious conflagration of the conflict in the region, leading to more human rights violations and suffering of innocent civilians,” they said.

### **XVIII. UNRWA Chief visits Gaza**

*On 16 November, UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini delivered the following remarks at a [press conference](#).*

It has been almost six weeks of hell for the people of Gaza. Six weeks far too many for the Palestinians, for the women, for the children. Six weeks far too long for the hostages and their families. And far too long for the entire region.

It has also been six weeks of total disregard for international humanitarian law. I have to say the scale of destruction and loss is just staggering, and this is taking place under our watch.

We have just witnessed the largest displacement of Palestinians since 1948. It is an exodus under our watch. A river of people being forced to flee their homes. Some were forced to re-live the unliveable; traumas from the past, mostly unhealed. Others, the younger generation, were forced to live through traumas of ancestors or parents.

This week, our teams reported people arriving after hours and hours of walking. Coming from the north of Gaza, Gaza City, to the South. They were dehydrated, hungry, exhausted, and shell shocked. Many were just asking “What next?”, “Where do I go now”?

Unlike in other global conflicts in recent years, the people of Gaza are trapped in a 365 square kilometre enclave with no way out. With no border to be crossed. This enclave has now shrunk by half.

Many continue to flock to UNRWA shelters where we are hosting more than 800,000 people. I went recently to one of these shelters. What I saw there will never leave me. I was shocked by the tragic and sudden transformation of a place I have known very well for more than 30 years.

Until recently, and I know it is hard to believe, many people in Gaza were living like you and me. With the same kind of dreams, the same kind of aspirations for their children. But suddenly, overnight, their dignity was stripped.

When I was in this school, the children were pleading for a sip of water and a loaf of bread. And they were doing this in the same school where many of them used to get teaching and education.

We keep talking about the unsanitary living conditions in these overcrowded shelters. First, we see it because there is almost no water in places where you have thousands of people. But then these are places which were never meant to be shelters. Basically, water is not available. There is only one toilet available for 700 people. These are the living conditions.

On top of that, most of the people left their homes at the last minute. They left without anything, and many of them basically do not have even the clothes to change their clothes after six weeks. That is what we are talking about when we talk about people being stripped of their dignity.

No doubt this kind of rapid deterioration brings us back to a kind of medieval age. The siege that we see is a collective punishment imposed on an entire population.

Let me give some of the latest issues of concern and also few issues where I would like to address some misunderstandings or, I would say, misinformation.

**1. The first one where I want to be clear and repeat: there is nowhere safe in Gaza.**

Whether in the north, in the south, in the middle. There is none. People have been asked to go from the north to the south but in reality, one third of the colleagues killed have been killed in the south. So, the south is not safe. Even the UN compounds are not safe. Up to 60 of them have been hit. Since the beginning of the conflict, we had more than 60 people killed. We had hundreds of people injured. There is no safe place, and I am saying this because you heard certainly yesterday Martin Griffiths talking about safe zones or humanitarian zones. Basically, in a war situation there is no such safe zone or humanitarian zone where people could feel safe.

## **2. Secondly, we have at least 103 UNRWA colleagues who have been killed.**

This is the number we were able to confirm. The reality is we might have more people who have been killed. And I worry that some of them are still under the rubble.

These were UNRWA colleagues. They had absolutely nothing to do with the conflict per se. They were civil servants of the United Nations, dedicated to serving their community. They have now been killed.

I know that last Monday, in Geneva and across the world, the UN declared half-mast to remember them. We did it everywhere except in Gaza, where basically our colleagues felt very strongly that the best way to honour them is through a message that we will continue to maintain our humanitarian response in the Gaza Strip.

## **3. Thirdly, because there have been again a number of articles, I want to make it clear again that UNRWA does not teach hatred in its schools.**

Over the past few weeks and amid a sea of emotions, a targeted and orchestrated campaign was launched against our education system, which in reality is recognized for its excellence. So let me just reconfirm a few facts:

UNRWA rejects claims linking its personnel and schools to the abhorrent October 7 attacks in Israel – attacks that UNRWA has condemned in the strongest terms, and which I will always continue to condemn.

I question the motivation of those who make such claims, through large advocacy campaigns – especially under these current circumstances.

I have always been clear on this: UNRWA is committed to upholding UN humanitarian principles, and we have absolutely zero tolerance for hate speech, racism and incitement to discrimination, hostility, or violence. I acknowledge that we are operating in a very emotional and divided environment. This environment has risks, but as the UN when it comes to this, we apply a no tolerance policy.

## **4. The question of diversion.**

UNRWA does not let aid be diverted. First of all, we are an agency that directly implements its programmes. We do not have any intermediary. Secondly, whenever we work with suppliers, they are systematically checked against a sanctions list. Thirdly, all the names of our staff on a yearly basis are communicated to the host country, and when it comes to the occupied Palestinian territory also to the Occupying state, namely Israel.

In reality, we are certainly one of the most scrutinized organizations. I experience this usually when I travel to capitals. Whenever we go to a Parliament, most questions about international aid are in reality directed to UNRWA.

#### **5. UNRWA is now running out of fuel.**

We will not be able to uphold our commitments to provide for the Palestinian people any longer.

I do believe there is a deliberate attempt to strangle our operation and paralyze UNRWA operations.

For weeks on end, we have pleaded, and I have pleaded three weeks ago at a press conference, warning about the impact of the lack of fuel. We have succeeded in the last three weeks to tap into the remaining fuel in the Gaza Strip, which was not UNRWA fuel, and we always coordinated with the Israeli Authorities. But now we are running out.

Yesterday, we received a tiny shipment of fuel, in reality half a truck, and on top of that it was delivered with conditionality meaning that it is to be used only and exclusively for the trucks collecting the goods arriving at Rafah.

Which means this fuel cannot be used for other purposes, which means the fuel is not available anymore for, for example, the desalination water stations, the sewage pumping system, or for the bakeries. As of yesterday, 70 per cent of the population in the south has no access to clean water. And as of today, we have raw sewage starting to flow in the streets.

Without the fuel we will not be able to bring the relief we are receiving from Egypt to the people in need. Clearly, if the issue of fuel is not addressed, we run the risk of having to suspend the entire humanitarian operation.

I do believe that it is outrageous that humanitarian agencies are reduced to begging for fuel and forced after that to decide who will we assist or not assist, when you have such a large population in a lifesaving situation.

#### **6. Another point I want to raise is the fact that UN facilities are being violated. Over the last six weeks, quite regularly.**

I mentioned before the premises sheltering displaced people. But I would like to tell you that over the last few days I received reports that several of our UNRWA schools (in the north) have been used for military purposes, including reports of an (alleged) recent discovery of weapons in schools and the positioning of Israeli Forces' tanks in at least two UN schools in the north.

I reiterate here that UN facilities must never be used for military purposes or political gains and control. This is precisely the meaning of the UN flag.

Before I conclude, let me, and I think it is important to always remember the situation in the West Bank. We should not forget the plight of the Palestinians in East Jerusalem and in the West Bank.

Long before the October 7 massacre, there was a lot of violence, mainly in the Refugee camps. Today, we have recorded since the beginning of the year more than 400 people killed, which is nearly three times higher than last year, and last year was already the highest number of people killed on record since 2005.

I just came back from a visit before coming here in Shufat camp in East Jerusalem where staff told me how they are living in constant fear and worry, amid Israeli Forces' operations.

Just after I left the Shufat camp, the school I visited had to evacuate again with 600 girls and boys because of such an operation.

In conclusion, just before taking question, I will again reiterate our asks:

- A ceasefire is now urgently needed if we want to save whatever is left of our humanity. In fact, it is long overdue.

- I am just receiving the information now that Gaza is again in a total communication blackout. And if it is again in a total communications blackout, it is because there is no fuel. As I told the member states, no fuel no bakery, no fuel no hospital, no fuel no water and here no fuel no communications. No communications are amplifying the anxiety and the panic and accelerating the last remaining civil order we have in the Gaza Strip.

- First, we need a ceasefire. We need fuel, fuel and fuel. A decision should have been taken a long time ago but the more we wait, the more we will see now the siege taking over and become the main reason why people die and could be killed in the Gaza Strip.

- The last point, when we talk about unhindered, unconditional and meaningful access of commodities in the Gaza Strip it is not only and just for humanitarian assistance, it is also to make sure basic commodities are available on the market and for that we need also a flow of commercial movement in the Gaza Strip.

## **XIX. UN Human Rights Chief Volker Türk briefs on his visit to the Middle East**

*On 16 November, Volker Türk, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, delivered the following [remarks](#) at an Informal Briefing to States on the High Commissioner's visit to the Middle East.*

A conflagration of violence has been unleashed in the Occupied Palestinian Territory – both in Gaza and the West Bank – as well as in Israel. Given the magnitude of the challenges, I thought it important to provide this informal briefing following my mission to Egypt and Jordan last week, and to offer my recommendations. I am grateful to both countries for having facilitated my visit.

I met with senior officials of both Egypt and Jordan, as well as the State of Palestine, and the Secretary-General of the Arab League, many UN colleagues, and representatives of Palestinian, Egyptian, Jordanian and Israeli civil society. I briefed journalists in Cairo and in Amman, with statements highlighting my key concerns and recommendations. I have also asked to visit Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory – a visit I consider very important.

I visited Rafah and El Arish, where I was struck by the horrific wounds of many patients at the hospital, including numerous children. I have also heard from a number of Israelis about their anguish, including families of the children and adults abducted by Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups.

Rarely have I heard such disturbing testimony about the catastrophic harm that ordinary people have endured, and which continues to mount. And never in my career of working in many crisis situations around the world have I met such an outpouring of fear, anger and despair.

The people of Gaza, who for years have been profoundly impoverished behind barbed wire fences, are enduring bombardment by the Israeli Security Forces of an intensity rarely experienced in this century.

**One in every 57 people living in the Gaza strip has been killed or wounded in the past five weeks**, according to figures from the Gaza Ministry of Health. Over 11,100 have been killed, more than 4,600 of them children. 102 of those killed were UN staff members: people whose only goal is to assist civilians. More than 26,000 people have been injured, many severely. And at least 2,000 more people are presumed to be trapped under the rubble of completely destroyed neighbourhoods, where there is no capacity to reach or rescue them. An entire population is being deeply traumatised.

In Israel, according to the authorities, 1,200 people, including many children, were killed in horrific attacks by Hamas and other armed groups on 7 and 8 October. 239 people, including children, were captured and taken to Gaza. And the nation has been thrown into shock.

It is apparent that on both sides, some view the killing of civilians as either acceptable collateral damage, or a deliberate and useful weapon of war. This is a humanitarian and human rights crisis. It represents a breakdown of the most basic respect for humane values. The killing of so many civilians cannot be dismissed as collateral damage. Not in a kibbutz. Not in a refugee camp. And not in a hospital.

As bombardment continues by air, intense urban warfare is also underway. In the very few hospitals that are still functioning, doctors operate on screaming children without anaesthetic, using mobile phones for light. WHO has recorded at least 137 attacks on health care in Gaza, with especially severe impact on Al-Shifa Hospital in recent days, where newborns on life support are dying due to power, oxygen, and water cuts, while many other patients of all ages are at risk – as well as medics, and people sheltering on the hospital grounds. And yet international humanitarian law requires special protection to medical units at all times, so that they can continue their life-saving work.

Many ordinary people have been forced to move south, seeking some kind of safety. They are carrying elderly family members, and terrified, sometimes wounded children, moving slowly on a bomb-cratered road. Others are unable to undertake the journey: hundreds of thousands of people – including many children, wounded, and people with disabilities – reportedly remain trapped in northern Gaza, where humanitarian access has become impossible.

The total depletion of fuel supplies is imminent, according to UNRWA, and it would be catastrophic across all of Gaza – leading to the complete collapse of water, sewage and crucial

healthcare services, and ending the trickle of humanitarian assistance that has been permitted to date. Massive outbreaks of infectious disease, and hunger, seem inevitable.

Current proposals for a so-called ‘safe zone’ are untenable: the zone is neither safe nor feasible for the number of people in need. I refer you to the IASC statement that will be coming out shortly.

Excellencies,

No-one is above the law, and international humanitarian law is clear.

