



# Security Council

Seventy-ninth year

**9531**<sup>st</sup> meeting

Friday, 12 January 2024, 3 p.m.

New York

*Provisional*

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<i>President:</i>	Mr. De Rivière . . . . .	(France)
<i>Members:</i>	Algeria . . . . .	Mr. Bendjama
	China . . . . .	Mr. Zhang Jun
	Ecuador . . . . .	Mr. De La Gasca
	Guyana . . . . .	Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett
	Japan . . . . .	Mr. Yamazaki
	Malta . . . . .	Mrs. Frazier
	Mozambique . . . . .	Mr. Fernandes
	Republic of Korea . . . . .	Mr. Kim Sangjin
	Russian Federation . . . . .	Mr. Nebenzia
	Sierra Leone . . . . .	Mr. Kanu
	Slovenia . . . . .	Mr. Žbogar
	Switzerland . . . . .	Mr. Hauri
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Dame Barbara Woodward
	United States of America . . . . .	Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield

## Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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

### **Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

### **The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question**

**The President** (*spoke in French*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Israel to participate in this meeting.

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

There being no objection, it is so decided.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Martin Griffiths, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator; and Ms. Ilze Brands Kehris, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights.

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

I give the floor to Mr. Griffiths.

**Mr. Griffiths:** I thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to address the Security Council on the humanitarian situation in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory.

For nearly 100 days, what has been unfolding in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory is a war conducted with almost no regard for the impact on civilians. In Gaza, the situation remains horrific as relentless Israeli military operations continue. We can see this in the tens of thousands of people killed and injured, the vast majority of them being women and children. According to the Ministry of Health in Gaza, more than 23,000 people have now been killed and more than 58,000 have been injured since the awful events of 7 October.

We can see it in the enforced displacement of 1.9 million civilians, a staggering 85 per cent of the total population, traumatized and forced to flee again and again as the bombs and missiles rain down on their

places of residence. And we can see it in the appalling conditions on ground: shelters overflowing and food and water running out, with the risk of famine, as we discussed in the Council the other day, growing each day. The health system, as Dr. Ghebreyesus has reminded us, is in a state of collapse. Women are unable to give birth safely. Children cannot get vaccinated. The sick and injured cannot get treatment. Infectious diseases are on the rise. And people have been seeking shelter and refuge in hospital yards.

Now winter has arrived in Gaza, bringing with it bitter cold, exacerbating the struggle to survive. That makes it all the more deplorable that facilities critical to the survival of the civilian population have come under relentless attack. One hundred and thirty-four facilities belonging to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) have been hit, and 148 United Nations personnel and non-governmental organization (NGO) staff — humanitarian aid workers — have been killed in Gaza. Humanitarian sites have been struck on numerous occasions, despite their identification and notification to the Israel Defense Forces. In the past few days alone, two NGO premises have been hit.

Orders for evacuation are unrelenting and come quickly. As ground operations move southwards, aerial bombardments have intensified in areas where civilians were told to relocate for their safety. More and more people are being crammed into an ever-smaller sliver of land, only to find yet more violence and deprivation, inadequate shelter and a near absence of the most basic services.

There is no safe place in Gaza, as we have so often said in the Chamber. Dignified human life

*(spoke in French)*

is a near impossibility.

*(spoke in English)*

Rafah, where the pre-crisis population was around just 280,000 people, is now home to 1 million displaced persons, and more continue to arrive every day. Multiple families are crowded into single apartments with no running water or working toilets. Tents are pitched and improvised shelters are built wherever possible, including sidewalks, squares and in the middle of streets. It is currently hard to imagine that people would or could move back northwards.

Our efforts in the United Nations, under the leadership of our colleague Jamie McGoldrick, to send humanitarian convoys to the north have been met with delays, denials and the imposition of impossible conditions. The lack of respect for the humanitarian notification system, the deconfliction system, puts every movement of aid workers in danger, as do the wholly insufficient quantities of armoured vehicles and the limited communications equipment that we have been allowed to bring in.

Colleagues who have managed to make it to the north in recent days describe scenes of utter horror — corpses left lying in the road; people with evident signs of starvation stopping trucks in search of anything they can get to survive. And even if people were able to return home to the north, we know from the statistics of buildings destroyed that many no longer have homes to go to.

*(spoke in French)*

As I have said in previous sessions, it is almost impossible

*(spoke in English)*

to provide humanitarian assistance across Gaza. Our access to Khan Younis and the middle area is largely absent and impossible. In the south, an expansion of the offensive into Rafah would seriously challenge already overstretched humanitarian operations that require extraordinary measures just to deliver the most meagre assistance. The other day, I spoke too vividly, perhaps, of the courage and humanity of those who try to make such deliveries, but it is true — we must remember their courage and those shows of humanity.

And while we have seen a minor increase in the number of trucks entering via the Rafah and Kerem Shalom crossings, humanitarian supplies alone will not be able to sustain more than 2 million people. We have said it before and the Secretary-General has said it as well — we cannot replace Gaza's commercial sector, the private sector, upon which 80 per cent of the people of Gaza depended for their sustenance before this recent conflict. Commercial goods must be let in, at scale, and are, to that extent, so much more primary and important than ours.

*(spoke in French)*

As I said the other day,

*(spoke in English)*

a growing list of rejected items means that we are unable to bring into Gaza supplies to rehabilitate life-sustaining infrastructure. The system for medical evacuation of patients to Egypt is woefully inadequate in the face of the massive torrent of needs.

In these circumstances, the spread of hostilities further southwards would significantly increase pressure for the mass displacement of people into neighbouring countries — and we know that we have all been thinking about that eventuality and the problems that it would bring. Some countries have already offered to host civilians who want to leave Gaza, for their protection. With the permission of the Council, I would like to emphasize that any persons displaced from Gaza must be allowed to return, as international law demands.

In that context, we are deeply alarmed by recent statements by Israeli ministers regarding plans to encourage the mass transfer of civilians from Gaza to third countries, currently being referred to as “voluntary relocation.” Those statements raise grave concerns about the possible forcible mass transfer or deportation of the Palestinian population from the Gaza Strip, something that would be strictly prohibited under international law. Any attempt to change the demographic composition of Gaza must be firmly rejected.

While Gaza is the epicentre of this crisis, none of us should ever forget the 1,200 people killed, thousands injured and hundreds taken in the brutal attack by Hamas and other armed groups on Israel on 7 October. Many of us, myself included, have seen films from those attacks and have heard accounts of abhorrent sexual violence committed then. Rocket fire continues into populated areas of Israel, causing more civilian casualties and trauma.

The families of the hostages — of all people — have been waiting for the release of their loved ones for nearly 100 days. Some came out during that momentary five-day pause of a certain freedom, but the families of the others await at least some information about the well-being of the remaining hostages. Unfortunately, since November, no hostages have been released, and no information has been shared with their families and loved ones.

Let us also not forget the effect of this war on Israel. As a result of the 7 October attack by Hamas and other

armed groups and due to ongoing rocket fire — as I myself experienced in Tel Aviv — from armed groups in Gaza and Lebanon, more than 100,000 people have been displaced within Israel.

I remain extremely concerned about the risk of a further regional spread of the conflict. We are seeing already increasing tension and hostilities in the West Bank, where there have been continued Israeli raids against Palestinian towns and alarming increases in settler violence, resulting in death, displacement and the demolition of homes. And we are all aware, as will be discussed later, of the increase in tensions and military activity in Lebanon, the Red Sea and my own favourite country, Yemen. We cannot allow this to metastasize further. The consequences of a wider conflagration — as if this were not bad enough — would be unimaginable.

What we have seen since 7 October is a stain on the collective conscience of everyone in this Chamber, everyone listening to these words. Unless we act, it will become more than that — an indelible mark on our claims to humanity. People will continue to suffer and die from the rockets, the bombs, the missiles, the bullets, the lack of safety, the trials, the inadequate services and, in increasing numbers, from starvation, disease and exposure. We heard yesterday reports that starvation, disease and exposure were beginning to rival the impact of the deaths and wounds and suffering of the people of Gaza from the bombing.

We cannot let that happen. I reiterate my call for far greater compliance with international humanitarian law — Ilze Brands Kehris will be even more eloquent than me — including the protection of civilians and the infrastructure they depend on; the provision of essentials for survival; the facilitation of humanitarian assistance at the scale required; and the humane treatment and immediate release of all hostages.

And as I did perhaps excessively,

*(spoke in French)*

the other day, the other evening,

*(spoke in English)*

I reiterate my call for a ceasefire. Most of all, I reiterate the call for a ceasefire, for the Council to take urgent action to bring this war to an end.

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

I now give the floor to Ms. Brands Kehris.

**Ms. Brands Kehris** *(spoke in French)*: It is an honour to address the Security Council on behalf of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

The devastating situation and immense suffering we are seeing in Gaza are preventable and foreseeable and has been warned about for many weeks.

The horror of the 7 October attacks — for which the perpetrators must be held accountable — will not be forgotten.

For Palestinians, the threat of forced displacement carries particular resonance — it is seared into Palestinian collective consciousness by what they refer to as the Nakba — the catastrophe — of 1948 when millions of Palestinians were forced from their homes.

Since 7 October, approximately 1.9 million Palestinians — nearly 85 per cent of Gaza's population — have been displaced, many of them on multiple occasions. Some have followed Israeli orders to leave certain areas, others have fled for fear of also falling victim to violence and severe deprivation should they remain. Families have been separated, tens of thousands killed and many thousands more seriously injured or remaining missing.

