



General Assembly

Tenth Emergency Special session

46th plenary meeting
Friday, 15 December 2023, 3 p.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Francis (Trinidad and Tobago)

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

Agenda item 5 (continued)

Illegal Israeli actions in occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

The President: Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote after the voting, may I remind members that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Ms. Squeff (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Argentina expresses its concern about the situation described by the Secretary-General in his letter of 6 December (S/2023/962) and in his intervention before the Security Council on 8 December (see S/PV.9498). However, we believe that the resolution adopted by the General Assembly at its tenth emergency session (resolution ES-10/22) does not address in a balanced manner the needs raised by the Secretary-General.

Argentina supports the request for a humanitarian ceasefire and the need to respect international law, including international humanitarian law, as well as the unconditional release of all hostages, understanding them to be Israeli civilians and civilians of other nationalities kidnapped since the terrorist acts perpetrated by Hamas on 7 October. Argentina expresses its strongest condemnation of the terrorist acts committed by Hamas, which lie at the root of the humanitarian disaster described by the Secretary-General.

Given that the resolution does not include an express repudiation of such acts, Argentina was unable to support the text with an affirmative vote and therefore abstained in the voting. Likewise, Argentina recognizes Israel's right to exercise its legitimate defence within the framework of international law and international humanitarian law and believes that such recognition should also have been included in the resolution adopted by the General Assembly.

Argentina thanks the Secretary-General and his team for the efforts they are undertaking and pays tribute to the international civil servants working nobly and at great sacrifice on the ground. Those who have lost their lives in the conduct of their duties deserve a special mention and our recognition.

Mrs. Buenrostro Massieu (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): My country, Mexico, welcomes the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution ES-10/22, which was co-sponsored by my country.

Regarding the draft amendment introduced by the United States (A/ES-10/L.29), while Mexico fully agrees with the condemnation of the abominable attacks by Hamas, we abstained in the voting on the draft amendment. That is because we believe it distorts the essential purpose of the resolution, which is a humanitarian ceasefire.

Mr. Zhang Jun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China welcomes the adoption by the General Assembly during its tenth emergency special session on 12 December of resolution ES-10/22, which calls for an immediate

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ceasefire in Gaza. The resolution was co-sponsored by 104 Member States, including China, and we voted in favour of it. The resolution was carried by an overwhelming majority — an eloquent testimony to the international community's prevailing sentiment — and must be implemented fully and effectively.

On 11 December, I joined my fellow Security Council Ambassadors on a visit organized by the Governments of the United Arab Emirates and Egypt to the Al-Arish and Rafah crossings. The humanitarian catastrophe unfolding in Gaza has reached such a point that no words can describe it. What met our eyes was way beyond the pale of human conscience, of the Charter of the United Nations and of international law. Much to our distress and anguish, killing is still ongoing as we speak.

The Security Council has been prevented from issuing even the most basic appeal, namely, a call for a ceasefire. Recently, with regard to addressing the Palestinian-Israeli issue, we have yet again witnessed stark double standards and blatant hypocrisy. The slogans that some used to glibly spout — charged with moral superiority about human rights, humanitarianism, the protection of women and children and so on — have now all of a sudden taken an absurd twist. Their mantras about the need to punish war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity are now failing to pass their lips. Even the most basic ceasefire seems to have become a bitter pill too unpalatable for them to swallow, something they scramble to skirt around or steer clear of.

China firmly opposes and condemns all attacks against civilians. Let me be clear: when we say nothing is more precious than lives, that includes the Palestinian people's lives. When we say women and children must be protected, that also includes Palestinian women and children. When we say international law and international humanitarian law ought to be respected and that civilians and civilian objects must not be targeted, that applies equally to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. In the current circumstances, a ceasefire should be an overriding precondition.