All parties to every conflict must, at all times, distinguish between civilians and combatants, and between civilian objects and military objectives. Attacks directed at civilians or protected civilian objects – hospitals, schools, and the markets and bakeries that constitute a lifeline – are prohibited. Indiscriminate attacks – for example, aiming indiscriminate projectiles into southern Israel – are prohibited. Attacks where the likelihood of civilian death, and damage to protected objects, is disproportionate to the concrete and direct military advantage – as constantly risked by Israel’s use of explosive weapons with wide-area effect in densely populated areas of Gaza – are also prohibited. Forced displacement is prohibited. The taking and holding of hostages is prohibited, as is any use of civilians to shield locations from military operations. Collective punishment – as in the case of Israel’s blockade and siege imposed on Gaza – is prohibited.

Extremely serious allegations of multiple and profound breaches of international humanitarian law, whoever commits them, demand rigorous investigation and full accountability. Where national authorities prove unwilling or unable to carry out such investigations, and where there are contested narratives on particularly significant incidents, international investigation is called for.

And it must be clear that breaches of international humanitarian law – even war crimes – committed by one party do not, ever, absolve the other from compliance with the clear principles of the law of war.

The crisis extends well beyond Gaza. I am deeply concerned about the intensification of violence and severe discrimination against Palestinians in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. In my view, this creates a potentially explosive situation, and I want to be clear: we are well beyond the level of early warning. I am ringing the loudest possible alarm bell about the occupied West Bank.

As I [warned](#) last Friday, settler attacks on Palestinians are increasing, and Israeli security forces have stepped up their use of military weaponry in law enforcement operations. Since the beginning of October, at least 190 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli security forces or by settlers. My Office will be issuing a report on these issues, including conditions of detention.

I also share the deep sense of foreboding of many of my interlocutors about the risk of spill over into the wider Middle East region, if the current trajectory continues.

This crisis is another global shock to our multilateral system – polarising it further, and creating deeper fractures, with unbearable consequences for the solutions that humanity so urgently needs. We must not allow this to happen. Polarisation is a trap. Every one of us needs to strive to find common ground, and a solution.

Let me be clear. The outbreak of conflict is always a failure: A failure to find a peaceful solution. A failure of prevention. A failure to uphold human rights. I feel this deeply. The failure, in this case, has been long-standing, and many parties could count their part of responsibility in it.

But every conflict that has been enduringly resolved, has achieved that resolution through the advancement of justice, accountability and human rights.

Warnings by my Office, and others, about the explosive situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, in particular Gaza; our careful documentation of human rights violations over many years; and our recommendations for de-escalation, accountability and justice have been ignored – not only in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, but by States with influence on the parties to this crisis.

The voice of reason, our work to report and document violations, and our advocacy for human rights, will persevere until it is heard.

Today, among both Israelis and Palestinians, entirely separate narratives are building up, parallel to each other and with no connection between them. Profound historical traumas have been revived. I plead for everyone to recognise and acknowledge this depth of pain, and the reality of the humanity and the suffering of the other. This is perhaps my most important recommendation: it is essential that all parties acknowledge that all human lives have equal value.

A vortex of disinformation and dehumanising rhetoric is tugging people away from reason and humanity, blocking the work of identifying and clearing the way out and forward.

We must not let rage submerge our moral compass. We must not lose our grip on reality to the myth that pain can be eradicated by unleashing it on a scapegoat. We must insist on the truth. And we must continue to insist on the humanity, and the value, of every life that is affected or destroyed in this fighting.

My Office is not partisan. But yes: I am taking sides. I am on the side of every civilian, Palestinian or Israeli, who is harmed, or who lives in fear. Every one of them has exactly the same rights to live and thrive in peace and in freedom. That is the promise of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Who can win a war in which so many children have been killed? Only extremism. The extremism that will continue grinding up the bodies and the future of the children of both sides – Palestinians and Israelis – and their children's children, until their future is only despair and bloodshed.

What kind of societies will emerge from this conflict? And where is the way out?

Israelis' freedom is inextricably bound up with Palestinians' freedom. Palestinians and Israelis are each others' only hope for peace.

Last night, the Security Council adopted resolution 2712, calling for "urgent and extended humanitarian pauses and corridors throughout the Gaza Strip", among other key demands on the parties. Such action is critically necessary.



I urge the parties to give effect, immediately, to the Council's calls. And I urge all those with responsibility to step back from this devastating escalation of death, destruction and grief.

All States with influence must seek common ground, to disempower extremists by offering hope; and to build an enduring peace, through justice and the guarantee of equal rights.

There must be an end to grave human rights violations, notably against children.

All forms of collective punishment must come to an end. All hostages must be released.

International humanitarian and human rights law must be immediately and fully respected, including the principles of necessity, distinction, precaution and proportionality.

There must be a ceasefire on humanitarian and human rights grounds, and an end to the fighting – not only to deliver urgently needed food and water, but to create the space for a path out of this horror.

Rapid and unimpeded humanitarian assistance throughout Gaza, including fuel, and at the scale required, is urgently needed, and must be facilitated – including through Israeli crossings such as Kerem Shalom. My Office will remain deeply engaged, and I stress the importance of full access to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Gaza, for my Office, to ensure full and independent monitoring and documentation, and to coordinate protection work.

I further urge Israeli authorities to take immediate measures to ensure that the security forces comply with their obligations as an occupying power to protect Palestinians in the occupied West Bank, including from violence by settlers. Continued, widespread impunity for such violations must stop.

Without genuine accountability, contested narratives cannot be resolved; and people will be unable to contemplate a shared, common future alongside each other. Accountability is the key to opening the possibility of a genuinely different reality.

We have issued numerous detailed recommendations to address the underlying drivers of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, most recently in my [speech](#) to the Human Rights Council in March. It is urgent that their implementation begin.

In the fog of war it is particularly important to support including with financial resources, civil society, who act as eyes and ears.

Finally, it is clear that the Israeli occupation must end. It is essential to ensure the rights of Palestinians to self-determination and to their own State. And it is essential to acknowledge that Israel has a right to exist.

My Office will continue to do our utmost to assist all parties to step back from the precipice to which extremism and violence have led. Our strongest assets will remain our principled independence, and our consistent standing on the international laws and standards that can ensure enduring peace, through respect for every human life.

## **XX. General Assembly hears briefings from the heads of UN human rights and humanitarian agencies**

*On 17 November, WHO Director-General [Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus](#), Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator [Martin Griffiths](#), UN High Commissioner for Human Rights [Volker Türk](#), and UNRWA Acting Deputy Commissioner-General [Natalie Boucly](#) delivered the following remarks at the Informal Plenary Meeting of the United Nations General Assembly.*

### **a. WHO Director-General's remarks**

On Tuesday of this week, I met for the second time with families of Israeli hostages being held in Gaza. I heard and felt their pain and heartache.

WHO continues to call for those hostages who are still alive to be released, without condition.

We are deeply concerned for their health and well-being, just as we are concerned for the health and well-being of the people of Gaza, which is becoming more precarious every hour.

So far this week, WHO has not received updates on the number of deaths or injuries in Gaza, which makes it harder for us to evaluate the functioning of the health system.

What is clear is that the health needs of the people of Gaza are growing all the time, and the health system is near collapse.

Only 10 of Gaza's 36 hospitals are still functioning, with just 1,400 hospital beds. Many health workers have been displaced, forced to flee with their families. Here's what that means:

More and more casualties, and fewer and fewer beds, health workers, medicines and supplies;

Premature babies dying as life-support systems shut down;

More than 2000 patients with cancer, 1000 with kidney disease, 50,000 with cardiovascular disease and 60,000 with diabetes, all at risk as their treatment is interrupted;

Up to 200 women giving birth every day in the worst imaginable conditions;

An estimated 20,000 people and counting in need of specialized mental health services;

Among displaced populations in overcrowded shelters, we are seeing increasing numbers of respiratory and skin infections;

Cases of acute watery diarrhoea as the sewage system breaks down and people are forced to defecate in the open;

Increasing malnutrition; I could go on and on.

There are no words to describe the horror. The people of Gaza need our support – your support – now. The best way to support Gaza’s health workers and the people they serve is by giving them the tools they need – medicines, medical equipment, clean water, food, power and protection.

Field hospitals and emergency medical teams can complement and support existing hospitals and health workers in Gaza, but they cannot replace them. Supporting Gaza’s health workers is at the heart of WHO’s operational response plan.

We need to rapidly resupply the hospitals, reconstitute the health workforce and ensure health services are protected.

But frankly, the amount of aid that has been allowed into Gaza so far is pitiful. It’s pathetic. And even the little aid we can get into Gaza cannot be distributed without fuel. It’s as simple as that: no fuel, no aid. The small amount of fuel that entered this week has already run out.

We welcome reports that an agreement has been reached for increased supply of fuel to Gaza. We look forward to seeing the details of those reports, and to their fulfilment. But it’s not just fuel. Electricity is also needed to power desalination plants, water and sewage treatment plants, hospitals and other essential services.

We welcome the Security Council’s adoption on Wednesday of a resolution on urgent and extended humanitarian pauses and corridors in Gaza. It doesn’t go far enough – we need a ceasefire – but it’s a start. We call for the immediate implementation of the resolution, and we call on all parties to abide by it. Most of all, we need attacks on health care to stop.

The Geneva conventions were adopted and ratified to establish what is acceptable and what is not in conflict. Violating the neutrality of health care is not acceptable. Attacks on health care must stop. But so far, WHO has verified 152 attacks on health care in Gaza, 170 in the West Bank, and 33 in Israel – attacks on hospitals, clinics, ambulances, health workers, and patients. Al-Shifa hospital must be enabled to function as a hospital. There are reportedly up to 300 health workers and 650 patients inside the hospital. Even if Hamas has used the hospital for military purposes, the hospital, and indeed all health care facilities, are never without protection under humanitarian law.

Furthermore, the proposal for a so-called “safe zone” at Al-Mawasi is a recipe for disaster. Attempting to cram so many people into such a small area with such little infrastructure or services will significantly increase risks to health for people who are already on the brink. WHO will not participate in the establishment of any so-called “safe zone” in Gaza without broad agreement, and unless fundamental conditions are in place to ensure safety and other essential needs are met, and a mechanism is in place to supervise its implementation, as Martin Griffiths said earlier.

Let me be clear.

The attacks by Hamas and other armed groups on Israel, the killing of 1200 people, and the taking of more than 200 hostages were totally unjustifiable. But with at least 11,500 Gazans killed, 70% of them women and children; With 1.7 million people displaced; With two-thirds of Gaza’s hospitals out of action; With no electricity, no fuel, no clean water, no food; With every bomb that kills or maims a child; With every family buried beneath the rubble of its own home; The scale of Israel’s response appears increasingly unjustifiable.

WHO, like the rest of the United Nations system, is impartial. We are not on one side or the other. We are on the side of humanity.

We are witnessing the destruction of life and property on a horrific scale. But we are also witnessing the destruction of civility, the rules-based system, and trust between countries. This crisis is an acid test for the United Nations, and for you, its Member States.

This organization was established to foster peace in our world. If you, as Member States of the United Nations, will not or cannot stop this bloodshed, then we must ask: what is the United Nations for? The crisis in Gaza is a crisis for the UN, and a crisis for humanity. Talk is not enough. Resolutions are not enough. Statements are not enough. You must act, and you must act now.

We call on you to ensure unfettered access to deliver humanitarian aid to the civilians of Gaza;

We call on Hamas to release the hostages;

We call on Israel to restore supplies of water, electricity and fuel;

We call on both sides to abide by their obligations under international humanitarian law;

We call for attacks on health care to stop, and for patients, health facilities, health infrastructure and health workers – as well as aid workers – to be protected.

And we continue to call for an end to this conflict, to prevent further deaths of civilians and further damage to Gaza's hospitals and health facilities.

**b. Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator's remarks**

Thank you for this opportunity to brief Member States on the latest humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip.

As you know, fierce hostilities continue across Gaza, from the air, sea, and now on the ground.

Casualties continue to mount, with the dead reportedly exceeding 11,000 people – the majority of them children and women. The actual total, however, is likely much higher as figures have not been updated for five days due to a collapse of communication networks in Gaza.

More than 41,000 housing units have been destroyed or severely damaged – amounting to around 45 per cent of the housing stock in Gaza. The nature and scale of civilian harm is characteristic of the use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects in such a densely populated area. I am reminded that tomorrow marks the first anniversary of the adoption of the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas. There is no greater reminder of the importance of its universal endorsement and implementation.

And more than 1.5 million Gazans are estimated to be internally displaced. Many of them have fled southwards in search of relative safety, only to be now told to relocate – many of them for the second time, westward.

Nevertheless, hundreds of thousands remain in the north, where the fiercest fighting and bombardment is taking place.