More than 100,000 people have also been internally displaced in southern Israel as a result of the conflict in Gaza, as well as in northern Israel. Reportedly, Israel has put in place provisions for their displacement in satisfactory conditions.

*(spoke in English)*

What has happened in Gaza is not just a by-product of conflict, but is the direct result of the manner in which hostilities have been conducted. Massive displacement in Gaza commenced on 12 October with the Israeli authorities' order to Palestinian civilians north of the Wadi Gaza to vacate their homes and go south.

While Israel stated that its evacuation orders have been for the safety of Palestinian civilians, it appears that Israel has made scant provision to ensure such relocations comply with international law — in particular ensuring access to appropriate hygiene, health, safety, nutrition and shelter and taking steps to minimize the risk of separation of family members. Such compelled evacuations, failing to meet the necessary conditions

for lawfulness, therefore potentially amount to forcible transfer, a war crime.

In fact, those orders have often been confusing, requiring civilians to move to so-called humanitarian zones or known shelters, despite the fact that many such areas have been subsequently struck in Israeli military operations and the lack of any capacity in the shelters to absorb more people.

OHCHR has documented how many civilians have sought in vain to find locations safe from Israel's massive bombardment and other military operations that have been continuing across the Gaza Strip, including in places specifically protected under international humanitarian law, such as hospitals and schools. The United Nations has documented 319 internally displaced persons killed and 1,135 injured in United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East shelters alone since 7 October. More than 60 per cent of people's homes have been damaged or destroyed across Gaza. Nowhere is safe.

Compounding a 17-year-old blockade imposed by Israel, Israel is failing in its obligations, including as an occupying Power, to facilitate the entry of sufficient aid and essential commercial goods into Gaza to meet the basic subsistence needs of the civilian population. The distribution of the little aid available to those most in need — nursing mothers, pregnant women, infants and children, aged persons, people with disabilities — is almost impossible. Hundreds of thousands are estimated to remain in northern Gaza, where almost no humanitarian aid has been permitted and where the water supply has remained cut — forcing people south — since the beginning of the conflict. More than 90 per cent of the population is now suffering from acute food insecurity, and many are on the brink of avoidable human-made famine. We recall that starvation of the civilian population as a method of war is prohibited.

The unacceptably high civilian casualty rate, the nearly complete destruction of essential civilian infrastructure, the displacement of an overwhelming percentage of the population and the abominable humanitarian conditions which 2.2 million people are being forced to endure raise very serious concerns about the potential commission of war crimes, while the risk of further grave violations, even atrocity crimes, is very real.

The prospect of widespread famine and disease, as Palestinians are crammed into the tiniest slivers of the Gaza Strip along the Egyptian border in overcrowded and dire humanitarian conditions with insufficient aid and a collapse in the provision of basic services, while Middle Gaza and Khan Younis remain under sustained aerial bombardment, cumulatively heightens the risks of further massive displacement on a widening scale, potentially even beyond Gaza's borders. With people desperate for safety and security, that is a risk the Council must be alive to.

As OHCHR has recently documented and reported, since 7 October, violence by Israeli settlers and Israeli security personnel has also dramatically increased in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, leading to the displacement of many communities within an increasingly coercive environment, possibly constituting forcible transfer. That comes in a context marked by massive increases in the use of force by Israeli security forces, the detention of thousands of Palestinians and extensive movement restrictions. The risk of an expanded and intense conflict in the West Bank cannot be ruled out.

Incendiary statements by some members of Israel's leadership pushing for permanent resettlement of Palestinians overseas have entrenched fears that Palestinians are being deliberately forced out of Gaza and will not be able to return. That must not be permitted. Palestinians' right to return to their homes must be subject to an ironclad guarantee, even if needed humanitarian corridors are opened to allow Palestinians to flee — especially the sick, persons with disabilities, older persons and pregnant women and children — including to Israel and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Israel, as the occupying Power, must support their return by restoring essential services and facilitating the necessary reconstruction of Gaza, particularly given that the scale of destruction and presence of unprecedented levels of explosive remnants of war mean that there are major practical obstacles to the near-term return home of most of those already displaced.

We need an immediate ceasefire on human rights and humanitarian grounds and the unconditional release of all hostages, as indispensable first steps towards a durable solution. The protection of civilians must be prioritized, and they must be allowed to find safety and access to life-sustaining assistance, wherever they are. Settler violence in the West Bank must be condemned,

accountability must be pursued and settlements must be stopped. We must also look towards what comes next. The current violence comes in the context of decades of human rights violations. For any enduring solution to this crisis, the underlying root causes must be addressed — and that includes accountability for violations committed on and since 7 October, and in the many years before. Ensuring justice and that the rights of all peoples — both of Palestinians and Israelis — are respected and protected is the only basis on which an enduring peace can be built.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. Brands Kehris for her briefing.

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

**Mr. Bendjama** (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank both Ms. Ilze Brands Kehris and Mr. Martin Griffiths for their comprehensive briefings.

We meet today as the Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people nears its 100th day. Shocking images reach us through our screens every hour and every day without any serious action being taken to end the situation. As the President of the Republic, Mr. Abdelmadjid Tebboune, has affirmed, what is happening in Gaza will remain a stain on the conscience of humankind. We and the peoples of the world wonder: is it not enough to kill more than 30,000 people, including more than 10,000 children? Is it not enough to injure more than 60,000 people? Is it not enough to destroy more than 60 per cent of the buildings in Gaza? Is it not enough for the entire population of Gaza to face the risk of famine now? Will the international community accept that more than 2 million people suffer from hunger and disease?

The brutal bombardment of Gaza, the destruction of its infrastructure, as well as the targeting of all signs of life there, are clearly intended to render Gaza uninhabitable. Their purpose is also to kill the hope of returning home in the hearts and minds of the Palestinians, with a view to facilitating and implementing a strategy meant to displace the Palestinians outside their land. That policy enjoys great support among the officials of the occupying authorities today. The objective is to liquidate the Palestinian question by emptying all the Palestinian occupied territories of their inhabitants.

At a time when we focus on Gaza because the situation there has surpassed the worst that any human being can imagine, we must not forget the West Bank and Al-Quds Al-Sharif. The plan of forced displacement is unfolding now across all the Palestinian territories through bombardment, destruction, settlement and annexation. That plan is destined to fail. Our position must be clear: we must reject the forced displacement of Palestinians from their land. Everyone must understand that there is no place for Palestinians except on their land. Any displacement of the Palestinians is a clear violation of international law, in particular article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. The international community, in particular the Security Council, must speak with one strong voice against the displacement of the Palestinians. No one inside this Chamber can remain silent as such plans unfold. Silence is complicity.

In conclusion, we reiterate our call for an urgent and permanent ceasefire in Gaza. We also reiterate our steadfast support for the fraternal Palestinian people until their independent State, with Jerusalem as its capital, is established.

**Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield** (United States of America): I thank Under-Secretary-General Griffiths and Assistant Secretary-General Brands Kehris for their briefings.

It has been more than three months since Hamas carried out the deadliest attack against Jews since the Holocaust and set this conflict into motion. It is a conflict that has killed and displaced far too many people. According to United Nations estimates, more than 1.8 million Palestinians in Gaza have been internally displaced. People are sheltering in overcrowded United Nations facilities; others are living in the streets — entire families, young children and the elderly.

The situation is heartbreaking and untenable. And the United States' position has been clear and consistent: Palestinian civilians in Gaza must be able to return home as soon as conditions allow. Just this week, while in the region, Secretary Blinken announced that Israel has committed to have the United Nations send an assessment team to the north of Gaza.

The United States has also made clear that civilians must not be pressed to leave Gaza under any circumstances. We unequivocally reject the statements by some Israeli ministers and lawmakers calling for a resettlement of Palestinians outside

of Gaza. Those statements, along with statements by Israeli officials calling for the mistreatment of Palestinian detainees or the destruction of Gaza, are irresponsible, inflammatory and only make it harder to secure a lasting peace.

But just as those words send the wrong message, so too do the words that we are not hearing from the Council. Why can some Council members still not bring themselves to condemn Hamas's horrific terrorist attack of 7 October? Why have some Council members stopped talking about the plight of the more than 100 hostages being held by Hamas — or the fact that Hamas and Hizbullah continue to fire rockets on Israel? Some 250,000 Israelis are internally displaced because of those relentless attacks. And why have some Council members refused to hold Hamas accountable for using civilians as human shields? We urge all Member States to speak out and to press Hamas and Hizbullah to do what is necessary to end the violence and displacement they have wrought.

Even as the Council focuses on the conflict in Gaza, we must not turn our attention away from the West Bank, where there has been an unprecedented rise in violence in recent months. We have seen Palestinian extremist militants carry out attacks against Israeli civilians. We unequivocally condemn those attacks, just as we unequivocally condemn attacks by Israeli extremist settlers that target Palestinians and their property and displace entire communities. The United States strongly opposes the advancement of settlements in the West Bank. And we strongly oppose the violence that has come to characterize them. At their core, settlements undermine the geographic viability of a two-State solution, exacerbate tensions and further harm trust between Israelis and Palestinians. At least 340 Palestinians in the West Bank have been killed by Israelis in the past three months.