An immediate ceasefire must be the international community's common goal and a matter of the utmost urgency. We urge Israel to heed the universal call of the international community for an immediate cessation of indiscriminate military attacks, an immediate end to the collective punishment against the population

of Gaza and an effective curtailment of the mounting settler violence in the West Bank. A humanitarian calamity never before seen has befallen Gaza. Israel, as the occupying Power, must fulfil its obligations under international humanitarian law. We firmly oppose the forced displacement and relocation of people from Gaza. China supports the continued relief operations of United Nations humanitarian agencies in Gaza and calls for immediate actions to expand humanitarian access, including making full use of all crossings, including the Kerem Shalom crossing, so that sufficient humanitarian aid can enter Gaza without impediment. We support further diplomatic efforts for the early release of all detainees.

The question of Palestine is a stress test for the conscience of humankind, and so is the conflict in Gaza vis-à-vis what the United Nations can do. China, together with the rest of the international community, will continue to work towards restoring peace and saving lives, in a tireless effort to bring about an early end to the hostilities in Gaza and to achieve lasting peace in the Middle East through the two-State solution.

Mr. Önal (Türkiye): I thank you, Mr. President, for reconvening the tenth emergency special session upon the request of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Group of Arab States.

We welcome the adoption of the resolution (resolution ES-10/22) presented by Egypt on behalf of the Arab Group.

It has been almost 10 weeks since unprecedented catastrophe has been inflicted on Gaza. As of now, more than 18,000 Palestinians have lost their lives. Many more are unaccounted for under the rubble, and many more are wounded. Those figures are not just numbers; they represent innocent civilians, mostly women and children. Each had dreams that have been shattered overnight. The risk of regional spillover is grave. It is crystal clear that the only way to prevent further violence and suffering is an immediate ceasefire. Unhindered and sufficient humanitarian aid is urgently needed all over Gaza through additional border crossings.

Complete disregard of the most basic requirements of human decency, acts of collective punishment and forced mass displacement of people, which amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity, are unacceptable. The claims that glorify indiscriminate violence as a means to achieve sustainable peace and

security are totally false and disingenuous. Acts of vengeance targeting an entire population cannot be justified under any pretext. Silence in the face of such atrocities and reckless cruelty is tantamount to giving carte blanche to, and complicity with, the perpetrators. The international community cannot and should not grow insensitive to the ongoing carnage, in which the most basic human rights, first and foremost the right to live and to live in dignity, are being violated.

At a time when we commemorate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, medieval impulses cannot — and should not — be allowed to prevail. The longer the international community fails to stop this carnage and bring the perpetrators to justice, the less credibility it will be left with when it comes to addressing issues of global concern anywhere, anytime. Those who could not bring themselves to do what their conscience tells them to do cannot claim to have the moral ground as well. Since the Security Council once again failed to deliver, it fell on the General Assembly to give voice to the collective conscience of humankind and, in doing so, to preserve the credibility of the United Nations system.

On this occasion, we would like to express our strong support to the Secretary-General, who invoked Article 99 of the Charter of the United Nations and called on the Security Council to undertake its responsibility for the maintenance of global peace and security. It is in that spirit that we, Türkiye, co-sponsored the resolution presented by Egypt on behalf of the Arab Group. In the final analysis, the root cause of the problem is the continued occupation of Palestinian territory, and only by bringing an end to this inhuman occupation and recognizing the right of Palestinian people for self-determination can a viable solution be achieved.

Ms. Eneström (Sweden): Sweden stands up for international law, including international humanitarian law. Sweden voted in favour of the resolution (resolution ES-10/22) because the humanitarian catastrophe unfolding in Gaza requires an immediate humanitarian ceasefire to protect civilians and enable humanitarian assistance to reach the civilian population. We also fully support the call for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages held by Hamas and other groups.

Sweden fully supports the Secretary-General's appeal for decisive action by the Security Council, invoking Article 99. The current impasse in the

Security Council is regrettable. As pointed out by the Secretary-General, the international community has the responsibility to use all its influence to prevent further escalation and end the crisis. The resolution presented by Egypt and adopted three days ago (see A/ES-10/PV.45) sends a clear message that the General Assembly shoulders the responsibility when the Security Council is unable to do so. A total of 153 Member States took a clear stance for international humanitarian law, which applies to all parties to the conflict at all times.