There is little to no medical care available in northern Gaza. Out of 24 hospitals with in-patient capacity in the north, only one, Al Ahli in Gaza city, is presently operational and admitting patients.

Eighteen hospitals have shut down and evacuated since the start of hostilities.

Another five hospitals, including Shifa, are providing extremely limited services to patients who have already been admitted. These hospitals are not reliably accessible because of insecurity, do not have electricity or essential supplies, and are not admitting new patients.

We have all seen the fighting in and around the Shifa hospital in recent days. It behooves me once again to make clear that, under international humanitarian law, all parties must protect civilians and civilian objects. To ensure the wounded and sick receive medical care, hospitals have specific protection. This means they must not be used to shield military objectives from attack. It also means that even if hospitals lose their protection, warnings and other precautions must be implemented to avoid civilian harm, and, of course, disproportionate attacks are strictly prohibited.

Across Gaza, but particularly in the north, food and water supplies are running perilously low, and the lack of fuel means that communications and other essential functions such as water desalination are progressively dropping offline.

Across the border, civilians in Israel endure deep pain of their own as they mourn the brutal killing of 1,200 people. New details of the horrors of 7 October emerge each day. Rockets continue to be fired into populated areas and tens of thousands of people are displaced.

Nearly 240 hostages, from babies to octogenarians, face their 41st day of captivity. They must be released immediately and without condition. In the interim, they must be treated humanely and be allowed to receive visits from the International Committee of the Red Cross.

My colleagues from the other UN Agencies and Departments Mr. Philippe Lazzarini (UNRWA), Dr. Tedros (WHO), Mr. Achim Steiner (UNDP), Mr. Volker Turk (OHCHR), Ms. Cindy McCain (WFP), Dr. Natalia Kanem (UNFPA), and Ms. Lana Wreikat (UNICEF) who join us today will provide further detail on the horrendous situation on the ground.

But it is without doubt a humanitarian crisis that, by any measure, is intolerable and cannot continue. In many respects, international humanitarian law appears to have been turned on its head.

In this regard, we welcome the resolution 2712 (2023) adopted by the Security Council on Wednesday, reaffirming that all parties must adhere to their international legal obligations. This joins, of course, the strong position set out by the General Assembly in its resolution on 26 October on the protection of civilians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel.

This morning, I want to set out what we at the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs see as the necessary requirements for the humanitarian response.

There are ten points, all of which are standard practice for humanitarians. Most are underpinned by obligations under IHL to take constant care to spare civilians and to meet their essential needs, including by facilitating the rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief.

One: We must be able to move from ad hoc delivery of assistance to a continuous flow of aid. People in need, and humanitarian organisations, require certainty that aid will arrive.

Two: More crossing points into Gaza for aid and commercial deliveries of essentials. Addressing the scale of needs across Gaza from a single crossing point in the South is logistically impossible. At the very least, we need permission to use the crossing point at Kerem Shalom, through which 60 per cent of goods were delivered before the hostilities began in October.

Three: Fuel. As we have highlighted repeatedly, fuel is critical for the onward distribution of aid throughout Gaza, and for the functioning of vital services. In other words, it is essential for keeping people alive. In the past few days, UNRWA has been allowed to receive 24,000 litres of fuel for two days of aid distribution within Gaza. This is welcome but is a fraction of what is needed to meet the minimum of our humanitarian responsibilities in Gaza: to do so, the requirement is ten times this – or 200,000 litres – per day.

Four: We need to have the security assurances and additional facilities to establish relief distribution hubs, particularly in the south of Gaza. These will be locations where people know they can access aid, and as jumping off points for the comprehensive delivery of aid.

Five: Safe and unimpeded access for humanitarian organisations to deliver aid throughout Gaza. This requires the facilitation of access, and assurances for the security of humanitarian personnel and assets.

Which brings me to Six: An improved humanitarian notification system. This aims to ensure that the parties have the information they need to meet their obligations to protect and facilitate humanitarian operations.

Seven: Civilians must be allowed to move to safer areas, and, when circumstances allow, to voluntarily return to their residences.

This connects directly to eight: We need to expand the number of shelters for displaced civilians across Gaza. Hundreds of thousands have so far taken shelter in UNRWA facilities. These shelters and the heroic efforts of UNRWA have been the buffer between survival and tragedy for so many of these people. But these facilities are overcrowded, overburdened and overwhelmed. We need to expand the number of locations and facilities, particularly in the south where hundreds of thousands of civilians continue to arrive.

Nine: Funding. Humanitarian operations cannot proceed without the money to fund them. The emergency appeal for Gaza amounts to \$1.2 billion. So far we have received around \$132 million. To do our job, to reach all those people in need, we need the funds to do so.

Ten: A humanitarian ceasefire. Call it what you will, but the requirement, from a humanitarian point of view, is simple. Stop the fighting to allow civilians to move safely. Do it for as long as possible, to facilitate an unimpeded humanitarian response. Give the people of Gaza a breather from the terrible, terrible things that have been put on them these last few weeks. And, without condition, release all the hostages.

We need the full leverage of the UN Membership to achieve these objectives. We are not asking for the moon. We are asking for the basic measures required to meet the essential needs of the civilian population and stem the course of this crisis.

For as dire as the situation is in Gaza, it could get far worse.

I have real concerns that if we do not take action now, this is a conflict that could spread its tendrils further into other parts of the Occupied Palestinian Territory and drag the region into a conflagration with even more catastrophic consequences.

### **c. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Remarks**

A conflagration of violence has been unleashed in the Occupied Palestinian Territory – both in Gaza and the West Bank – as well as in Israel.

In such a situation the protection of civilians is an absolutely top priority. The killing of civilians must not become acceptable collateral damage. It must not become a deliberate weapon of war. Not in a refugee camp. Not in a kibbutz. And not in a hospital. Not anywhere.

During my mission to Egypt and Jordan last week, for which I thank both countries, – I encountered an outpouring of anguish, fear, anger and despair.

The people of Gaza, who for years have seen their rights comprehensively restricted, are enduring bombardment by the Israeli Security Forces of an intensity rarely experienced in this century, together with ongoing urban warfare.

One in every 57 people living in the Gaza strip has been killed or wounded in the past five weeks, according to figures from the Gaza Ministry of Health. The levels of distress are unimaginable; the situation is a living nightmare. Over 11,100 have been killed, more than 4,600 of them children. More than 26,000 people have been injured, many severely. And at least 2,000 more people are presumed to be trapped under rubble, where there is no capacity to reach or rescue them. Hospitals, schools, homes, and the markets and bakeries that constitute a lifeline have also been hit by Israeli airstrikes. An entire population is being deeply traumatised, and the impact on children, in particular, will have far-reaching consequences.

In Israel, according to the authorities, 1,200 people, including many children, were killed in horrific attacks by Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups on 7 and 8 October. 239 people, including children, were captured and taken to Gaza. And the nation has been thrown into shock.

Against this backdrop, let me highlight some salient protection points.

It is a fact that many civilians are unable to comply with the Israeli forces' instructions to move elsewhere in the face of imminent bombardment. Hundreds of thousands of people – including

many children, wounded, and people with disabilities – remain in the north, or other areas of intense military activity, including areas where humanitarian access has become impossible. Their lives must be protected urgently.

The current Israeli proposal for a so-called ‘safe zone’ is untenable: the zone is neither safe nor feasible for the number of people in need. I refer you to yesterday’s [statement](#) by the Inter Agency Standing Committee: civilians must be protected throughout Gaza, wherever they are.

I also join my humanitarian colleagues in our alarm about the imminent total depletion of fuel supplies. Already, this is leading to the collapse of water, sewage and crucial healthcare services, and could end the trickle of humanitarian assistance that Israel has to date permitted to enter Gaza. Massive outbreaks of infectious disease seem inevitable, and WFP warns that civilians “are facing the immediate possibility of starvation”.

International humanitarian law is clear.

All parties must, at all times, distinguish between civilians and combatants, and between civilian objects and military objectives.

Attacks directed at civilians or protected civilian objects – such as hospitals – are prohibited.

Indiscriminate attacks – for example, the use by Palestinian armed groups of indiscriminate projectiles aimed at southern Israel – are prohibited.

Attacks where the likelihood of civilian death, and damage to protected objects, is disproportionate to the probable military advantage – as constantly risked by Israel’s use of explosive weapons with wide-area effect in densely populated areas – are prohibited.

Forced displacement is prohibited.

The taking and holding of hostages is prohibited, as is any use of civilians to shield locations from military operations.

Collective punishment – as in the case of Israel’s blockade and siege imposed on Gaza – is prohibited.

No-one is above the law. Breaches of international humanitarian law – even war crimes – committed by one party do not, ever, absolve the other from compliance with the principles of the law of war and their human rights obligations.

All serious allegations of multiple and profound breaches of international humanitarian and human rights law – whoever commits them – demand rigorous investigation and full accountability.

Where national authorities prove unwilling or unable to carry out such investigations, and where there are contested narratives on particularly significant incidents, international investigation is called for.

In the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, I am deeply concerned about the intensification of violence and severe discrimination against Palestinians. I am alarmed by the rise



in killings of Palestinians by Israeli security forces and by settlers; displacement of Palestinian communities due to settler violence; a sharp increase in seemingly arbitrary arrests and detention; and the ill-treatment of Palestinians in detention. These heighten a potentially explosive situation that is well past the early warning level. I am ringing the loudest possible alarm bell about the West Bank.

I share with many a deep sense of foreboding about the risk of spillover into the wider Middle East region, if the current trajectory of this conflict continues.

This crisis is also another global shock to our multilateral system – driving more polarisation and creating deeper fractures, with terrible impact on the solutions that humanity so urgently needs.

Three weeks ago, by a broad majority of Member States, this Assembly took clear action on the crisis. Resolution ES-10/21 called for an immediate and sustained humanitarian truce leading to a cessation of hostilities. Since then, the situation has further, and dramatically, deteriorated. The Security Council's resolution 2712 on Wednesday called for “urgent and extended humanitarian pauses and corridors throughout the Gaza Strip”, among other key demands on the parties.

These repeated calls by the global community must not be ignored but implemented at once.

There must be a ceasefire on humanitarian and human rights grounds, and an end to the fighting – not only to deliver urgently needed food and provide meaningful humanitarian assistance, but also to create space for a path out of this horror.

Rapid and unimpeded humanitarian assistance throughout Gaza, in line with humanitarian principles, including life-saving fuel, and at the magnitude required, must be facilitated – including through crossings from Israel.

International humanitarian and human rights law must be respected, immediately and fully. There must be an end to grave human rights violations, notably against children.

All hostages must be released.

All forms of collective punishment must cease.

The Israeli authorities must take immediate steps to ensure that the security forces comply with their obligations as an occupying power to protect Palestinians in the occupied West Bank, including from violence by settlers. Investigations into violations must be carried out without delay; the current widespread impunity for such violations must stop.

Accountability is the key to any prospect of a genuine solution, and my Office has issued numerous detailed recommendations for years to address the underlying drivers of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict – most recently in my [speech](#) to the Human Rights Council in March. It is urgent that their implementation begins.

My Office has scaled up its engagement. I stress the importance of full access to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including all parts of Gaza, for my Office, to ensure that we can

carry out our independent monitoring and documentation and protection coordination work without hindrance, in line with the mandate entrusted to us by this Assembly.

I also strongly encourage continued support for civil society groups, including with financial resources. Amid such turmoil, their work is especially vital.

A vortex of hate speech and disinformation is fuelling dehumanisation, and blocking the search for an enduring solution. I am very concerned about the risk of further grave violations, even potentially amounting to atrocity crimes, in light of recent statements by some in leadership positions.

What kind of societies will emerge from this crisis? Only extremism can win a war in which so many children are killed. And the endpoint of extremism is even greater despair, and more bloodshed.

Israelis' freedom is inextricably bound up with Palestinians' freedom. Palestinians and Israelis are each other's only hope for peace. It is essential that all parties acknowledge the reality of the humanity and the suffering of the other. Every civilian, Palestinian or Israeli, has exactly the same rights to live and thrive in peace and in freedom.

That is the promise of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. And if there is one lesson to be drawn from this crisis it is the centrality of human rights for the prevention, mitigation and resolution of conflict.

It is clear that the Israeli occupation must end. It is essential to ensure the rights of Palestinians to self-determination and to their own State. And it is essential to acknowledge that Israel has a right to exist.

My Office will continue to insist, vigorously, on the upholding of international human rights standards, which are our common heritage and shared foundation for peace and justice.