I want to be clear. The United States will continue to respond to this escalating violence, including through our new visa restriction policy. Under that policy, we have taken steps to improve visa restrictions against individuals who are involved in or meaningfully contributing to the undermining of peace, security or stability in the West Bank. But we know that that is just one piece of the broader picture, and we urge the Israeli Government to prevent and investigate settler violence and to hold extremists who perpetuate it to account. We also urge the Israeli Government to exercise restraint in its operations in the West Bank by respecting civilian

infrastructure, especially in refugee camps, and minimizing civilian harm.

Finally, we have long maintained that stability in the West Bank is dependent on the Palestinian Authority (PA) security forces. That means that the PA must make steps towards reform and revitalization, and it means that Israel must release revenues that allow the PA to pay its security forces.

At this profoundly difficult moment, the United States has stepped up to lead and to advance a vision for lasting peace in which Israel is integrated into the region and terrorist groups can no longer threaten Israel's security; in which Palestinians realize their aspirations for a State of their own and Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank are unified under the Palestinian Authority; and in which Israelis and Palestinians live side by side in peace, with equal measures of security, freedom and dignity. That is the only way forward. It is the only way to end this terrible cycle of violence once and for all. The damning reality is that Israelis and Palestinians will forever be scarred by years and years of mistrust and fear and violence. But the generations that follow need not know that reality. Let us therefore work together to sow the seeds of peace. That must be our charge.

**Mr. Nebenzia** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Under-Secretary-General Martin Griffiths and Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights Ilze Brands Kehris for their objective assessments of the catastrophic situation in the Gaza Strip.

The Russian Federation supported Algeria's initiative to convene today's extraordinary meeting of the Security Council on the situation in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict zone, focusing on the threat of the forced displacement of Palestinians from the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, and guided by the illegality under international law of steps taken in that regard by West Jerusalem. This is only one piece of the bloody puzzle that makes up the picture of the catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza. To date, more than 23,000 people have been killed in the enclave. According to preliminary data alone, more than 7,500 children have been killed. Thousands of people are still missing under the rubble of destroyed buildings. Given the frequency and power of the strikes on population centres, every day in Gaza, dozens, if not hundreds, of Gazans are killed and maimed. Civilian infrastructure, including medical facilities, has been almost completely

destroyed. The total blockade of Gaza has resulted in acute shortages of water, fuel and medical supplies.

Since the escalation of the conflict, some 2 million people — half of them women and children — have already been displaced from their homes. The majority of the internally displaced persons — or more accurately, forcibly transferred persons — have taken refuge in facilities of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, which, despite their status, continue to be subjected to Israeli bombing. Those people have lost their homes, property and livelihoods, and many are in fact on the verge of imminent starvation.

The dire humanitarian situation in Gaza demonstrates how disastrous it can be to follow a path that ignores international law. The attacks of 7 October were of course reprehensible. At the same time, those events cannot legitimize Israel's indiscriminate use of force in the Gaza Strip, especially because that form of hostilities, which is in fact becoming a collective punishment of the Palestinians, involves many grave violations of international humanitarian law. Moreover, the events of 7 October should not be seen in isolation from the long and bloody history of the Palestinian-Israeli confrontation, which spans several decades of oppression, occupation and many crimes against the Palestinian people.

Against that backdrop, the Security Council, as the main body for the maintenance of international peace and security, has still not been able to shoulder its direct mandate and adopt a resolution that unequivocally demands an immediate ceasefire between the parties. We regret to note that resolution 2712 (2023) did not include that key call because of the opposition of one delegation, the United States, and therefore its practical significance verges on zero. And resolution 2720 (2023) — on which we abstained in the voting, upon the request of the Arab States — under pressure from Washington, is full of highly dubious calls to create the conditions for a cessation of hostilities. I would like to emphasize once again that we categorically disagree with the content of the resolution's current operative paragraph 2, and I want to say that the responsibility for all possible consequences will fall on those States that gave their consent to its language that was pushed through by the United States.

Together with the constant indiscriminate bombing and targeting of civilian targets to sow terror and panic

among civilians, we see that a clear, holistic strategy to forcibly displace Palestinians is emerging from West Jerusalem. Its logic is simple — to make life in Gaza unbearable, or even impossible, leaving civilians with an unimaginable choice: to leave their homeland or be killed. The continued forcible expulsion of Palestinians from the Gaza Strip and the West Bank will inevitably shake up the entire Middle East and North Africa region, with dire consequences for the entire world. The Secretariat, led by the Secretary-General, and an overwhelming number of Member States have sounded the alarm condemning such plans by the Israeli leadership and are united in their desire to take decisive action to prevent such a massive forcible deportation of Palestinians from their land. The Israeli side, as an occupying Power, is obliged to comply with the norms of international humanitarian law, in particular article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, which directly prohibits the deportation and forcible transfer of protected persons. Pursuant to articles 23 and 59 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, the occupying Power also has a special obligation to ensure that the civilian population is provided with basic necessities.

Against that backdrop, and in the face of a catastrophic humanitarian situation, Israel's plans to flood the tunnels of Gaza with sea water — according to various estimates, we are talking about filling 1,300 corridors, 500 kilometres in length, with 1.5 million cubic metres of water — are also a cause for extreme concern. I would like to emphasize in particular that the consequences of the contamination of groundwater — the sole source of fresh water for the population of Gaza — will last for centuries. The implementation of such plans risks not only a large-scale environmental disaster, but it will also make the territory of the enclave virtually uninhabitable. Such actions can be qualified as one of the elements of genocide, according to article 2, subparagraph (c), of the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

South Africa, Bangladesh, Bolivia, the Comoros, Djibouti and Brazil already filed corresponding collective complaints against Israel with the International Court of Justice, in addition to the upcoming hearings in the second half of February at The Hague on the legal consequences of the construction of Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories.

At the same time, one can hardly count on a corrupt institution such as the International Criminal

Court (ICC) to provide a proper assessment of what is happening. We have no illusions that the British Prosecutor of the ICC, Mr. Karim Khan, will find the courage to go against his Western backers and their allies, since that body is called upon to serve their political interests. We have observed similar inaction from the ICC in the case of the war crimes of the United States, the United Kingdom and their satellites in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya. The investigation, which never began, was simply deprioritized. With regard to Israel, the President of the ICC is acting in a similar way, limiting himself to vague justifications and recalling some previously voiced appeals to stop the violence.

Against that grim backdrop, our attention is drawn to the messages circulating in the media about the Israeli leadership's ideas of persuading Arab, African and European countries to accept Palestinian refugees, with such transfers bankrolled by the Arab monarchies. Such leaks, combined with the incessant provocative statements of the Israeli establishment, give rise to additional tensions and undermine the universally acknowledged international legal basis for a Palestinian-Israeli settlement, the consistent erosion of which by Washington has led to the current explosion.

In the current conditions, the Russian Federation's fundamental approaches remain unchanged. We call for an immediate ceasefire, for guarantees of unhindered and safe humanitarian access, for the release of hostages and for the restoration of the political horizon for the Middle East peace process on the basis of the two-State solution.

The escalation in Gaza has now continued for 100 days, and there is no sign of it abating. Moreover, the United States and its allies are themselves contributing to the spillover of the conflict throughout the entire region by attacking the people of Yemen yesterday in violation of Article 2 of the Charter of the United Nations. The Council will discuss that dire situation in detail in a separate briefing later today. Apparently, that kind of effective bilateral diplomacy — or rather, arbitrary act — in the region is what our American colleagues have in mind when they claim that they are working better than multilateral efforts.

All of that leads to the main conclusion that, without an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, the Middle East risks being plunged into the abyss of a full-scale war with the gravest global repercussion. The Security Council

has an obligation to return to consider this issue as soon as possible.

**Mr. De La Gasca** (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I wish to thank Mr. Martin Griffiths, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, and Ms. Ilze Brands Kehris, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, for the sombre briefings we just heard, while reiterating Ecuador's support for their work.

Over a year ago, in our first statement delivered as a non-permanent member of the Council on this issue, my delegation called for an end to inflammatory statements that deepen the conflict and incite violence (see S/PV.9236). Our meeting today was convened due to the concern generated by precisely such statements, and in far more difficult circumstances.

The Council has been clear in rejecting the forcible displacement of civilians, including children, in contravention of international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law. It has done so twice in the past 60 days, in resolutions 2712 (2023) and 2720 (2023). In the latter, the Council highlighted that the Gaza Strip constitutes an integral part of the territory occupied in 1967 and reiterated the vision of the two-State solution, with the Gaza Strip as part of the Palestinian Government. Ecuador reiterates its total agreement with what was stated by the Council and insists on the need to reach a peaceful, negotiated, definitive and fair solution for the parties, with the existence of two States, Palestine and Israel, on the basis of the 1967 borders and the relevant resolutions.

In recent days, we received a letter from the Secretary-General reporting on the implementation of resolution 2712 (2023) (S/2024/26), in which he clearly states that the provisions of the resolution are far from being fulfilled and that the progress made is totally insufficient.

Events on the ground reveal incessant violence, more deaths and injuries and an unsustainable humanitarian situation that is constantly worsening. Hamas's hostages remain captive; civilians continue to be displaced; and the danger of the spillover of violence into the region increases. In short, we are observing how, unfortunately, the provisions of the Council have a limited impact in reality.