The impending risk of collapse of the humanitarian system in Gaza entails potentially irreversible implications for peace and security in the entire region and places the civilian population, especially children, in desperate conditions. It is now crucial to attain continuous, prompt, secure and unimpeded humanitarian access to Gaza. The Swedish Government has presented a new package of humanitarian aid in the light of the developments in Gaza. The aid, which amounts to SKr210 million, aims to meet the most urgent needs and focuses on women and children.

Sweden reiterates its long-standing support for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which heroically continues to operate in Gaza under very difficult circumstances. Sweden expresses condolences for the UNRWA staff that have paid the ultimate price, many of them together with family members.

Sweden reiterates its clear position that Israel has the legitimate right to defend itself, in line with international humanitarian law and international law, against Hamas and its horrendous terrorist attacks, which Sweden unequivocally condemns.

The purpose of a humanitarian ceasefire is to protect civilians and to enable access for humanitarian assistance. It is temporary and its objectives are humanitarian. A long-term solution in Gaza cannot include Hamas. The only sustainable way forward is a negotiated two-State solution where Gaza and the West Bank are governed by a legitimate Palestinian leadership.

Mr. Al-Fatlawi (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for your valuable efforts in reconvening this emergency special session, which allows Member States to convey their position and vision to the international community on the repeated aggression waged by the Israeli occupation forces against the resilient Palestinian people.

Iraq co-sponsored the resolution entitled “Protection of civilians and upholding legal and humanitarian obligations” (resolution ES-10/22), introduced by the Arab Republic of Egypt on behalf of the Group of Arab States. We voted in favour of the resolution and welcome its adoption. However, Iraq has reservations about some of the sentences in the resolution that could be interpreted as equating the Israeli occupier and the Palestinian citizen defending his land and freedom.

The Israeli occupation forces started their aggression against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip more than two months ago. They have used all kinds of weapons and indiscriminate bombardment by air, land and sea. They have destroyed infrastructure, schools, hospitals, houses of worship and dwellings. Since then, the Security Council has been unable to discharge its legal responsibility in maintaining peace and security. It failed repeatedly to adopt a draft resolution to end the brutal massacres, genocide and systematic killing perpetrated by the Israeli occupation forces, which has claimed the lives of tens of thousands of children, women and elderly people. They have cut off fuel and the water supply, closed border crossings and imposed a blockade, collective punishment and forcible displacement against the people of Palestine. That has exacerbated the humanitarian situation and led to a veritable humanitarian catastrophe. The Secretary-General described it as being unprecedented. It has reached a stage of total collapse as a result of the intensity of the military operations, which will have repercussions that will impact regional and international peace and security.

I take this opportunity to commend the role of the United Nations and its humanitarian agencies. They have discharged their mandate through the presence of their personnel in the field, the provision of assistance and their continued humanitarian action, despite the difficult circumstances. Meanwhile, the Israeli occupation forces have ignored their calls for establishing a ceasefire, ending the humanitarian catastrophe and saving lives, while knowing that many United Nations colleagues have lost their lives.

The Government of Iraq expresses its support and appreciation for Secretary-General António Guterres, for his principled and clear position in his letter (S/2023/962) to the Security Council on the blatant violations in the Gaza Strip. The Secretary-General invoked Article 99 of the Charter of the United Nations.

Iraq stresses that the humanitarian disasters caused by the Israeli aggression have led to a humanitarian tragedy that requires urgent international intervention to stop it. There is a need for concerted international efforts and for a sense of responsibility to avoid the dire consequences of the spread of the ongoing events. What has been happening in the Gaza Strip since 7 October cannot be separated from the long-standing usurpation of legitimate rights and continued violations by the occupation forces in the Palestinian territories, in addition to the detention campaigns, the confiscation of land and violating holy sites with impunity for more than seven decades.