#### **d. Acting Deputy UNRWA Commissioner-General's remarks**

The situation in Gaza is dire.

1.6 million people have been displaced, out of a total of 2.2 million. It is the largest displacement of Palestinians since 1948.

The scale of destruction and loss is staggering. Entire neighbourhoods have been razed to the ground. More than half of the housing units in Gaza are reportedly destroyed. At least 154 UNRWA schools and other buildings have been turned into shelters overnight. They now house more than 810,000 people. That is, half of the displaced population.

The Commissioner-General recently went to one of these shelters – a school turned shelter – in Rafah. It was a heartbreaking experience. The shelter was massively overcrowded and unsanitary, with conditions of life that lack dignity. Hundreds of people share one toilet. Everyone was pleading for water and food, especially children. Children who should be in that school to learn and play, not shelter from bombs.

The sheer number of civilian casualties in Gaza is shocking. More than 11,000 people have been killed, according to the Ministry of Health in Gaza, including over 4,000 children. Among them are 103 UNRWA colleagues, mostly killed in their homes – the highest number of UN aid workers killed in any conflict.

While UNRWA cannot verify all civilian deaths, we can say that the number of our staff killed in Gaza is proportionate to the estimated number of civilian deaths. UNRWA has relied on the Ministry of Health figures in all previous wars.

Earlier this week, the UN lowered its flag around the world in a mark of respect to these staff members. In Gaza, we continued to fly the UN blue flag high, to reflect our determination to stay and deliver, in near-impossible circumstances. Some 5,000 UNRWA staff members – from our 13,000 total workforce – in Gaza continue to come in to work each day. All the while they are also displaced, bereaved, and living alongside the people they serve. They suffer the same deprivation, the same heartbreak. Yet, they find the strength to push through another day. I am humbled to be their colleague.

Nowhere is safe in Gaza.

The Israeli Authorities asked people to move to the south. However, no part of the Gaza Strip has been spared from bombardment. The military escalation in the South of the last few days defies the reassurance that people had received about moving south to be safe. Hospitals, mosques, churches, bakeries, and over 60 UNRWA buildings and schools have been hit across Gaza. Most of our impacted facilities (60 per cent) were in the middle areas and in the south. This is where people were told to go for safety. They came to UNRWA buildings to be protected by the UN flag.

As of yesterday, the telecommunications blackout due to the lack of fuel is adding to the anxiety and distress of people in Gaza. As the Commissioner-General told the Security-Council, all this cannot be casually labelled “collateral damage”.

There is talk about expelling the population from Gaza altogether, including into “safe zones”.

Unilateral proposals for “safe zones” are no substitute for compliance with international humanitarian law. A “safe zone” can protect civilians only if all parties to the conflict agree to preserve and respect its civilian character. That is not the case here. Regardless of whether “safe zones” are established, the obligations of the parties to protect civilians remain, including those who, for whatever reason, are located outside the designated area. One party abusing international law does not lessen the obligations of the other party to respect it.

I must stress that the UN is not giving assistance to anyone in the Al Mawasi area in the south of the Gaza Strip, a stretch of sand of 14 square kilometers, with no UN or other infrastructure. Putting 2 million people in the open air without infrastructure will make it impossible to provide lifesaving assistance, giving rise to health hazards. This does not qualify as a valid humanitarian initiative.

Our approach was well explained by Martin Griffiths. We are focusing on improving and extending our current shelter capacity in public buildings. This is where UNRWA already works, this is where our staff goes every day.

Gaza is under siege.

2.2 million people are being denied access to life's essentials, which amounts to collective punishment. There is simply not enough water, food, medicine, or fuel to sustain life. The little aid coming in through Rafah is not remotely enough to cover the immense needs of the population. No fuel had entered Rafah since the beginning of the war until three days ago.

We heard it from Martin. We received 23,000 liters of fuel, on the condition that we would only use it for our own trucks. Our humanitarian operation uses at a bare minimum 120,000 liters per day. Fuel is desperately needed for electricity, water and sanitation for the 810,000 people we are sheltering. We also need to continue giving fuel to bakeries and hospitals. Without fuel, hospitals across Gaza are shutting down, having to make inhumane decisions as to whose life, if any, to save, in such circumstances.

Surgeries are not being performed, life support machines and incubators are shutting off, and as a result, people, including infants, are dying. For what?

I want to stress that an Occupying Power, whether in time of peace or war, has the responsibility to ensure that the civilian population has access to food, water, shelter and other necessities of life.

Our work has become 'mission impossible'.

I have worked in many conflict settings with the United Nations. This situation is nothing short of a travesty. Humanitarian aid is being made conditional – it is dependent on political negotiations. Aid workers are asked to be complicit in displacing the population. We cannot fully protect people in UN premises, under the UN flag. We cannot reach people in need, including thousands still trapped in the north. We cannot provide sufficient assistance to those we can reach. As our fuel stocks are almost completely depleted, our ability to work and deliver our mandate is under threat. The implications for the civilian population, including 13,000 UNRWA staff, and our operations, are massive.

The de-humanization rhetoric in this conflict is worrying, reminiscent of the worst possible times in history.

The massacres of 7 October by Hamas were horrific and we strongly condemn them. But we have heard statements from top Israeli officials referring to ALL Palestinians as "human animals," and promising them destruction and hell. This language is extremely dangerous. It makes what was previously unacceptable, acceptable. As the Commissioner-General reiterated in Geneva yesterday, there should be no hierarchy in levels of suffering, pain and empathy.

The whole region is simmering.

There is anger and tension throughout, and it is manifesting in increased violence. In the West Bank, Israeli military incursions and settler violence have caused record high death tolls among the Palestinians. Movements restrictions are impacting our ability to run schools and clinics, affecting the refugee population. On the Israeli border with Lebanon, there are regular clashes and

civilian casualties, and these are intensifying. Any further escalation on these fronts would be a disaster for the region and beyond.

There is a collective responsibility on the part of the international community to ensure that this horror ends now. We must remain steadfast in our determination, and I must quote from a famous text: ‘to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, and reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person’.

First, an immediate, sustained, humanitarian ceasefire must be implemented, along with strict adherence to international humanitarian law.

Wars have rules. It is high time for these rules to be followed in Gaza. Civilians and civilian infrastructure, including UN facilities hosting displaced people, must be protected everywhere.

Second, a meaningful, unconditional, and continuous flow of humanitarian aid, including fuel, is absolutely needed and it is needed now.

All crossings should be open, in particular, crossing points with Israel like Kerem Shalom. Aid must reach all people in need in Gaza, wherever they are. Humanitarian aid alone, however, will not cover the needs of people in Gaza. It must be complemented by the private sector and public, municipal services like water and waste management. Commercial lines must be reopened, so that shops and retailers can replenish their stocks.

Third, UNRWA still needs funds.

We are grateful to the countries that announced new contributions in the past weeks. However, our core budget remains underfunded. We have repeatedly sounded the alarm that the largest UN Agency in Gaza might not have the funds to pay staff, including those on the frontlines in Gaza, until the end of the year. UNRWA is among the last glimmers of hope in a truly desperate place. Our services in the West Bank and Lebanon continue and are for many the only lifeline. I implore your governments to remain generous and ask those that have excluded the Agency from their contributions to reconsider. We stand ready to engage with them.

Finally, we must step back from the brink before it is too late.

In terms of the aftermath, a genuine prospect of Palestinian statehood is critical to stabilize the region. It is in the interest of all, including Israel, to find a solution that allows Israelis and Palestinians to live in peace, side by side. At the moment, no one does, and no one probably will, unless a fair and lasting political solution is found to this conflict. This is no way to live.

## **XXI. Following fatal attacks Secretary-General emphasizes UN premises ‘are inviolable’, calls for ceasefire**

*The following [statement](#) by Secretary-General António Guterres was issued on 19 November.*

I am deeply shocked that two United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) schools were struck in less than 24 hours in Gaza. Dozens of people — many women and children — were killed and injured as they were seeking safety in United Nations premises.

Hundreds of thousands of Palestinian civilians are seeking shelter at United Nations facilities throughout Gaza due to the intensified fighting. I reaffirm that our premises are inviolable.

This war is having a staggering and unacceptable number of civilian casualties, including women and children, every day. This must stop.

I reiterate my call for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire.

I also want to express my deep appreciation for all the mediation efforts led by the Government of Qatar.

## **XXII. UN Women Executive Director briefs the UN Security Council**

*On 22 November, Sima Bahous, UN Women Executive Director, delivered the following [remarks](#) at the UN Security Council meeting.*

Allow me to thank you, Ambassador Zhang Jun, for your remarkable efforts during China's presidency to maintain focus on the situation in Gaza. And thank you to Ambassador Nusseibeh and Ambassador Frazier for calling for this meeting, and to Members of the Security Council, for this opportunity to brief you about the humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

I just returned last night from Egypt and Jordan. There I met with Government, civil society partners, humanitarian workers, and volunteers, all working tirelessly to respond to the suffering of the Gazan people and end the crisis. I commend their efforts to ensure humanitarian aid gets to those in need. I welcome the news that 50 hostages, all women and children, will be released in return for the release of 150 Palestinian women and children, and a much-needed humanitarian pause. I thank the Governments of Egypt, Qatar, and the United States for facilitating this agreement.

I hope that this is the beginning of a permanent truce and lasting relief for the people of Gaza and all the hostages held by Hamas.

We have witnessed six rounds of violence in Gaza in the past 15 years. Yet, the ferocity and destruction that the Gazan people are being forced to endure under our watch has reached an intensity we have never seen before.

I have been consistent in my briefings to you, in reminding you that women and girls are paying the highest price of conflicts.

Before October 7th, 67 per cent of all civilians killed in the Occupied Palestinian Territory in the past 15 years were men, and less than 14 per cent were women and girls. Since that date, that percentage has reversed. Not only is the number of civilians killed since October 7th twice that of

the last 15 years combined, now 67 per cent of the more than 14,000 people killed in Gaza are estimated to be women and children.

That is two mothers killed every hour and seven women every two hours. We mourn them all.

We also mourn the more than 100 UN colleagues who have died in just a month of this crisis. They served the mandate of our United Nations and the principles we have sworn to uphold, and they paid the ultimate price for it.

Despite their knowledge of the dangers they faced, they did what they believed in until their final breath, whether in schools, in hospitals or wherever they were needed. We carry their memories with us throughout this crisis and beyond.

It has been 47 days since the October 7th attack on Israel, where 1,200 people, many of them women and children, were killed. Each day that passes marks another 24 hours of unspeakable fear and uncertainty for the hostages, including the women and girls held by Hamas. I continue to call for their immediate and unconditional release.

It has been 47 days since the more than two million Palestinians in Gaza have spent every moment fearing for their lives, mourning their dead, and living under conditions that would break every single one of us.

Thousands of women in Gaza have lost their homes, with 45 per cent of all housing units destroyed or damaged.

Thousands more are injured, unable to find any medical support from a totally shattered health system.

One-hundred-eighty women are delivering babies every day without water, without painkillers, without anaesthesia for C-sections, without electricity for incubators, and without medical supplies. Yet, they continue caring for their children, the sick, the elderly, mixing baby formula with contaminated water, going without food so that their children can live another day, enduring multiple risks in severely overcrowded shelters. They have been robbed of their livelihoods, of their security, and of their dignity.

Women in Gaza have told us that they pray for peace, but that if peace does not come, they pray for a quick death, in their sleep, with their children in their arms. It should shame us all that any mother, anywhere, has such a prayer.

Before the current escalation, there were 650,000 women and girls in dire need of humanitarian assistance in Gaza. Now that estimate has gone up to 1.1 million, including the nearly 800,000 women internally displaced.

And while the situation of women and girls in Gaza rightly preoccupies us because of its immediacy and the overwhelming imperative to act, we are seeing an escalation in the West Bank where demolitions of public infrastructure, revocation of work permits, increased settler violence, and detentions have significantly impacted the lives and livelihoods of women.

I am alarmed by disturbing reports of gender-based and sexual violence. I reiterate my call from when I last spoke in these Chambers in October, that every act of violence against women and girls, including sexual violence, is unequivocally condemned, and must be fully investigated with the utmost priority.

I am reassured that SRSG [Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict] Patten has activated the UN Action network that she chairs to proactively share UN-sourced and verified information on incidents, patterns, and trends of conflict-related sexual violence to aid all investigations.

I am confident that there will ultimately be a reckoning for all violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in this conflict. The work of the Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israelis is crucial.