We believe it is evident that, in this case, without a humanitarian ceasefire it is impossible to implement what was decided. But we cannot allow ourselves to be discouraged. It is our duty to continue working and to do everything in our power for the situation to improve. In that connection, we welcome the opening of the Kerem Shalom crossing by Israel, which has allowed a second point of entry for humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip.

Regarding resolution 2720 (2023), we appreciate the speed with which the Secretary-General appointed Ms. Sigrid Kaag as Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza. We hope that her work is successful and that the United Nations mechanism to accelerate the delivery of humanitarian relief shipments to Gaza can soon be implemented. Likewise, resolution 2720 (2023) calls for creating the conditions for a sustainable cessation of hostilities. We call for progress in that direction.

In conclusion, I reiterate Ecuador's condemnation of the atrocious terrorist acts by Hamas that began on 7 October and of sexual violence and all types of violence against civilians. I reiterate our demand for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages and that, in the meantime, humanitarian access be guaranteed to address their medical needs, as required by resolutions 2712 (2023) and 2720 (2023).

**Dame Barbara Woodward** (United Kingdom): I join others in thanking Under-Secretary-General Griffiths and Assistant Secretary-General Brands Kehris for their briefings today.

I have three points to make today.

First, the United Kingdom firmly rejects any proposal that Palestinians should be resettled outside Gaza, including proposals from members of the Israeli Government. Our views and concerns are shared by our allies and partners, that Gazans should not be subject to forcible displacement or relocation from Gaza.

Secondly, the United Kingdom is alarmed by the record levels of extremist settler violence in the occupied Palestinian territories and its devastating impact. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, since 7 October 2023, at least 198 Palestinian households, including 586 children, have been displaced following an increase in extremist settler violence and access restrictions. We call on the Government of Israel not only to condemn settler

violence, but also to take direct action against those responsible for it, hold them accountable and ensure that Palestinian civilians are protected. We also continue to call on Israel to cease immediately all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem and its Lower Aqueduct, and to respect in their absolute entirety all legal obligations. We reiterate our long-standing position that settlements are illegal under international law and that settlement expansions hinder us from creating the conditions for a durable peace in Israel, the West Bank and across all occupied Palestinian territories.

Thirdly, the United Kingdom is intensely focused on ensuring that more aid gets into Gaza. The current levels are woefully inadequate for the deepening humanitarian crisis. We are deeply concerned that the World Food Programme is reporting that 9 out of 10 families are going with less than one meal a day. We want to see a ceasefire, but this must be a sustainable ceasefire — one that will last. A sustainable ceasefire means one in which Hamas no longer poses a threat to Israel's security, aid is delivered without hindrance and Palestinians can return to the areas of Gaza from which they have been displaced. Ahead of a permanent ceasefire, we want to see immediate and sustained humanitarian pauses. That will allow for hostages to be released and more aid to enter Gaza. In accordance with resolution 2720 (2023), we call on Israel to allow for higher volumes of humanitarian aid through as many routes as possible.

In conclusion, we call once again for the release of hostages taken on 7 October 2023, for measures to allow humanitarian aid in to meet the desperate humanitarian need in Gaza and for a sustainable ceasefire with a political horizon towards a two-State solution. We also remain committed to working with Israelis, Palestinians and all parties in the region and beyond to make that a reality.

**Mr. Zhang Jun** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Algeria for the initiative to request holding this meeting. I also thank Under-Secretary-General Griffiths and Assistant Secretary-General Brands Kehris for their briefings.

Almost 100 days since the beginning of this round of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, more than 23,000 people in Gaza and 200 United Nations personnel and journalists have lost their lives; 90 per cent of the population of Gaza has been displaced. More than

60 per cent of the homes there have been destroyed. Hundreds of thousands of people are struggling to survive in makeshift tents. These are not merely cold statistics; they represent the loss of human lives and the suffering experienced on a daily basis. In the twenty-first century, the historical records that continue to be broken today are none other than those related to wars and their death toll, which is an indelible stain on the human conscience.

The international community has overwhelmingly called for an immediate ceasefire. But, under various pretexts, one permanent member of the Security Council has blocked consensus on this issue through the use of the veto in blatant contempt of international fairness and justice and the Council's authority. Certain people have continuously spoken of the protection of human rights and the prevention of genocide, while, at the same time, in the face of the appalling situation in Gaza, they have played dumb, have continued to stonewall us and have attempted to divert our attention in a blatant display of double standards. It is imperative that we eliminate all interference and take robust action to end the fighting, save lives and restore peace.

First, the forced displacement of the Palestinian people in any form must be firmly rejected. Gaza is the homeland of the Palestinian people. Over the past three months, more than 1 million people have been repeatedly forced to relocate, faced with the constant threat of death. They have nowhere to hide or run. Some Israeli politicians have called for "voluntary immigration" from Gaza, about which we are deeply concerned. That would mean driving 2 million people out of Gaza and turning Gaza into an uninhabited so-called safe zone. If such a horrific idea were implemented, it would constitute a serious crime under international law and would ultimately destroy the prospect of the two-State solution. We have taken note of some statements and clarifications made by Israel in that regard. But with regard to this issue, while words are important, action is even more important. We are paying close attention to Israel's declared intentions but, at the same time, paying even closer attention to the serious consequences of its actions.

Secondly, every measure must be taken to alleviate the effects of the humanitarian disaster. Currently, access to humanitarian supplies is extremely limited. Food, medicine and other essential supplies are extremely scarce. Disease and hunger are spreading throughout Gaza, and the social order is on the verge

of collapse. Secretary-General Guterres has repeatedly stressed that delivering humanitarian aid to Gaza cannot be done under gunfire. It is Israel that has continued its indiscriminate bombing against Gaza and has put in place numerous obstacles blocking access to humanitarian supplies. It is also Israel that has accused the United Nations of having neither the will nor the ability to provide humanitarian relief, which is totally unacceptable. Resolutions 2712 (2023) and 2720 (2023) must be implemented in full. Israel must fulfil its obligations as the occupying Power, ensure the safety of humanitarian workers and fully cooperate in humanitarian relief efforts. China welcomes the concrete proposals made by Secretary-General Guterres with regard to the implementation of resolution 2712 (2023) and the appointment of Ms. Kaag as the Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza. China supports further action by the Security Council to remove obstacles to the safe, rapid and unimpeded entry of sufficient humanitarian supplies in Gaza.

Thirdly, a ceasefire must be sought with the utmost urgency. Only a ceasefire can prevent greater civilian casualties and humanitarian disasters and create the conditions for the early release of all hostages. Only a ceasefire can prevent destroying the premise of the two-State solution. And only a ceasefire can prevent the entire Middle East region from sliding into a tragic abyss. However, it is worrisome that, instead of a horizon that would be afforded by an immediate ceasefire, the situation is evolving into an expansion of the conflict. We urge the international community, especially countries with major influence, to make achieving a ceasefire the top priority. We call on Israel to reverse course immediately and stop its indiscriminate military attacks on and destruction of Gaza.

In the West Bank, Israel should effectively curb settler violence and stop the searches, arrests and raids of Palestinians. Israel should transfer seized tax revenue to the Palestinian National Authority as soon as possible. We are concerned about the spillover effects of the Gaza conflict on the situation in the Red Sea. The military action launched by the United States and the United Kingdom against Yemen will undoubtedly exacerbate regional tensions. We call on all parties to effectively abide by the Charter of the United Nations and international law and to make joint efforts to maintain peace and security in the Red Sea and the Middle East.

**Mrs. Frazier** (Malta): I thank Under-Secretary-General Griffiths and Assistant Secretary-General Brands Kehris for their most pertinent briefings.

At the outset, we must stress that the catastrophic situation in Gaza is causing immense levels of death, suffering and displacement among the civilian population. Millions of civilians are enduring the deprivation of basic necessities, leading to a staggering loss of life. This plight is never more tragic than when one considers the humanitarian consequences the situation has on women and children, who suffer disproportionately from food insecurity, malnutrition and the crippled health-care system.

We reiterate that there is an urgent need to genuinely facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid into and within Gaza, including through the opening of additional crossing points. Furthermore, all arbitrary bureaucratic impediments to humanitarian operations must cease. Equally fundamental is the need to ensure and safeguard the safety of United Nations and humanitarian workers, including the security of their premises. The rising death toll among humanitarian, Palestinian Red Crescent Society and United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East staff is unacceptable. Within that context, Malta calls for the immediate and full implementation of resolutions 2712 (2023) and 2720 (2023). We look forward to working with the newly appointed Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza, Ms. Sigrid Kaag, towards ensuring that.

We must also not forget the plight of those hostages still held by Hamas in Gaza. In accordance with resolution 2712 (2023), Malta calls for the immediate and safe release of the remaining hostages. We unreservedly condemn the Hamas terror attacks of 7 October, including the recurring rocket fire into Israeli territory, and further denounce any acts of sexual violence committed. Malta emphasizes the utmost importance of adhering to international humanitarian law and accountability for those who violate it. It is imperative that all parties take the necessary measures to safeguard civilians and protect civilian infrastructure. Likewise, attacks on religious sites and individuals seeking refuge within them are unacceptable, as are any deliberate targeting of journalists in the conflict.

We remain convinced of the need for an urgent cessation of hostilities. The establishment of a humanitarian ceasefire is the only way through which

a meaningful and effective humanitarian response throughout the entirety of Gaza can be mounted. The cessation of hostilities is also critical within the context of the displacement of the Palestinian people. Palestinians in Gaza must be allowed to return to their homes or provided with adequate and safe shelter until their homes are rebuilt. The forced displacement of populations and the transfer of populations from occupied territory is a grave violation of international law and a war crime under the fourth Geneva Convention. We reject any attempts at the forced or coercive transfer of Palestinian people out of Gaza. Statements to that effect from figures within the Government of Israel are deeply regrettable.

We are also deeply concerned that, in the past weeks, we have witnessed a resurgence of forced transfer of Palestinian communities linked to demolitions, illegal settler encroachment and violence in the West Bank. Malta strongly stresses that settlements violate international law, obstruct peace and threaten the viability of an independent, contiguous Palestinian State. Israeli settler violence is unacceptable and must be addressed without impunity. Such actions also inflame tensions and risk a further spillover of the conflict. All parties must mitigate any threats that inflame regional tensions, including escalations on the Blue Line and in the Red Sea. The universal norms of international law must be respected on all fronts. A fundamental recommitment to political dialogue that is based on the realization of a two-State solution has never been more essential.

Malta reiterates its conviction that the only viable path to achieving peace lies within the internationally agreed parameters of the two-State solution, along the pre-1967 borders, addressing the legitimate aspirations of both sides, with Jerusalem as the future capital of two States living side by side in peace and security.

**Mr. Yamazaki** (Japan): I thank Under-Secretary-General Griffiths and Assistant Secretary-General Brands Kehris for their valuable briefings.

Three months have passed since the heinous acts of terror were committed by Hamas and other militant groups. Since then, Gaza has been under heavy bombardments and relentless shelling, making Gaza one of the worst humanitarian catastrophes witnessed today. The extent of the suffering in Gaza is unimaginable. At least 23,000 Palestinians have reportedly been killed in Gaza, including a heartbreaking loss of more than 10,000

children. More than 85 per cent of the population across the Gaza Strip have been displaced. Critical civilian infrastructure, including hospitals and United Nations shelters, have not been spared from attacks. Famine is imminent, and those internally displaced are at a high risk of communicable diseases owing to extremely poor living conditions. Humankind is in crisis.

The international community must continue to work with a greater sense of urgency towards alleviating the humanitarian disaster in Gaza. We fully support the recently appointed Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza, Ms. Sigrid Kaag, and her staff to that end. While the Security Council adopted resolutions 2712 (2023) and 2720 (2023), regrettably, their effective implementation remains elusive owing to the ongoing heavy fighting. As violent regional spillover is already happening, what is most urgent is the de-escalation of the conflict. In that regard, our position is clear, as shown in our voting positions for the relevant resolutions, including the General Assembly resolution adopted on 12 December 2023 (General Assembly resolution ES-10/22). We would also like to emphasize once again that hostages held by Hamas and other militant groups must be released immediately and unconditionally to create better conditions for easing tensions.

Japan is concerned about the recent inflammatory rhetoric by Israeli ministers on the “resettlement” of Palestinians outside of the Gaza Strip. Any attempt to forcibly displace the Palestinian people is inconsistent with the relevant Security Council resolutions and in violation of international law, including international humanitarian law and human rights law. We reject any such forced displacement. We also stress the need to create conditions to enable displaced Palestinians in Gaza to return safely to their homes. In that regard, we note recent reports that Israel has agreed to allow the United Nations to carry out an assessment mission in northern Gaza. We should create a conducive environment in which residents can return safely to their homes.

In conclusion, Japan will continue to exert its utmost efforts to contribute to the de-escalation of this conflict within and beyond Gaza. A two-State solution remains the only viable path for both Israel and a future independent Palestinian State — which must include the Gaza Strip and the West Bank — to live side by side in mutual peace and security.

**Mr. Žbogar** (Slovenia): I also would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Griffiths and Assistant Secretary-General Brands Kehris for their very sober and yet very clear briefings.

Looking at the situation in Gaza and the broader Middle East region, we believe it is high time to reflect on our responsibility as the Security Council. Slovenia shares the concerns of briefers regarding the several recent statements by members of the Israeli Government proposing the mass displacement of Palestinians from Gaza, and we strongly reject those statements. Any displacement of the Palestinian population from Gaza would constitute a grave breach of international humanitarian law, amounting to a war crime. We condemn such statements, which are only escalating tensions.

Secondly, we are appalled by the current conditions in which the internally displaced people of Gaza are living. Eighty-five per cent of Gaza’s population is displaced. Military operations, including indiscriminate bombardment, are forcing people to flee over and over again.

As the recent letter by the Secretary-General (S/2024/26) outlined, Gaza is facing widespread death and destruction. Famine is rampant. There is an evolving public health catastrophe, with children, pregnant women and older persons among those at greatest risk. There is a dire need to scale up humanitarian aid and allow rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian assistance. In that regard, we welcome the appointment of Ms. Sigrid Kaag as the Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza, and we stand ready to support her.

Throughout the conflict, we have repeatedly called for full respect of international humanitarian law and human rights law. I would like to voice our concern about the grave violations we are witnessing in Gaza. All the reports we are receiving on the humanitarian situation demonstrate that Gaza is uninhabitable. People have been seeking shelter at hospitals and facilities of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, which are overcrowded and lack adequate sanitation facilities, and even those facilities have been bombed. Civilians have been sheltering in the so-called safe zones, which have been bombed as well.

The bottom line is that no place in Gaza is safe. Therefore, where will these people return? We are

talking about whole neighborhoods reduced to rubble. Roads and infrastructure related to water, electricity and sewage — the most basic infrastructure — have been damaged. Hospitals, religious sites, schools, museums, the ancient port of Gaza and other sites have been destroyed.

Of course, we are aware of Hamas using some civilian infrastructure to continue its attacks on Israel. Of course, we are aware of the brutality of the 7 October attack on Israeli civilians. We are deeply concerned by the information about sexual violence by Hamas, which needs to be investigated and addressed. And we are calling on Hamas to immediately release all hostages so that they can return to their families. But that cannot — and does not — justify disproportionately destroying civilian infrastructure and life in Gaza. Condemning the statements on displacement is not enough. We need to prevent actions leading to displacement. Displacement need not necessarily be forced but could happen because Palestinians do not have anywhere to return to.

That brings me to my last point. Before we can enable the United Nations to deliver enough humanitarian assistance to people of Gaza and before we can start creating conditions for a safe return, we need to demand an immediate ceasefire — a ceasefire that would stop the destruction of Gaza, that would return the hostages home and that would help us calm the region.

**Mr. Kanu** (Sierra Leone): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting. Let me also thank Under-Secretary-General Martin Griffiths and Assistant Secretary-General Ilze Brands Kehris for their important briefings.

When Sierra Leone first addressed the agenda item entitled “The situation in the Middle East” in the Security Council, in May 1970 (see S/PV.1539), our representative stated that the plight of the Palestinian refugees is great, that development and progress are a matter of urgency for both Arabs and Jews and that surely it is in the interest of humankind that we should all seek, passionately and persistently, a way towards peace and allow the process of conciliation and reconciliation. More than half a century later, we are convened in this Chamber to address the threat of the forced displacement of Palestinians in Gaza.

In the context of the continuing occupation by Israel of the Palestinian territories and the escalation

following the heinous 7 October 2023 attacks by Hamas, Sierra Leone has and continues to condemn in the strongest terms that heinous attack against Israeli civilians by Hamas and the taking of hostages. Sierra Leone emphasizes our call for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages, while noting that the taking of hostages is a serious breach of international law.

We also strongly condemn attacks on civilians, including Palestinian civilians, and civilian infrastructure, as well as the practice of collective punishment and forced displacement of the Palestinian people. As reported by the Secretary-General, 1.9 million Palestinians are internally displaced and are mostly sheltering in or around the vicinity of installations of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East in Gaza. We reject any attempt to remove Palestinians from the Gaza Strip or the West Bank, either temporarily or for a long-term period.

We deeply regret the unacceptably high human cost; approximately 23,000 Palestinian civilians have been reported killed since 7 October 2023, with women and children being the most affected. We regret the ultimate cost being paid by United Nations and other humanitarian workers and journalists. Sierra Leone calls for accountability for all those responsible for violations of international law, in particular international humanitarian law, and those crimes of serious concern to the international community.

For the past three months, we have witnessed a situation that has become increasingly precarious, leading to the breakdown of systems, the loss of lives and the destruction of civilian infrastructure in the Gaza Strip. The situation has deepened the complexity of the Middle East and Palestinian question, with ramifications for regional escalation. We note with grave concern the severe humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip owing to the continuous violence and denial of access to life-saving humanitarian aid at the scale and means necessary.

We call on all parties to comply with resolutions 2712 (2023) and 2720 (2023) and their obligations under international law, in order to facilitate rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access to the civilians in need. Sierra Leone therefore calls for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire, which, in our view, will bring an end to atrocities, reduce regional tensions and allow

for the consolidation of ongoing humanitarian efforts by the United Nations and other international partners, geared towards an effective humanitarian aid operation in the Gaza Strip.

In conclusion, Sierra Leone reiterates its call for political and diplomatic efforts to facilitate the two-State solution that will ensure Israel and Palestine live side by side in long-lasting peace and security.

**Mr. Kim Sangjin** (Republic of Korea): I too would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Martin Griffiths and Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights Ilze Brands Kehris for their briefings today.