Gaza's only two women's shelters are now closed. Women-led organizations continue to operate in Gaza, though under severe constraints. Where they function, they are using their networks to source and distribute emergency items and to document and respond to protection concerns. I salute their courage and reiterate the need to ensure they have whatever they need to continue their crucial work.

UN Women's response plan for Gaza, working with partners including the World Food Programme, will in its initial phase cover food and cash assistance to around 14,000 women-headed households, one third of all women-headed households in Gaza.

We will support and work urgently with the Egyptian Red Crescent and the Jordanian Hashemite Charity Organization to advance the distribution of items identified by women in Gaza as priority needs.

I commend the many female staff and volunteers of the Egyptian Red Crescent for their exceptional service in these challenging circumstances. And I welcome the establishment of a new Jordanian field hospital in Khan Younis, notably including female medical staff, such as doctors and nurses, for the first time. This is a significant milestone.

We are providing flexible financial support to women's organizations across the Occupied Palestinian Territory, with the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund, which has launched a new appeal to mobilize an additional 10 million dollars. And we will support women's leadership in the political space.

As always, we will continue to work with our UN sister entities and through the broader IASC membership to ensure that humanitarian response serves women and girls to the fullest. I thank our development partners for their support to us in implementing the plan, but much more funding is needed.

I encourage all donors to increase their allocations, including to UNRWA who remains the only lifeline for thousands of Palestinians.



UN Women has met with and heard from Israeli women who shared with us that they, and civil society organizations, are working to document gender-based atrocities, and they shared their hope for peace, with women—both Israeli and Palestinian—at the table.

During my mission I heard unequivocal calls time and time again that we need an “immediate and unconditional ceasefire.”

I also heard calls from partners across the region that forced displacement or transfer of Palestinians from their land is a red line, that we must ensure the protection of civilians and that we must facilitate unhindered access to aid. I heard calls for an end to occupation, and for concerted progress towards a peaceful, two-state solution.

I suspect I am not unique in finding this one of the lowest moments for the international community and for peace and security that I can recall. But it is precisely at moments such as this that multilateralism is at its most important. This institution, and others of the United Nations, are where we come together to find peace. Our track record is varied.

International justice mechanisms are actively resisted. The growing pushback against women and girls and their rights is gaining momentum. The UN Charter and our global norms are flagrantly ignored. And as we abandon the instruments of multilateralism, the volume of arms transfers and the market value of arms manufacturers skyrocket.

I welcome last week’s resolution in the Security Council and hope that that will only be the start of greater consensus in the Security Council to find a solution. I call on its immediate implementation. But this resolution, like the more-than 100 resolutions on the so-called Palestinian question since 1948, makes no reference to gender issues. I also welcome the General Assembly resolution passed on October 26th, calling for “an immediate, durable and sustained humanitarian truce leading to a cessation of hostilities”.

I urge you to include the voices of Palestinian and Israeli women working for peace, to recognize their leadership and to call for their meaningful participation in any negotiation efforts.

This crisis must be a wakeup call to our multilateral system. The world is looking to us to model its highest ideals, not to reflect its greatest failures.

Now more than ever we must be faithful to our Charter and to our shared humanity.

Now more than ever we must reject those who seek to sow hatred and division.

Now more than ever we must seek peace, and in doing so recall that women remain the largest and most reliable constituency to that end.

And now, more than ever, we must uphold principles of justice and accountability for crimes committed, to stop those that are ongoing and to deter those yet to occur.

I call for this truce to be extended to a ceasefire and for the remaining hostages to be released unconditionally. I call for an immediate end to the current siege, beginning with ensuring access to water.

Excellencies, let me end with a sentiment that we hear from women in Gaza; they note that the international community spends significant time reiterating numbers; numbers of people killed, numbers of children under rubble, numbers of houses destroyed. Yet, the women in Gaza feel completely abandoned.

They hear that more humanitarian relief is coming but can see that the trickle of aid does not meet the ocean of need.

More than anything, they tell us they want the violence to stop. And to stop *now*.

For the sake of women and girls, I leave you with a call for a return to a genuine and purposeful commitment toward a just peace.

### **XXIII. UNFPA Executive Director briefs the Security Council**

*On 22 November, UNFPA Executive Director Natalia Kanem delivered the following [statement](#) at the UN Security Council.*

May I thank Malta, the United Arab Emirates and the Members of the Security Council for convening this important briefing and for affording me the opportunity to address you.

UNFPA deplores the loss of life in Israel and in the Occupied Palestinian Territory in the escalating crisis since October 7th. We are deeply concerned for the safety and wellbeing of all women and girls caught up in the conflict. The situation they face is beyond catastrophic.

UNFPA delivers reproductive health and population-related services focusing on women and girls in over 130 locations, mainly developing countries around the world, including delivery of humanitarian aid to pregnant women and new mothers. This assistance aligns with the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence. We have worked in the Occupied Palestinian Territory since 1986, where we are now providing desperately needed support.

Some two-thirds of all the thousands of people killed in Gaza are women and children, showing yet again that they pay the steepest price in conflicts.

Amid the ongoing fighting and devastation, in Gaza there are currently 5,500 pregnant women expected to give birth in the coming month. Every day approximately 180 women deliver under appalling conditions, the future for their newborns uncertain.

At a moment when new life is beginning, what should be a moment of joy is overshadowed by death and destruction, horror and fear. The situation is most dire for women facing obstetric complications – some 15% of pregnant women. Their lives are at risk due to severely limited access to healthcare and emergency obstetric care.

UNFPA is deeply worried about the more than 7,000 women who gave birth over the past 47 days. They lack access to postpartum care, water, sanitation and nutrition.

Due to attacks on health facilities, as well as the lack of fuel, electricity and supplies, half of all hospitals have shut down. Those that remain open are at the breaking point.

There are 2.2 million people in Gaza, where an entire population is besieged and denied access to the essentials for survival. Over 1.6 million people are living in overcrowded conditions without sufficient clean water and sanitation. This creates multiple health risks, including for women who have no access to menstrual hygiene, as well as those who are pregnant or have recently delivered. Lack of food and water across Gaza will have an adverse impact on the health and wellbeing of pregnant and breastfeeding women. They have higher daily water and caloric intake requirements.

A woman called Reham, who is two months pregnant and experienced bleeding, told us: “There is a treatment that I should take, but I am not able to get it. Pregnant women like me should be drinking milk, eating eggs. All bakeries have been bombed. There is no bread, no water.”

In the West Bank, where settler violence is on the rise and households have been displaced, more than 70,000 women are pregnant and 8,000 are expected to give birth in the coming month.

We are deeply concerned about the protection risks facing women living under these conditions, especially gender-based violence. Lack of access and the loss of communications limit our ability to deliver the support and services that gender-based violence survivors require.

Al Shifa Hospital is no longer functioning, and across Gaza health supplies are running dangerously low. There are reports of women having to undergo cesarean sections without anesthesia. Military strikes and operations near hospitals are jeopardizing the lives of patients and of women and girls who desperately need medical care but are unable to receive it.

Hospitals, health workers and civilians must never be targets. They have special protection under international humanitarian law. When health facilities are under attack, the lives of critically ill patients and health workers, and all seeking shelter at these facilities, are at risk. They have nowhere safe to go.

Thus far, UNFPA has managed to deliver five truckloads of reproductive health kits to Gaza, containing pharmaceuticals, equipment and supplies for emergency obstetric and neonatal care. This includes anaesthetics for use during caesarean sections. UNFPA is distributing clean delivery kits to improve the hygienic conditions for birth, wherever they may occur, as well as kits for women who have recently given birth.

UNFPA also provides cash transfers to pregnant and breastfeeding women, breast cancer patients, and survivors of gender-based violence.

UNFPA perseveres in providing life-saving services. Yet the assistance delivered in Gaza to date is nowhere near enough to meet the tremendous needs of women and girls. Operational constraints and the fact that our own staff and most partners are directly affected by the conflict themselves severely impinges on our ability to deliver essential services.

Our colleagues recount the impact of this daily trauma on their own families. One said that during her fourth evacuation, “We were running without purpose, unsure where to find shelter and refuge. The sounds of bombing filled the air, and dust enveloped us.”

In Israel, civilians are experiencing profound pain as they mourn the killing of 1,200 people in the brutal attacks of October 7th, which we once again condemn while once again calling for the

immediate and unconditional release of all hostages held by Hamas. We join the Secretary-General in welcoming the announcement of the recent deal regarding the release of some of the hostages, including women and children.

UNFPA welcomes Security Council Resolution 2712 of 15 November, noting it calls for urgent and extended humanitarian pauses, and corridors throughout Gaza to save and protect civilian lives. UNFPA has continued to call for an immediate ceasefire. In this regard, the announcement of a four-day humanitarian pause is a welcome development, which must be used to allow for additional aid to reach those in desperate need.

Indeed, more aid is urgently needed in Gaza to save lives and stem the torrent of human suffering. Unimpeded access of humanitarian workers and of supplies, including sexual and reproductive health services, is a matter of life and death for women and girls.

In line with the Emergency Relief Coordinator's ten-point plan, the continuous and sufficient flow of humanitarian assistance to all those in need, wherever they are, is essential. This is especially true for women and children.

Civilians and the infrastructure they rely on – including hospitals, shelters and schools – must be protected.

We call for the protection of humanitarian workers in Gaza, who risk their lives in the service of others, as we mourn the loss of over 100 UNRWA colleagues and scores of aid workers killed in the conflict.

UNFPA reiterates the Secretary-General's call for international humanitarian law and international human rights law to be upheld by all parties, and for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages, who include women and girls.

On this International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, which begins 16 Days to orange the world against gender-based violence, UNFPA denounces in the strongest possible terms all acts of violence against women and girls, including sexual violence, whenever and wherever they occur.

Distinguished members of the Security Council,

The violence must end. The fate of humanity does not belong in the hands of those wielding weapons. It rests with women and young people and allies standing together waging peace.

In this urgent test of humanity, women and girls desperately need peace to prevail. I call upon the Security Council to do everything in your power to make that peace happen.

#### **XXIV. UNICEF Executive Director briefs the Security Council**

*On 22 November, UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell delivered the following [statement](#) at the UN Security Council.*

Thank you to Ambassador Nusseibeh, Ambassador Zhang Jun, and Ambassador Frazier for bringing us together to speak about the worsening situation for children in the State of Palestine and Israel.

I would also like to thank this Council for its adoption of Resolution 2712, a text that acknowledges the disproportionate impact of this war on children, by demanding that parties to the conflict afford children with the special protection they are entitled to under international law.

Critically, this resolution calls for extended humanitarian pauses and corridors in Gaza ... which I hope will be urgently implemented, so that humanitarian partners can reach civilians in need — especially children. UNICEF also welcomes the limited ceasefire agreement. We are positioned to quickly scale up the delivery of desperately needed humanitarian aid in Gaza but, of course, more resources are needed to meet ever growing needs.

But this is far from enough: the war must be brought to an end and the killing and maiming of children must stop immediately.

Excellencies, before briefing you in more detail on the situation in Gaza, I would like to draw your attention to the plight of children in Israel and the West Bank.

Since October 7<sup>th</sup>, 35 Israeli children have reportedly been killed, while more than 30 are being held hostage in Gaza. Like the Secretary-General has said, the agreement to release hostages is welcomed but much more needs to be done. UNICEF will continue to call on parties to safely release all abducted children.

Last week, UNICEF's Deputy Executive Director travelled to Israel where he met with families of the child hostages. They shared their anguish and deepening fear over the safety of their children.

I had planned to travel to Israel and the West Bank last week as well, but I was advised by doctors to postpone my visit after sustaining injuries in a car crash en route to Rafah.

Our Deputy Executive Director visited the West Bank to assess the deteriorating security and humanitarian conditions there. Over the past six weeks, 56 Palestinian children have been killed, while scores have been displaced from their homes. We estimate that 450,000 children in the West Bank need humanitarian assistance. UNICEF and its partners are providing mental health and protection support, water and sanitation services, and remedial education for 280,000 children in the West Bank.

Turning to Gaza, I have just returned from a visit to the south of the territory where I was able to meet with children, their families, and with UNICEF staff on the ground. I am haunted by what I saw and heard.

When I visited the Nasser Hospital in Khan Yunis, it was teeming with people. In addition to the patients and medical staff, the hospital is sheltering thousands of internally displaced people. They are sleeping on blankets, along corridors and in the hospital's common areas.