More than three months have now passed since the horrendous terrorist attacks by Hamas on 7 October 2023, which we condemn in the strongest terms. Since then, hostilities have been ongoing in Gaza and Israel, and the consequences are extremely alarming. Last week, Under-Secretary-General Griffiths described the situation on the ground, saying that Gaza has become a place of death and despair. Civilians in Gaza, including women and children, have no safe places, as even hospitals are being besieged by military operations and air strikes. Today Under-Secretary-General Griffiths stated in his briefing to the members of the Security Council that there has been barely any improvement in the humanitarian situation in Gaza despite the adoption of resolutions 2712 (2023) and 2720 (2023). In his alarming letter to the Council last week (S/2024/26), Secretary-General Guterres also detailed that the level of aid to Palestinians in Gaza is completely inadequate for two million people as widespread famine looms.

More sustainable humanitarian pauses that can lead to a sustainable cessation of hostilities are of utmost importance. Based on those pauses, the delivery of critical humanitarian aid must be expanded and expedited. Countless trucks with humanitarian aid from numerous countries are lining up, waiting for their turn to enter Gaza, which I myself witnessed on my visit to the Rafah crossing.

The Palestinian people's right to live on their own land must be guaranteed. Individual or mass forcible transfer of Palestinians outside Palestine, including the Gaza Strip, is simply not acceptable. In that regard, we have deep concerns about high-level Israeli officials' comments suggesting the mass displacement or so-called voluntary migration of Palestinians out of Gaza. We are also extremely alarmed by the inflammatory remarks by various Israeli ministers, stating that Israel must resettle

the Gaza Strip. Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), adopted in 2016, clearly condemns all measures aimed at altering the demographic composition, character and status of the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including the transfer of Israeli settlers and the displacement of Palestinian civilians. Any such act is in violation of international humanitarian law and the relevant Security Council resolutions. All settlement activities must be ceased, and Gaza must not be resettled. Resolution 2334 (2016) also calls upon the parties to refrain from provocative actions, incitement and inflammatory rhetoric. The rhetoric of high-level Israeli officials — including multiple ministers — on the possible forced displacement of Palestinians does not in any way help to ease the tension that is widespread all around the Middle East.

We all know — and every member in this Chamber keeps reaffirming — that the only possible way to stop the cycle of violence is through the realization of the two-State solution, with both Israelis and Palestinians living side by side in peace within secure and recognized borders, consistent with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions. Any acts or statements that hinder the realization of that aspiration of the world must stop immediately.

**Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett** (Guyana): I express my appreciation to Under-Secretary-General Martin Griffiths and Assistant Secretary-General Ilze Brands Kehris for their sobering and informative briefings.

Guyana is deeply concerned about the forced displacement of the population in Gaza since 7 October 2023. We take note that many Palestinians in Gaza have been displaced multiple times within the territory. We are now alarmed at the statements emanating from certain officials suggesting that the Palestinian people in Gaza should be forcibly transferred out of the territory to countries in the region and elsewhere. Guyana rejects those proposals and calls on the Security Council to do all within its power to protect the Palestinian population in Gaza from such a plight, which is reminiscent of 1948. We must condemn in no uncertain terms those and all other suggestions that purport to violate international law, sending a strong message to the authors of those suggestions that they cannot carry out such actions unopposed.

The displacement of the population in Gaza is distressing to Guyana on two fronts.

First, the circumstances under which people have been uprooted from their homes and livelihoods have created a catastrophic humanitarian situation involving disease, destruction, danger and death. Palestinian men, women and children have been herded into smaller and smaller spaces in the Gaza Strip and forced to eke out an existence in the most inhumane conditions and without an adequate supply of food, water, medicine, fuel and other basic items essential for survival. Social services, including the delivery of quality education and health care, have been severely disrupted. Women are unable to give birth — a most sacred experience — in a safe environment. There is acute food insecurity, sparking legitimate concerns about mass starvation and death as famine looms. As if those conditions were not bad enough, these displaced persons live with the constant threat of bombs and bullets destroying or maiming them and their loved ones.

The second element of concern to Guyana, particularly if there are mass forced transfers outside of Gaza, relates to the implications for the two-State solution. The prospects for a Palestinian State cannot be divorced from the necessity of the Palestinian people inhabiting the territory that pertains to them. Forcibly removing Palestinians from Gaza undermines those prospects and, coupled with an expanding settler policy in the West Bank, leaves no doubt about the likely fate of the two-State solution. In that context, Guyana underscores the importance of advancing the implementation of resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002) and other relevant resolutions to realize the two-State solution.

We must tackle these issues frontally. Guyana was encouraged by the earlier public assurances from the Government of Israel that it has no intention of displacing the civilian population of Gaza, but pronouncements by some Israeli officials give reason for real worry. Israel's actions must be in tandem with their earlier assurances. The first and most critical step at this stage is a cessation of all hostilities — an immediate ceasefire. Outside of that, displacement will continue, because people will have to keep moving in the hope of finding safety somewhere in the hell that is Gaza right now.

Guyana wants to partner with the Council and the international community to end the indignity that the people of Gaza are enduring. We are prepared to work hard with everyone to end this war and to rebuild and reconstruct lives. Most importantly, we are prepared, as

we have always been, to work with everyone to find the path to advance the two-State solution. Palestinians and Israelis alike deserve lasting peace and security.

**Mr. Fernandes** (Mozambique): I wish to thank the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria for requesting this briefing on the humanitarian situation in Gaza, with particular focus on the forced displacement of the Palestinian people. We also thank the briefers: Mr. Martin Griffiths, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator; and Ms. Ilze Brands Kehris, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, for their assessment of the situation in Gaza.

After three months of war, the situation in Gaza is dire, with endless death, forced relocations, an unparalleled health catastrophe, famine and no prospects or hope for Gaza. Forced displacement and limits on humanitarian aid are not acceptable. Innocent civilians are those who suffer the most. It is our duty to uphold respect and dignity. In fact, the United Nations has reported that the Gaza Strip continues to suffer from intense bombardments that have caused immense casualties and the destruction of vital civilian infrastructure, creating a total crisis. Those actions violate international humanitarian law, human rights law and the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention regarding displaced persons.

The regional escalation of the conflict in the Middle East has reached the highest level. It is therefore imperative that the conflict cease immediately before the consequences spread any further, or it will be too late to stop and limit its repercussions.

As Council members, we have an obligation to ensure moderation and restraint. International conflict laws must take precedence over those actions, and all actors must halt violence and military operations. An immediate ceasefire is our best hope, as it would allow humanitarian access under resolutions 2712 (2023) and 2720 (2023). Most importantly, it would potentially enable negotiations towards peace. According to Mr. Filippo Grandi, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "resolving forced displacement is not only a moral or humanitarian imperative, but also deals with issues at the heart of the Council's mandate to maintain international peace and security".

Finally, in order to resolve the Gaza crisis, Mozambique calls upon all parties to exercise maximum restraint and return to dialogue before

the situation deteriorates irreparably. In that vein, Mozambique continues to support the prospect of two States, Palestine and Israel, coexisting peacefully in accordance with the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions.

**Mr. Hauri** (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting, and Mr. Martin Griffiths and Ms. Ilze Brands Kehris for their briefings.

Their analysis of the situation is clear: the guns must be silenced if we wish to stop the spread of the conflict and the suffering of the civilian population and facilitate humanitarian access and the release of hostages. That is why Switzerland calls for every measure to be taken to immediately allow safe, unhindered and expanded humanitarian access and to establish a lasting humanitarian ceasefire.

The unjustifiable acts of terror committed by Hamas on 7 October, with the number of victims amounting to nearly 1,200, the violence, particularly the sexual violence suffered by many young women and girls, and the taking of hostages, were deeply shocking. We have firmly and unequivocally condemned them. We also reiterate our call for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages still being held in Gaza. We continue to attach great importance to the right of each State to ensure its security and the duty to protect its population and those under its control.

Since that day, we have seen an alarming increase in the level of violence and suffering in the Middle East. In Gaza, more than 23,300 people have been killed and more than 59,400 injured, according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Three months later, no outcome is yet visible. It is our responsibility, as members of the Council responsible for ensuring international peace and security, to reverse that trend. That is because the continuation of such violence not only threatens to destabilize the entire region, but it also endangers the very foundations of the international law-based system and the fundamental principles of humanity. In three months, the Gaza Strip has become uninhabitable and, as the Secretary-General says, no one is safe there. As we speak, 85 per cent of the population in Gaza, including many families with children, have been forced to flee. There are now 1.4 million people crammed into 155 overcrowded and inadequately

equipped United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East facilities.

Switzerland therefore rejects and condemns all declarations aimed at expelling civilians from the occupied Palestinian territory, including Gaza. Switzerland recalls that the Geneva Conventions prohibit the forced transfer of populations, which may constitute a war crime. We call on the leaders of all parties to refrain from any unilateral measures and any provocative acts or inflammatory remarks, particularly those that could constitute a violation of international law.

It is urgent to negotiate a decisive turning point in order to emerge from the crisis, which threatens the peace and security of Israelis, Palestinians, and the entire region and well beyond. To that end, the full implementation of resolutions 2712 (2023) and 2720 (2023) is essential. There is an urgent need to increase the humanitarian assistance entering Gaza by ensuring rapid, safe and unhindered access for aid in accordance with international humanitarian law. Indeed, the status quo is untenable for civilians. They are facing serious threats due to the continuation of intense hostilities and the shortage of all goods and services essential to their survival, leading to famine, which already affects half a million Gazans. In that regard, Switzerland recalls that the use of starvation as a method of warfare is strictly prohibited by international humanitarian law and may constitute a war crime.

Furthermore, all violations of international law committed in Israel and throughout the occupied Palestinian territory must be investigated and the perpetrators brought to justice before the relevant authorities. To that end, the International Criminal Court is currently conducting an investigation into the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, covering both the events relating to 7 October and the ongoing events in Gaza and the West Bank.

The search for a two-State political solution, for which the Council has advocated for years, is imperative. Conditions must be created to rebuild Gaza as an integral part of a future Palestinian State living side by side with Israel in peace and within secure and recognized borders.

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

I thank Mr. Griffiths and Ms. Brands Kehris for their briefings.

As Emmanuel Macron, President of France, has stated, we must work immediately towards a lasting ceasefire with the help of all regional and international partners. That is essential if more aid is to be delivered to the civilian population of Gaza. Obstacles must be removed to guarantee humanitarian access and fully implement resolutions 2712 (2023) and 2720 (2023). France will continue to provide financial and material aid to the civilian population of Gaza. We commend the essential commitment of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and all humanitarian actors.

France calls for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages. The Council must condemn the attacks committed by Hamas and other terrorist groups on 7 October, including the use of sexual violence. France will continue its work to establish sanctions against Hamas at the European level.

On the political front, France will continue to advocate for the two-State solution, with Jerusalem as the capital of both States, which is the only way to build a just and lasting peace. Our President is pursuing his discussions with the stakeholders of the region to that end. We must work towards building a State for the Palestinians. The Palestinian Authority has a central role to play in that process in both the West Bank and Gaza, which is destined to become part of such a Palestinian State.

In resolution 2712 (2023), the Council reaffirmed that the forced displacement of civilian populations contravenes international law. Furthermore, France condemns the policy of settlements, which is illegal and poses a major obstacle to the prospect of the two-State solution. Ending settler violence in the West Bank is imperative.

Lastly, avoiding a regional conflagration is critical. The stability of Lebanon and the region requires full compliance with resolution 1701 (2006) by all parties. France strongly condemns the Houthi attacks on commercial vessels in the Red Sea, which violate the rights and freedoms of navigation, and will continue to shoulder its responsibilities to help to ensure maritime security in the region.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

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

**Mr. Mansour** (Palestine) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the brotherly country of Algeria for requesting this meeting.

(*spoke in English*)

Allow me to thank the briefers, Under-Secretary-General Griffiths and Assistant Secretary-General Brands Kehris, for their statements, but more importantly for the relentless efforts of the United Nations to uphold its mandate in circumstances made deliberately impossible.

Allow me also, before delivering my statement, to make two remarks.

First, we thank South Africa for its moral leadership with the case it presented before the International Court of Justice yesterday against Israel for genocide. We advise those who were unable until now to even say that Israel has committed grave breaches of international law, let alone hold Israel accountable, to avoid claiming some legal or moral authority to criticize South Africa for seizing the highest judicial body of our international law-based order to address one of the most important situations of our time. The lesson of the Holocaust is not that one should defend Israel when it is committing atrocities, but rather that one should stand against atrocities, regardless of who commits them and who endures them.

Secondly, the best way to avoid regional escalation is not the threat or use of more fire, but action for an immediate ceasefire. I have to say that one would have hoped that saving Palestinian children's lives would have been met with the same urgency to act and provide protection granted to shipping lanes.

It took 75 years for the United Nations to finally recognize the Nakba. Instead of seeing the Nakba end, our people are yet again confronted with large-scale massacres aimed at forcibly displacing them. This is a Nakba that the world is watching unfold before our eyes. I am from the generation born with the Nakba, its massacres, its tents and its hardships. I never thought that I would see it happen again in my lifetime — 70 per cent of Palestinians in Gaza are already refugees, who have already been denied their right of return for decades. Many of the people in Gaza have had their homes destroyed in previous assaults. Palestinians in Gaza today mourn their loved ones and

mourn their homes, which they have built and have rebuilt for themselves and their families. They mourn their city and the Gaza Strip, as all its landmarks have been destroyed. Every place where people had happy memories has been disfigured. Now, every corner is filled with agony, death and suffering.

In 100 days, virtually every Palestinian in Gaza has been displaced multiple times, from a home to a United Nations shelter, to a tent, searching for safety everywhere, finding safety nowhere; searching for life anywhere, met by death everywhere. Israel has deliberately destroyed everything. It has killed and maimed our children, our doctors, our journalists, our engineers, our poets and our academics. It has destroyed the very requirement of life, and of a life in Gaza. There are no homes to live in, no schools or universities to study, no hospitals to heal, no mosques or churches to worship, no agricultural land to farm, no bakeries for bread, no drinkable water, no markets to buy from, no safety and no future. And as Mr. Griffiths correctly stated, there is no safe place in the Gaza Strip.

It was hoping that Palestinians would leave under the pressure of its bombardments. They have not. Now it is hoping that they will leave because of the destruction the bombs have left behind. Palestinians are traumatized by the Nakba. They have laid even deeper roots in the hope of preventing it from reoccurring. But it is unjust that their lives should be hell on Earth just because they refuse to leave their homeland. Our people have a simple dream: to live in freedom and dignity on their land. This is their right, and yet they have continued to be stripped of it for decades.

The Secretary-General has been unequivocal in his report (see S/PV.9498) and statements, together with the entirety of the United Nations system. Saving civilian lives, allowing humanitarian access and aid, preventing famine, stopping the spread of infectious diseases and preventing regional escalation all require an immediate humanitarian ceasefire. You cannot do any of those things without an immediate ceasefire. If you want to send humanitarian assistance up to scale, if you want to prevent forced displacement, and if you want an army of humanitarian officers from the United Nations to be able to deliver humanitarian assistance to every corner of the Gaza Strip, you cannot do it without a ceasefire. The Secretary-General is correct, Mr. Griffiths is correct, and all those who believe in that are correct. We thank the Council for the unanimous decision and position of rejecting forced displacement.

We acknowledge and appreciate that. We also thank the Council for the unanimous position of asking for humanitarian aid to scale, as requested by the Secretary-General. What the Council is not unanimously agreeing to is the requirement and guarantee to do so by calling for a ceasefire now. We hope that soon the Council will be unanimous in the decision to call for a ceasefire.

Instead, Israel continues its mass killings of Palestinians. Death is everywhere. Now it has new shapes and names, such as starvation, dehydration and disease, which are spreading like wildfire. These are the consequences not of a war, but an Israeli-made humanitarian catastrophe. Israeli confessions or denials are irrelevant; their actions speak loud enough. And actions speak louder than words. Israel wants the Palestinian people to choose between destruction and displacement, between genocide and ethnic cleansing.

The Council needs to act now to stop the genocide under way, to save lives, to put an end to this carnage and to restore life in Gaza. And our people will have to figure out how to live with such loss, pain, suffering and trauma, and how to live without their loved ones or without limbs or with visible and invisible scars.

There have always been two visions about how to end this conflict. The first is live and let live, uphold international law, end the occupation, fulfil Palestinian rights and achieve a just and lasting peace on the basis of United Nations resolutions. That is the international consensus. The second is a supremacist, racist, criminal and delusional vision that somehow this conflict could end by Palestinians accepting that they have only three options: death, exodus or subjugation. The incessant attacks against Palestinian communities in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, to force them to leave are also a product of the same logic that denies Palestinian existence, rights and statehood, the same logic that considers that the solution is not ending the Nakba, but continuing it to its term. The international position is clear: there is not a people too many in our region; there is a missing independent State. Act accordingly, protect the Palestinian people and support the independence of the Palestinian State.

The Palestinian people are here to stay. We are as old as our Roman olive trees. The Palestinian people have a right to live in freedom and dignity in their ancestral land. This is the only path towards shared peace and security. All those who want to see shared

peace and security should not spread fire. They must support an immediate ceasefire now.

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

**Mr. Erdan** (Israel): This is the second Security Council meeting this week on the situation in Gaza and the twenty-first meeting on the subject since 7 October. Over the same period, three General Assembly meetings were convened and two Security Council resolutions were adopted (resolutions 2720 (2024) and resolution 2712 (2023)), as well as two General Assembly resolutions (General Assembly resolutions ES-10/21 and ES-10/22).

Sadly, not a single one of those resolutions condemned Hamas for its heinous massacre of 1,300 Israelis and for taking 240 hostages. Nearly 100 days have passed of 136 children, women and elderly being held in dark Hamas terror tunnels and still not a single discussion here was dedicated to advancing their release. For heaven's sake, 100 days have elapsed and not once has the Council convened to focus on freeing the hostages. Little baby Kfir Bibas is about to mark his first birthday, a quarter of his life spent as a hostage in the hands of rapists and murderers, and the Council has taken no action to secure his release. One hundred days have elapsed, and Hamas has not even permitted the Red Cross to visit the hostages. This is the most heinous war crime and what has the Council done?

But these are all symptoms of the same cancer that is rotting this institution. For years, the United Nations has been exploited by dictators and human rights abusers, and today it has become another weapon in the arsenal of terrorists. The United Nations has lost all moral credibility. Ninety-eight days after the most widespread massacre of Jews since the Holocaust, it has become evidently clear that the United Nations can unite on only one thing — the demonization of Israel.