While I was there, I spoke with a 16-year-old girl lying in her hospital bed. She was badly injured when her neighbourhood was bombed, and the doctors told her she will never walk again.

In the hospital's neonatal ward, I saw tiny babies clinging to life in incubators, as doctors worried how they could keep the machines running without fuel.

During my time in Khan Yunis, I also spoke with a UNICEF staff member who, despite losing 17 members of her own extended family, is working heroically to provide children and families in Gaza with access to safe water and sanitation.

As a mother of four, she is one of countless parents in Gaza in constant fear for her family. Given the terrible toll this war has exacted on Gaza's children, their fear is well founded.

More than 5,300 Palestinian children have been reportedly killed in just 46 days — that is over 115 a day, every day, for weeks and weeks. Based on these figures, children account for forty per cent of the deaths in Gaza. This is unprecedented. In other words, today, the Gaza Strip is the most dangerous place in the world to be a child.

We are also receiving reports that more than 1,200 children remain under the rubble of bombed out buildings or are otherwise unaccounted for.

Of note, the number of deaths in the present crisis has far surpassed the total number of deaths during previous escalations. For comparison, a total of 1,653 children were verified as killed in 17 years of monitoring and reporting of grave violations between 2005 and 2022.

Children who manage to survive the war are likely to see their lives irrevocably altered through repeated exposure to traumatic events. The violence and upheaval around them can induce toxic stress that interferes with their physical and cognitive development. Even before this latest escalation, more than 540,000 children in Gaza — half of its entire child population — were identified as needing mental health and psychosocial support.

Today, well over 1.7 million people in Gaza, half of whom are children, are displaced.

We are particularly concerned by reports of increasing numbers of displaced children who have been separated from their families along evacuation corridors to the south, or who are otherwise arriving unaccompanied to hospitals for medical care. These children are especially vulnerable, and they urgently need to be identified, provided with temporary care, and given access to family tracing and reunification services.

In addition to bombs, rockets, and gunfire, Gaza's children are at extreme risk from catastrophic living conditions. One million children — or really all children inside the territory — are now food insecure; facing what could soon become a catastrophic nutrition crisis.

We project that over the next few months, child wasting, the most life-threatening form of malnutrition in children, could increase by nearly 30 per cent in Gaza.

Meanwhile, water production capacity has plummeted to just five per cent of its normal output, with families and children relying on three litres or less of water per person per day for drinking, cooking, and hygiene. At the same time, water pumping, desalination and wastewater treatment have all ceased to function because of the lack of fuel. And sanitation services have collapsed.

These conditions are leading to disease outbreaks which could be life-threatening for vulnerable groups like newborns, children, and women — especially those who are malnourished. We are seeing cases of diarrheal and respiratory infections in children under five. We anticipate that the situation could worsen as the colder winter weather starts to set in.

The public health risks in Gaza are compounded by the virtual shutdown of the health care system. More than two-thirds of hospitals are no longer functioning because of the lack of fuel and water, or because they sustained catastrophic damage in attacks. Moreover, WHO estimates that at least 16 health workers have been killed and 38 injured while on duty.

Hospital patients are being injured and killed or are dying from the lack of medicine and care. Last week, UNICEF was part of an inter-agency mission that relocated 31 babies from Al-Shifa hospital to the Emirati hospital in the south of the Gaza Strip. Twenty-eight of those babies are now receiving care in Egypt.

Hospitals should never be attacked or used by combatants. And with thousands of displaced people sheltering in Gaza's health facilities, I cannot emphasize this point enough.

We are also seeing devastating attacks on schools, with close to 90 per cent of all school buildings sustaining damage. Nearly 80 per cent of the remaining school facilities are being used as shelters for internally displaced people. But even these spaces, where children and families have sought safety after fleeing their homes, have come under attack.

This past weekend, strikes on two schools, including UNRWA's Al-Fakhura school which was sheltering displaced people, reportedly killed at least 24 people. UNICEF condemns all attacks on schools.

Across the State of Palestine and Israel, parties to the conflict are blatantly committing grave violations against children — including killing, maiming, abductions, attacks on schools and hospitals, and the denial of humanitarian access.

But in Gaza, the effects of the violence perpetrated on children have been catastrophic, indiscriminate and disproportionate. And when the war ends, the contamination by explosive remnants of war will be unprecedented, with potentially tens of thousands of remnants scattered across Gaza and beyond — a lethal threat to children that could last for decades.

Inside Gaza, the war has also caused the largest ever loss of life for UN personnel, with more than 100 UNRWA staff killed. And in recent days, a WHO colleague was killed along with her 6-month-old baby, her husband and her two brothers.

Excellencies, for children to survive, for humanitarian workers to stay and effectively deliver, humanitarian pauses are simply not enough. UNICEF is calling for an urgent humanitarian ceasefire to immediately put a stop to this carnage.

We are concerned that further military escalation in the south of Gaza would exponentially worsen the humanitarian situation there, causing additional displacement, and squeezing the civilian population into an even smaller area. Attacks on the south must be avoided.

UNICEF is strongly opposed to the establishment of so-called ‘safe zones.’ No place is safe in the Gaza Strip. And the proposed zones do not have the infrastructure or protection measures in place to meet the needs of such large numbers of civilians.

We also reiterate our call on the parties to immediately and fully respect international humanitarian and human rights law, including the principles of necessity, distinction, precaution and proportionality.

We ask them to go beyond what the law requires — to protect children and the civilian infrastructure they rely on, and to immediately, and unconditionally, release all civilian hostages held in the Gaza Strip, especially children.

We call on the parties to abide by Resolution 2712, and to provide safe and unrestricted humanitarian access to and within the Gaza Strip, including in the north. Parties must allow the immediate entry of life sustaining supplies, including fuel, that are needed for trucking, water desalination, water pumping and flour production. We must be permitted to bring in essential WASH supplies, tarpaulins, tents and poles.

We also call on the parties to ensure the voluntary movement and safe passage for all civilians seeking emergency shelter and a safe place to stay, to reopen, repair and augment the capacity of all water lines into the Gaza Strip, and to ensure that the water is safe and not contaminated.

Excellencies, the true cost of this latest war in Palestine and Israel will be measured in children’s lives — those lost to the violence and those forever changed by it. Without an end to the fighting and full humanitarian access, the cost will continue to grow exponentially.

The destruction of Gaza and killing of civilians will not bring peace or safety to the region. The people of this region deserve peace. Only a negotiated political solution — one that prioritizes the rights and wellbeing of this and future generations of Israeli and Palestinian children — can ensure that.

I urge the parties to heed this call, starting with a humanitarian ceasefire as the first step on the path to lasting peace. And I urge you, as Members of the Security Council, to do everything in your power to end this catastrophe for children.

## **XXV. Secretary-General welcomes the agreement to release hostages in Gaza**

*The following is the [statement](#) attributable to the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General issued on 22 November.*

The Secretary-General welcomes the agreement reached by Israel and Hamas, with the mediation of Qatar supported by Egypt and the United States. This is an important step in the right direction, but much more needs to be done.

The United Nations will mobilize all its capacities to support the implementation of the agreement and maximize its positive impact on the humanitarian situation in Gaza.



## **XXVI. UN Special Coordinator welcomes the agreement to release hostages**

*On 22 November, UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Tor Wennesland issued the following [statement](#).*

I welcome the announcements of a deal to secure the release of hostages abducted by Hamas and others during horrific attacks on 7 October.

I also welcome the announcement of a 4-day humanitarian pause in Gaza. This pause must be used to its fullest extent to facilitate the release of hostages and alleviate the dire needs of Palestinians in Gaza.

It is critical that we see safe access and a continuous flow of humanitarian aid to all those in need. I appreciate the efforts of the Governments of Egypt, Qatar, the United States for facilitating the agreement. All parties must live up to their responsibilities to uphold this important agreement.

This is an important step, but more must be done and I will continue all efforts to bring the suffering to an end.

## **XXVII. UN Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs concludes Middle East visit**

*On 22 November, this [press release](#) was issued following the Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo's visit to Israel, the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Jordan.*

Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo completed today a visit to Israel, the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Jordan. The war in Gaza and the 7 October attacks that triggered it were at the centre of her discussions.

On 19-20 November, in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, the Under-Secretary-General met with President Isaac Herzog and other senior Israeli officials, as well as with families of Israeli hostages taken on 7 October. On 21 November in Ramallah, she held talks with Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh and other Palestinian leaders. She also met with the Palestinian Red Crescent leadership.

During the visit, Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo spent time with UN staff, including from UNRWA, who have been working to bring needed relief to civilians in Gaza. She paid tribute to the dozens of UN colleagues who have paid the ultimate price during the violence.

Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo concluded her visit on 22 November with meetings in Amman.

Throughout her visit, Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo expressed her deep concern over the continued loss of life in Gaza following the abhorrent attacks of 7 October. She reiterated the Secretary-General's three priorities: 1) achieving a humanitarian ceasefire and improving humanitarian access in the Strip; 2) the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages; and 3) preventing the escalation or expansion of the conflict. She welcomed the recent announcement of an agreement on release of hostages and a humanitarian pause but said much more must be done.

She also listened to the views of her interlocutors regarding ending the conflict, emphasizing the absolute need for all to commit to a political horizon through a two-state solution allowing Israelis and Palestinians to live in peace, security and dignity.

## **XXVIII. Gaza: Humanitarians stand ready to ramp up aid deliveries in wake of Israel, Hamas agreement**

*On 22 November, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Martin Griffiths issued the following [statement](#).*

I welcome the agreement reached by Israel and Hamas, with the mediation of Qatar supported by Egypt and the United States. I hope it brings some respite to the people of Gaza and Israel and some relief to the hostages and detainees who will be released and to their families.

I also hope it allows grieving families to honour their dead and bury them with dignity.

I look forward to the implementation of the humanitarian pause and hope it leads to a longer-term humanitarian ceasefire – for the benefit of the people of Gaza, Israel and beyond.

Humanitarian agencies are mobilized and ready to increase the volume of aid brought into Gaza and distributed across the Strip.

As we wait for the pause to come into effect, we renew our call for:

- Full adherence to international humanitarian law.
- Safe and unimpeded humanitarian access into and across Gaza so that we can deliver aid to people in need wherever they are.
- The protection of civilians, including by allowing them to seek safety from hostilities.
- The immediate and unconditional release of all hostages.

## **XXIX. Following his second Gaza visit, UNRWA Commissioner-General renews calls for a ceasefire**

*On 23 November, UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini released the following [statement](#).*

I have just returned from my second visit to the Gaza Strip since the war began. I bear witness to the unspeakable suffering of people.

Since my first visit two weeks ago, the humanitarian situation has already become far worse. Displacement continues. UNRWA now hosts more than 1 million people in its schools and premises across the Gaza Strip.

As we all anticipate the beginning of the much-awaited pause, I reiterate my call for a long-standing humanitarian ceasefire. People are exhausted and are losing hope in humanity. They need respite, they deserve to sleep without being anxious about whether they will make it through the night. This is the bare minimum anyone should be able to have.

The pause is also an opportunity to reach people in need including in the north and to start repairing civilian infrastructure.

UNRWA is committed to continue bringing assistance to people in need. We are ready to receive more than 150 trucks of aid per day without interruption.

It is time to scrap the bureaucratic hurdles and limits imposed on the humanitarian community so that we expand and speed up the delivery of desperately needed humanitarian assistance to more than 2 million people.”

### **XXX. Joint UN mission transfers critical patients from Al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza, under intense fighting**

*On 24 November, the World Health Organization issued the following [press release](#).*

On 22 November, in cooperation with the Palestine Red Crescent Society, WHO participated in another joint-UN mission to transfer 151 patients, relatives and health workers accompanying them from Al-Shifa hospital in northern Gaza. The mission was undertaken following specific requests from health authorities and hospital officials in Gaza.

This was the third mission to Al-Shifa carried out by WHO, other UN agencies and partners in less than a week; the first was an assessment mission (18 November) and the second was an evacuation mission to transport 31 infants (19 November).

During this mission, the team transferred 73 severely ill or injured patients, including 18 dialysis patients; 26 patients with serious spinal injuries; 8 patients with severe chronic conditions; two in need of critical care; and 19 patients in wheelchairs. The patients were transported in 14 ambulances supplied and staffed by the Palestine Red Crescent Society, and two buses, with 8 health workers and 70 family members accompanying them.

This was a high-risk mission, as intense fighting and shelling continued in proximity of Al-Shifa hospital.