Seventy-six years ago here, at the United Nations, there was a moment of justice and morality when the General Assembly adopted the partition plan (General Assembly resolution 181 (II)), establishing a Jewish State and an Arab State. As the Council probably remembers, Israel immediately accepted the resolution and established a thriving State — a democracy. The Palestinians, on the other hand, rejected the resolution and from that moment on, for the past 76 years, they have used every means to annihilate us, including the use of the United Nations as a weapon. They called their

failure to commit a genocide against the Jewish people the Nakba. The Council heard it mentioned again today.

There is not one single United Nations entity that has remained untainted by politicized, anti-Israel bias. Every United Nations entity has become weaponized against Israel by the Palestinians and their automatic anti-Israel majority. Just look at this meeting. The representative of the League of Arab States who sits on the Council found it crucial to discuss the forced displacement of Gazans in the same week that Gaza was already discussed here, in depth, and in the General Assembly.

First, let me be very clear. There is no forced displacement. As Israel's Prime Minister said two days ago, Israel has no intention of displacing the population in Gaza. Israel is solely fighting Hamas terrorists, whose core strategy is to use Gazan civilians as human shields and who have converted every inch of Gaza into a terror war machine. The Council knows that to ensure that 7 October never happens again, Israel must eliminate Hamas. Yet Hamas has embedded itself in and under civilian infrastructure. There is hardly one home in Gaza in which weapons were not found. Therefore, in order to mitigate civilian casualties, Israel requested the temporary evacuation of civilians from active war zones. After all, temporary evacuation is reversible, while the loss of life is not. The Council knows the facts, yet, owing to political interests, some Council members prefer spreading falsehoods to the truth, Israel be damned.

As we speak, there are more than 1 million Muslims being forcibly removed from their homes, all their possessions taken from them as they face poverty, famine and disease. No, I am not talking about the situation in Gaza, but about Pakistan's forced displacement of 1.3 million Afghans. Afghan families that lived their entire lives in Pakistan are being forcibly expelled, their lives destroyed and their future lost. Eighty-five per cent of those fleeing are women and children. The Council convened 21 times, primarily to assist the people of Gaza on account of Israel's self-defence against Hamas terrorists, but not even once to focus solely on defending the rights of Afghans in Pakistan. Why does the forced displacement of Muslims from a Muslim country mean nothing to the Algerian representative and the Council? I will tell the Council why: no Jews, no news. But that is merely one example. On Christmas, 200 Nigerian Christians were murdered by Muslims. Over the past decade, 50,000 Christians

in Nigeria have been butchered and hacked to death. Is that even a concern to the Council? Again — no Jews, no news.

The Council speaks a great deal about proportionality. But where is the proportionality when it comes to the Council's obsession against Israel? It dedicates hours to talking about Israel and attempting to tie our hands when brutal dictatorships and murderous regimes, such as Iran and others, are hardly the focus here. Sadly, Council members are not the captains of this ship. The Council is being led by the poisonous political goals of the biased majority in the United Nations. Every United Nations body is now a weapon against Israel, and as a result, those in real need remain helpless. By focusing mainly on Israel, a country that represents one tenth of 1 per cent of the global population, every human rights abuser can continue to commit their crimes unimpeded.

In 2023, the General Assembly adopted more resolutions against Israel than against Iran, North Korea and Syria combined. Iran — a country that murders women for not properly wearing their head coverings, guns down thousands of peaceful protesters and hangs members of the LGBTQ community from cranes while funding terror across the globe — had only one General Assembly resolution adopted against it, while its leaders are given the red-carpet treatment here at the United Nations. Syria, a country that has murdered hundreds of thousands of its own citizens with barrel bombs and chemical weapons, also had only one resolution adopted against it. Israel had more than a dozen, just as it does every year. It should be crystal clear to every person in this Chamber that the United Nations is not only broken — it is dangerous. It took UN-Women 60 days to release a loosely and vaguely worded statement on Hamas's sexual violence, despite the overwhelming evidence of their crimes. To the United Nations, Israeli women are not women.

Under-Secretary-General Griffiths libellously said recently that Gaza is the worst humanitarian crisis he has ever seen. Really? He saw the killing fields of the Khmer Rouge. He saw 400,000 Yemenis murdered and starved to death. But to him, Gaza is worse. Every single day Israel facilitates truckloads of food, water and medical supplies to Gaza and supports every humanitarian initiative, while the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs refuses to even report about Israeli victims of terror. By the way, where are his and the Council's concerns about Palestinian leaders' and officials' incitement to terrorism? They

pay the terrorists. They do not only talk about it, they pay them to kill Jews. The Palestinian Authority did not even condemn the 7 October massacre. Where are the concerns? Even the World Health Organization (WHO) has joined the Palestinians arsenal. In May, at the WHO annual meeting, a special debate was held to single out Israel; the only country in the world singled out for condemnation with its very own special agenda item was the Jewish State. At that same annual meeting, North Korea was elected to the WHO Executive Board, on which Syria and Yemen also sit. That is how distorted the United Nations has become.

The same goes for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). Just this week, a Telegram group of 3,000 UNRWA teachers in Gaza was exposed and shown to contain many posts celebrating and praising Hamas's massacre. The rapist murderers were praised as heroes. Their education was glorified. And pictures of dead and captured Israelis were gleefully shared. Countless weapons caches and rockets have been found in UNRWA schools across Gaza, as have sickening education materials promoting martyrdom and antisemitism. That is a United Nations agency manufacturing generations of hate and violence. It is literally a United Nations-facilitated weapon against Israel.

The list of different United Nations agencies and bodies that have been that have been weaponized against Israel is endless, but of all the anti-Israel organs at the United Nations, there is one that puts all the others to shame, and that is the Human Rights Council. Currently — it is important to know the facts — of the Council's 47 members, only 17 actually uphold human rights in their own countries, and that is the Council that we trust to be a lighthouse of morality and good. Not a single Human Rights Council resolution has focused on the police State of Cuba, not even once, or on the authoritarian regime of Venezuela. No Jews, no news. Iran even recently chaired a human rights social forum. To the United Nations, darkness is light and wrong is right.

Israel is the only country that is bashed at every Human Rights Council session as a result of special agenda item 7 — bash the Jews and make news. Like in the General Assembly, Israel has more resolutions adopted against it at the Human Rights Council than any other country by a long shot. One third of all commissions of inquiry ever established by the Council have been to investigate — guess who? — Israel, the

only liberal democracy in the Middle East. Delegations are invited to visit, even though they do not want to.

Just when Israel thought that the United Nations had hit rock bottom, the Organization proved us wrong. South Africa's libellous case before the International Court of Justice is the epitome of the dystopian reality of the United Nations. How can it be that the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, which was adopted following the genocide of the Jewish people, is now being weaponized against the Jewish State while serving the Hamas terrorists that perpetrated the massacre? Anyone who looks at the facts on the ground can see that South Africa's case is baseless. Hamas is the one that publicly declares its intent and seeks to commit genocide against Israelis, not the other way around. The entity that should truly be sitting on trial is the United Nations. The United Nations is an accomplice of terrorists. The United Nations has turned a blind eye to Hamas's digging of terror tunnels for 18 years under schools and to Hamas's exploitation of international aid to fund their terror war machine.

Israel is fighting the most just war. Israel was attacked unprovoked by Hamas/Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham terrorists, whose stated goal is to annihilate us. It is written in their Charter, and they have sworn publicly to repeat the atrocities of 7 October until they achieve that goal. No country in the world would accept a ceasefire in a similar situation until such a threat could no longer be actualized.

Council members all know that, so why are they still being steered by politics? Why are they directly following the script of terrorists? Do they not bother to think about what will happen in Israel and Gaza if there is a ceasefire? We know what will happen: Hamas will continue its reign of terror in Gaza. How can Council members speak about the two-State solution or any other solution together with a ceasefire that will keep Hamas in power? What kind of future do Council members think the region will have if that happens?

Hamas knows that it cannot defeat Israel on the conventional battlefield, so instead it uses terror to attempt to drive Israel away out of fear, while weaponizing the United Nations to help it achieve its goal. The time has come to take back the United Nations, to force the institution to live up to its founding principles.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): The representative of Algeria has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

**Mr. Bendjama** (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Mr. President, for giving me the floor for the second time. I assure you, Sir, that I will be brief, but I will try to help you to conclude this Security Council meeting on a positive note.

At the outset, I would like to thank all my colleagues in the Security Council for their substantial contribution to the subject that brings us together today, namely, the proposed forced displacement of the Palestinian people.

Following our exchange this afternoon, we can conclude that there is a consensus within the Security Council with regard to the categorical rejection of any proposal directly or indirectly aimed at the forced displacement of the Palestinian people from their land. It is a rare consensus. It is a precious consensus which reconciles us with multilateralism.

Could we not move forward together on the basis of this newfound consensus within the Council, even if it concerns only part of the Palestinian question? That would, I am certain, resonate enormously with public opinion around the world and especially in our region.

I must admit that, in our region, the United Nations and the Security Council need to restore their credibility and rebuild trust in their endeavours. The Algerian delegation stands ready to work with all its colleagues on the Security Council to make progress in that direction for peace in our region and throughout the world.

*The meeting rose at 5.25 p.m.*