It took 20 hours for the team to complete the evacuation, including 6 hours at a checkpoint where the team and patients were screened by the Israeli Defence Force. This was despite an initial agreement to only screen participants at the origination point in Al-Shifa Hospital.

The screening process involved checks on the patients, their relatives, and the personnel; these included elderly, children and severely ill patients. Three medical personnel from the Palestine Red Crescent Society and three from the Ministry of Health were detained.

After 6 hours at the security checkpoint, the convoy proceeded as the condition of some of patients was already deteriorating. Patients reached their final destination late at night.

Most of the patients were ultimately transferred to the European Gaza Hospital, with the dialysis patients admitted to Al Najjar Hospital. Both facilities are in the south of Gaza.

WHO is extremely concerned about the safety of the estimated 100 patients and health workers remaining at Al-Shifa. Due to the limited time that the mission members were able to spend in the hospital and the urgency of moving the most critical, it was difficult to determine exactly how many remain.

Two of the six detained health workers have reportedly been released. We do not have information about the well-being of the four remaining health staff, including the director of Al-Shifa hospital. WHO calls for their legal and human rights to be fully observed during their detention.

This and other evacuations were requested by health authorities, health workers and patients, and became necessary as Al-Shifa Hospital is no longer able to function due to lack of water, fuel, medical supplies, food, and staff, and recent military incursions.

Also on 21 November, WHO and partners undertook a mission to Al-Ahli Hospital in northern Gaza to assess medical priorities. Al-Ahli, which is one of the only functional hospitals in the north, must be urgently and regularly supplied with fuel, water, food and medical supplies to ensure the continuity of care. Today, 22 patients along with 19 companions arrived at the European Gaza hospital, in the transfer mission undertaken with the Palestine Red Crescent Society, following the assessment mission.

WHO again asks all relevant authorities to ensure that the medical evacuations that WHO has been requested to assist in can proceed safely, under agreed procedures, without endangering the lives of patients. Ultimately, the safety, security and evacuation decisions rest with the relevant authorities.

### **XXXI. Statement by UN Special Coordinator Tor Wennesland on the implementation of 22 November agreement**

*The following [statement](#) by UN Special Coordinator for Middle East Peace Process Tor Wennesland was issued on 24 November.*

I welcome today's start to the implementation of the agreement reached on Wednesday (22 November) which saw the release of 13 Israeli hostages abducted by Hamas and others on 7 October, and the release of 39 Palestinian prisoners from Israeli prisons. I also welcome the release of a number of foreign workers held in Gaza. I look forward to additional releases expected over the coming days.

Today's humanitarian pause went into effect with relative calm allowing truckloads of aid to go into Gaza. These developments are a significant humanitarian breakthrough that we need to build on. More assistance and supplies must enter the Strip safely and continuously to alleviate the immense suffering of civilians.

I reiterate my call for the release of all hostages held by Hamas and others in Gaza.

I highly appreciate and commend the Governments of Qatar, Egypt, and the United States for their determined efforts to facilitate this agreement.

I call on all concerned parties to uphold their commitments and refrain from provocations or any actions that could impact the full implementation of this agreement. I also urge the parties to exhaust every effort to achieve an extended humanitarian ceasefire and pursue a more peaceful future.

## **XXXII. UN human rights experts call for full and independent investigations into all crimes committed in Israel and the OPT**

*On 27 November, Morris Tidball-Binz, Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, and Alice Jill Edwards, Special Rapporteur on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment released the following [statement](#).*

UN experts today called for prompt, transparent and independent investigations into allegations of war crimes and crimes against humanity, perpetrated in Israel and in the Occupied Palestinian Territory on 7 October 2023 and thereafter. They urged all parties to the ongoing armed conflict to protect civilians and comply with their obligations under international law.

“Independent investigators must be given the necessary resources, support and access required to conduct prompt, thorough and impartial investigations into crimes allegedly committed by all parties to the conflict,” the experts said, calling on Israel, the Palestinian Authority and the *de facto* authorities in Gaza to cooperate fully with investigations.

“The duty to investigate war crimes and crimes against humanity, including any act of summary or extrajudicial killing, torture or other outrages on human dignity, is a fundamental legal obligation,” they said.

The experts urged the international community to ensure that all those responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity, as well as any other international crimes committed in the conflict, especially persons with command responsibility, are promptly brought to justice.

“There is no statute of limitation for such crimes, and they fall under universal jurisdiction, which means that courts in any country can exercise their authority to prosecute those responsible, regardless of their nationality and the country where the crimes were committed,” they said. “We encourage all States to play a proactive role in identifying key suspected perpetrators and helping to facilitate prosecutions through the principle of mutual legal assistance.”

The experts recalled that reliable evidence, gathered by independent and impartial investigators, including forensic specialists experienced in investigating violations of international humanitarian law, is essential for successful prosecutions, and that investigations must comply with international standards. The experts referred to the Revised Manual on the Effective Investigation and Documentation of Crimes of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Istanbul Protocol) and the Revised United Nations Manual on the Effective Prevention and Investigation of Extra-Legal, Arbitrary and Summary Executions (Minnesota Protocol).

They welcomed ongoing investigations by the International Criminal Court and the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel, to examine and document all existing evidence of crimes committed to date in Israel, Gaza and the West Bank.

“We stress that for the purposes of healing, recovery, reconciliation and justice, victims and survivors, and their families, should be able to participate in any proceedings,” the experts said.

They offered the support of their mandates and their expertise, including in forensic sciences, to advise and assist in this effort.

### **XXXIII. Secretary-General urges continued dialogue between parties aimed at full humanitarian ceasefire**

*The following [statement](#) was issued on 27 November by the Spokesman for UN Secretary-General António Guterres.*

Seven weeks of hostilities in Gaza and Israel have taken an appalling toll that has shocked the world. For the past four days, the guns have fallen silent. We have seen the release of Israeli and foreign hostages held by Hamas and others since 7 October, and the release of Palestinian prisoners from Israeli jails.

The Secretary General commends the Governments of Qatar, Egypt and the United States for facilitating this arrangement and he recognizes the critical role of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The United Nations will continue to support these efforts in every possible way.

During these four days, the United Nations has scaled up the entry of humanitarian aid into Gaza and sent aid to some northern areas that have been largely cut off for weeks. But this aid barely registers against the huge needs of 1.7 million displaced people. The humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza is getting worse by the day.

The dialogue that led to the agreement must continue, resulting in a full humanitarian ceasefire, for the benefit of the people of Gaza, Israel and the wider region. The Secretary General once again calls for the remaining hostages to be released immediately and unconditionally.

He urges all States to use their influence to end this tragic conflict and support irreversible steps towards the only sustainable future for the region: a two-State solution, with Israel and Palestine living side by side, in peace and security.

### **XXXIV. Palestinian Rights Committee Chair issues urgent call for justice and peace on International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People amid escalating violence in Gaza**

*On 28 November, the UN Chronicle published the following [article](#) by the Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People Ambassador Cheikh Niang.*

As the world observes the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People on 29 November 2023, United Nations Member States engage in a moment of introspection and rededication to the cause of peace. The observance arrives amid a surge in violence in Israel and Gaza unseen in recent history. This has not only claimed thousands of lives but has also resulted in the displacement of [over 1.7 million people](#). Such tragic events underscore the urgency to find a peaceful resolution to the conflict, a subject that has long stood as one of the international community's most formidable challenges.

The date of 29 November carries historical significance, marking the anniversary of the General Assembly's adoption of [resolution 181 \(II\)](#) in 1947, which determined the partition of the mandate for Palestine into two States—one Jewish, one Arab—and designated Jerusalem for international governance. The Arab State has not been established to this date. Although seventy-six years have elapsed, marred by recurrent conflict, the aspiration for a Palestinian State and peace in the Middle East endures.

On this solemn day, the international community, led by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People as the General Assembly-mandated body, gathers for an expression of profound solidarity. The [special meeting of the Committee](#) offers an opportunity for Member States, regional organizations and civil society to share messages of solidarity with the Palestinian people. Similar events take place in United Nations offices in Geneva, Nairobi and Vienna as well as in other United Nations country offices throughout the world. This year, such demonstrations of solidarity would resonate with an urgent call to cease hostilities, to end the occupation of Palestinian territory, to release all hostages and persons arbitrarily detained, and to re-engage in a dialogue that could establish the foundations of sustainable peace and an independent Palestinian State.

Ambassador Cheikh Niang (second from left), Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and Permanent Representative of Senegal to the United Nations, chairs a meeting of the Committee on 30 August 2023. UN Photo/Manuel Elías

The Committee's establishment by the [United Nations General Assembly in 1975](#) was a direct response to the growing international concern over the prolonged conflict and the inability to achieve a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. Its mandate reiterated the recognition of the Palestinian people's inalienable rights to self-determination, national independence and sovereignty, and to return to their homes and property, from which they had been displaced.

Since then, the Committee has been at the forefront of ensuring that the plight and the rights of the Palestinian people are well known and communicated clearly to other United Nations Member States and the media. This task is pivotal not only for informing the global public but also for garnering support to safeguard the rights, dignity and security of the Palestinian people through a just and lasting solution to the conflict. The commemoration of the Day of Solidarity is a key event in this regard.

This year, the agenda of the Day of Solidarity also includes the unveiling of the exhibit "[Palestine—A Land with A People](#)," which chronicles the harrowing history of the [Nakba](#). This historical event of 1948 and the years that followed witnessed the displacement and dispossession of more than half of the Palestinian population, a situation that persists through a lasting refugee crises. Today, Gaza is facing threats of a new Nakba, and we must work tirelessly to prevent it.



In the light of the ongoing conflict in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, the Committee's role in helping to inform public opinion on the question of Palestine has become even more consequential. Amid misinformation and disinformation, including on social media, it is crucial that reporting remains factual, nuanced and sensitive to the complexities of the situation.

On this International Day of Solidarity, the Committee stands united with Member States, unwavering in its vow to advocate for the rights of the Palestinian people. We call on everyone to transcend the anguish and horrors wrought upon civilians by the current conflict in Gaza and reaffirm our collective commitment to the Charter of the United Nations and to international law. Let us pursue with renewed energy the two-State solution called for in countless United Nations resolutions as a means to uphold peace, justice, security and freedom for all peoples in the region.

The Committee's efforts highlight the need for ongoing support for the Palestinian people. The assistance of informed and empathetic global citizenry is crucial for cultivating the international solidarity required by peacemakers and humanitarian workers to achieve a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. It reminds everyone that the quest for peace transcends political agreements and ceasefire lines. It is about recognizing the shared humanity and working tirelessly to ensure that future generations can live in a world where dignity and security are not just aspirations but realities for the Palestinian people and everyone living in the region.

On this International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the Committee calls on all to rekindle the spirit of resolution 181 (II)—not as a reminder of division but as a symbol of hope for a future where two States, Israel and Palestine, can exist side by side in harmony, peace and security.

**XXXV. World ‘must be united in demanding an end to the occupation, blockade of Gaza’, says Secretary-General, marking Day of Solidarity with Palestinian People**

*Following is Secretary-General António Guterres' [message](#) for the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, observed on 29 November.*

This International Day of Solidarity comes during one of the darkest chapters in the history of the Palestinian people. I am horrified by the death and destruction that have engulfed the region, which is overwhelmed with pain, anguish and heartache.

Palestinians in Gaza are suffering a humanitarian catastrophe. Almost 1.7 million people have been forced from their homes — but nowhere is safe. Meanwhile, the situation in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, risks boiling over.

I express my sincere condolences to the thousands of families who are mourning loved ones. This includes members of our own United Nations family killed in Gaza, representing the largest loss of personnel in the history of our Organization.

I have been clear in my condemnation of the terror attacks by Hamas on 7 October. But I have also been clear that they cannot justify the collective punishment of the Palestinian people.



Across the region, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency is an indispensable lifeline, delivering vital support to millions of Palestinian refugees. It is more important than ever that the international community stands with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) as a source of support for the Palestinian people.

Above all, this is a day for reaffirming international solidarity with the Palestinian people and their right to live in peace and dignity.

That must start with a long-term humanitarian ceasefire, unrestricted access for life-saving aid, the release of all hostages, the protection of civilians and an end to violations of international humanitarian law. We must be united in demanding an end to the occupation and the blockade of Gaza.

It is long past time to move in a determined, irreversible way towards a two-State solution, on the basis of United Nations resolutions and international law, with Israel and Palestine living side-by-side in peace and security with Jerusalem as the capital of both States.

The United Nations will not waver in its commitment to the Palestinian people. Today and every day, let us stand in solidarity with the aspirations of the Palestinian people to achieve their inalienable rights and build a future of peace, justice, security and dignity for all.

#### **XXXVI. Security Council holds ministerial-level meeting on Israel-Gaza war**

*On 29 November the Security Council held a quarterly open debate convened at the ministerial level on the Middle East situation including the Palestinian question. The [briefing](#) by Secretary-General António Guterres on the implementation of resolution 2712 (2023) and the [briefing](#) of the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Tor Wennesland are reproduced below.*

##### **a. Secretary-General's remarks**

Mr. President, Excellencies,

I welcome this opportunity to brief the Security Council on implementation of resolution 2712.

My Special Coordinator for the Middle East process Tor Wennesland will follow with his regular monthly briefing.

Mr. President,

Resolution 2712 was approved in a context of widespread death and wholesale destruction unleashed by the conflict in Gaza and Israel.

According to Israeli authorities, more than 1,200 people were killed — including 33 children — and thousands were injured in the abhorrent acts of terror by Hamas on 7 October.

Some 250 people were also abducted, including 34 children.

There are also numerous accounts of sexual violence during the attacks that must be vigorously investigated and prosecuted.

Gender-based violence must be condemned. Anytime. Anywhere.

Mr. President,

According to the de facto authorities, more than 14,000 people have been killed since the start of the Israeli military operations in Gaza.

Tens of thousands of Palestinians have also been injured, with many more missing.

In Gaza, more than two-thirds of those killed are reported to be children and women.

In a matter of weeks, a far greater number of children have been killed by Israeli military operations in Gaza than the total number of children killed during any year, by any party to a conflict since I have been Secretary-General – as clearly indicated in the annual reports on Children and Armed Conflict that I have submitted to the Council.

Over the past few days, the people of the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel have finally seen a glimmer of hope and humanity in so much darkness. It is deeply moving to see civilians finally having a respite from the bombardments, families reunited, and lifesaving aid increasing.

Mr. President,

Resolution 2712 “demands that all parties comply with their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law, notably with regard to the protection of civilians, especially children.”

It is clear that before the pause, we witnessed serious violations. Beyond the many civilians killed and wounded that I spoke of, eighty percent of Gaza’s people have now been forced from their homes.

This growing population is being pushed towards an ever-smaller area of southern Gaza. And, of course, nowhere is safe in Gaza.

Meanwhile, an estimated 45 percent of all homes in Gaza have been damaged or destroyed.

The nature and scale of death and destruction are characteristic of the use of wide-area explosive weapons in populated areas, with a significant impact on civilians.

At the same time, rocket attacks on population centres in Israel by Hamas and other groups have continued – along with allegations of the use of human shields.

This is also inconsistent with international humanitarian law obligations.

Mr. President,

I want to stress the inviolability of United Nations facilities which today are sheltering more than one million civilians seeking protection under the UN flag.

UNRWA shares the coordinates of all its facilities across the Gaza Strip with all parties to the conflict.

The agency has verified 104 incidents that have impacted 82 UNRWA installations – 24 of which happened since the adoption of the resolution.

A total of 218 internally displaced people sheltering in UNRWA schools have reportedly been killed and at least 894 injured.

In addition, it is with immense sadness and pain that I report that since the beginning of the hostilities, 111 members of our UN family have been killed in Gaza.

This represents the largest loss of personnel in the history of our organization.

Let me put it plainly:

Civilians – including United Nations personnel – must be protected.

Civilian objects – including hospitals – must be protected.

UN facilities must not be hit.

International humanitarian law must be respected by all parties to the conflict at all times.

Mr. President,

Security Council resolution 2712 calls “for urgent and extended humanitarian pauses and corridors throughout the Gaza Strip ...to enable ...full, rapid, safe, and unhindered humanitarian access.”

I welcome the arrangement reached by Israel and Hamas – with the assistance of the governments of Qatar, Egypt and the United States.

We are working to maximize the positive potential of this arrangement on the humanitarian situation in Gaza.

The pause has enabled us to enhance the delivery of aid into and across Gaza.

For example, for the first time since 7 October, an inter-agency convoy delivered food, water, medical supplies, and shelter items to northern Gaza – specifically to four UNRWA shelters in Jabalia camp.

Prior to this, minimal or no assistance had reached these locations – even as tens of thousands of people had crowded there for shelter.

Also, for the first time, supplies of cooking gas entered Gaza where people waited in lines that extended for two kilometres.

In the south, where the needs are dire, UN agencies and partners have increased both the amount of aid delivered, and the number of locations reached.

I express my appreciation to the Government of Egypt for their contribution in making this assistance possible.

But the level of aid to Palestinians in Gaza remains completely inadequate to meet the huge needs of more than two million people.

And although the total volume of fuel allowed into Gaza has also increased, it remains utterly insufficient to sustain basic operations.

Civilians in Gaza need a continuous flow of life-saving humanitarian aid and fuel into and across the area.

Safe and unimpeded humanitarian access to all those in need is critical.

Humanitarian partners carried out several medical evacuations from north to south Gaza, including to transport dozens of premature babies as well as spinal and dialysis patients from Shifa and Al-Ahli Anglican hospitals.

Several critically ill patients have also been evacuated for treatment in Egypt.

Hospitals across Gaza lack the basic supplies, staff and fuel to deliver primary health care at the scale needed, let alone safely treat urgent cases.

The medical system has broken down under the heavy caseload, acute shortages, and the impact of hostilities.

Mr. President,

Security Council resolution 2712 calls for “the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages held by Hamas and other groups.”

The arrangement announced on 22 November has so far led to the release, over 5 days, of 60 hostages – 29 women, 31 children – held by Hamas and other groups since 7 October.

Outside the arrangement during the same period, another 21 hostages were released.

This is a welcome start. But as I have been saying from day one, all hostages must be released immediately and unconditionally.

Until then, they must be treated humanely and the International Committee of the Red Cross must be allowed to visit them.

The arrangement also saw the release of 180 Palestinian prisoners and detainees from Israeli jails, mostly women and children.

Mr. President,

Security Council resolution 2712 “calls on all parties to refrain from depriving the civilian population in the Gaza Strip of basic services and humanitarian assistance indispensable to their survival, consistent with international humanitarian law.”

Much, much more is required to begin to address human needs in Gaza.

Water and electricity services must be fully restored.

Food systems have collapsed and hunger is spreading, particularly in the north.

Sanitary conditions in shelters are appalling, with few toilets and sewage flooding, posing a serious threat to public health.

Children, pregnant women, older people and those with weakened immune systems are at greatest risk.

Gaza needs an immediate and sustained increase in humanitarian aid including food, water, fuel, blankets, medicines and healthcare supplies.

It is important to recognize that the Rafah border crossing does not have enough capacity, especially taking into account the slow pace of security procedures.

That is why we have been urging the opening of other crossings, including Kerem Shalom, and the streamlining of inspection mechanisms to allow for the necessary increase of lifesaving aid.

But humanitarian aid alone will not be sufficient. We also need the private sector to bring in critical basic commodities to replenish completely depleted shops in Gaza.

Mr. President,

Finally, Security Council Resolution 2712 “underscores the importance of coordination, humanitarian notification, and deconfliction mechanisms, to protect all medical and humanitarian staff, vehicles, including ambulances, humanitarian sites, and critical infrastructure, including UN facilities.”

A humanitarian notification system is now in place, and is being constantly reviewed and enhanced, including through plans for additional civil-military experts to support coordination.

Mr. President,

I welcome the adoption of resolution 2712 – but its implementation by the parties matters most.

In accordance with the resolution, I will revert to the President of the Security Council with a set of options on effectively monitoring the implementation of the resolution.

I have already established a working group composed of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, the Department of Peace Operations, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, and the Office of Legal Affairs to urgently prepare proposals in this regard.

So far it is clear that implementation has been only partial at best, and is woefully insufficient.

Ultimately, we know that the measure of success will not be the number of trucks dispatched or the tons of supplies delivered – as important as these are.

Success will be measured in lives that are saved, suffering that is ended, and hope and dignity that is restored.

The people of Gaza are in the midst of an epic humanitarian catastrophe before the eyes of the world.

We must not look away.

Intense negotiations are taking place to prolong the truce – which we strongly welcome — but we believe we need a true humanitarian ceasefire.

And we must ensure the people of the region finally have a horizon of hope – by moving in a determined and irreversible way toward establishing a two-State solution, on the basis of United Nations resolutions and international law, with Israel and Palestine living side-by-side in peace and security.

Failure will condemn Palestinians, Israelis, the region and the world, to a never-ending cycle of death and destruction.

Thank you.

#### **b. Remarks of the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process**

Mister President, Excellencies, Members of the Security Council,

Following the Secretary-General's statement, I will focus my briefing on dynamics in the occupied West Bank, the region and where we go from here in the context of the unfolding conflict between Israel and Palestinian militants in Gaza.

Before doing so, I wish to join the Secretary-General in acknowledging the efforts of Qatar, Egypt and the United States in facilitating an agreement that has secured the release of 60 Israeli hostages from Gaza so far, resulted in a six-day pause in fighting, which allowed the UN to scale-up humanitarian aid, as well as led to the release of 180 Palestinian prisoners and detainees from Israeli custody.

Such respite from the weeks of horror is long overdue.

Mr. President,

While the world's attention has been rightly focused on the devastating violence and outbreak of hostilities since 7 October, we are also witnessing heightened tensions, intensive violence and widespread movement restrictions across the occupied West Bank.

The period has been marked by some of the most intensive Israeli operations in the West Bank since the Second Intifada, involving the use of improvised explosive devices by armed Palestinians and drone strikes by Israeli security forces. Tulkarem and Jenin have seen the largest-scale Israeli operations, including inside refugee camps.

Settler violence has also continued at high levels driving mounting tensions and increased violence, as well as Palestinian displacement.

In all, 154 Palestinians, including 37 children, have been killed this reporting period in the West Bank – nearly all of them in the context of Israeli operations, many involving armed exchanges with Palestinians. Two Palestinians have been killed by Israeli settlers.

Three Israelis, including two security forces, were killed by Palestinians in attacks.

Mister President,

Amid the surging violence and extensive Israeli movement restrictions, the Palestinian Authority's (PA) long-standing fiscal crisis has worsened significantly, as economic activity in the West Bank has ground to a halt and the economy in Gaza collapsed.

The 2 November decision by the Israeli Security Cabinet to deduct “all funds designated for the Gaza Strip” from the clearance revenues Israel transfers to the PA further weakened revenues, impacting many critical services and the payment of public sector salaries, including to security forces.

The situation is boiling and getting worse rapidly. In the months before the war, I warned regularly in this Council that more must be done to help stabilize the situation in the West Bank – that is more the case now than ever before.

Mister President,

A few words on regional dynamics and my continued concern about the risk for further escalation.

Turning to Israel's north, while tensions along the Blue Line have calmed in recent days, the situation remains volatile, as it was throughout the reporting period. Approximately 100,000 Israelis remain displaced from communities in the north and some 50,000 Lebanese are displaced from southern areas near the Blue Line.

On the Golan, firing from Syria towards the Israeli-occupied Golan and strikes by Israel against targets in Syria took place.

From farther afield, missiles and drones were also reportedly launched from Yemen toward Israel, most were intercepted, however a drone strike claimed by the Houthis hit a school in Eilat on 9 November. A ship affiliated to an Israeli businessman was seized by Houthi forces in the Red Sea on 19 November.

Mister President,

The dizzying pace of events and staggering needs on the ground make it difficult to see beyond the most immediate challenges. Nevertheless, we must begin work on what comes next. Without an effective political and security framework for when the fighting ceases, it will be impossible to sustainably end the violence and shape a new reality.

Over the coming weeks and months, the international community must increase their engagements with Israel, the PA and regional partners on constructive and practical political solutions.

While much is unknown about how this war will end, some absolutes are clear.

- Acts of terror like those Hamas and others committed against Israel on October 7<sup>th</sup> must never be allowed to happen again and Palestinians in Gaza must never ever again experience the horrors they are enduring.
- Gaza is and must remain an integral part of a future Palestinian State, with both Gaza and the West Bank under one Palestinian authority.
- The only viable path is one that leads to an end to the occupation and to the realization of a two-State solution, in line with UN resolutions, previous agreements and international law.

Our past efforts have certainly not been enough – a message that resonates in particular today as we mark the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. There must be a new and different approach, or we are doomed to return to the path of managing a conflict that clearly cannot be managed.

Thank you.

\*\*\*