The resolution was co-sponsored by 104 Member States, with 153 Member States voting in favour of it. Before that, 99 States had sponsored a draft resolution (S/2023/773) that was presented to the Security Council (see S/PV.9442), and 121 States voted in its favour (resolution ES-10/21) in the General Assembly at its tenth emergency special session on 27 October (see A/ES-10/PV.41). That reflects the global call and the will of the majority of Member States for a ceasefire to save lives and to end the unspeakable daily humanitarian disasters due to their severity. We are hopeful that the calls of the majority of the Member States will be heeded and that an end will be put to those humanitarian disasters in order to preserve the dignity of the Palestinian people and their right to live in freedom. We are also hopeful that the necessary measures will be adopted to hold the Israeli entity accountable for its brutal crimes.

Iraq strongly condemns the crimes perpetrated by the Israeli occupation forces. We stress that, in the light of those circumstances and escalation, the Palestinian question cannot be reduced from one of usurped land and an oppressed people without freedom to merely a question of displacement and humanitarian assistance. Therefore, it is high time that the international community adopt measures to end this continued suffering, which has been ongoing for more than seven decades. We reiterate our call on the international community, with a sense of responsibility and human solidarity, to compel the Israeli entity to end its ongoing aggression against the Palestinian people and comply with international resolutions.

In conclusion, we reiterate the position of the Government and the people of the Republic of Iraq in support of the Palestinian people, their ambitions and their right to self-determination and the establishment of a Palestinian State on the land of Palestine.

Ms. Jiménez de la Hoz (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank you, Mr. President, for reconvening this emergency special session on the humanitarian situation in Gaza.

Spain has supported the call that the Secretary-General made in his letter of 6 December (S/2023/962) for the Security Council to act to avoid a humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza. Last Friday, 8 December, Spain co-sponsored the draft resolution (S/2023/970) presented by the United Arab Emirates in the Security Council (see S/PV.9499) in response to the Secretary-General's call for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza. We also call for all parties to respect international law, protect all civilians, immediately release all hostages and allow humanitarian access. We regret that the draft resolution did not go forward. Spain also recalls Security Council resolution 2712 (2023), which demands that all parties comply with their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law, notably with regard to the protection of civilians, especially children.

Since the attacks of 7 October, we have been reiterating our firm solidarity with Israel and the condemnation of the brutal indiscriminate terrorist attack by Hamas, both expressed without reservation on numerous occasions. For that reason, we consider that the text adopted (resolution ES-10/22) by the General Assembly last Tuesday (see A/ES-10/PV.45) should have included a clear condemnation of Hamas. From the beginning, Spain has urged all parties to respect international law, including international humanitarian law, and we have indicated that there must be accountability for violations of international law.

United Nations agencies report that humanitarian structures in Gaza are on the brink of collapse. There is an urgent need to guarantee the supply of food, water, fuel, electricity and medical care, as well as provide safe shelters. Humanitarian access must be urgently restored to the level necessary to meet the needs of the civilian population and respond to what is already a humanitarian catastrophe. We call for additional routes to be opened to bring in vital aid to Gaza. Since the military operation in Gaza began, Spain has tripled its aid to Palestine this year to €48.5 million in response to the United Nations humanitarian appeal.

The international community must join forces to end the spiral of violence in the Middle East. The Palestinians need the hope of a State, and Israel

needs security guarantees. To assume its role the day after in Gaza, the Palestinian Authority must receive strong Arab, European and international support. A Palestinian Authority that assumes Government responsibilities throughout Palestine is the best guarantee of security for Israel. Palestine also needs security guarantees, guarantees that are not met under the current settlements policy.

I reiterate Spain's firm commitment to holding a peace conference with the parties and the international community, with a view to realizing the two-State solution, as soon as possible. That is the path towards the crucial objective of a State of Israel and a State of Palestine living in peace and security.

Mr. Mc Bean (Ireland): Ireland co-sponsored and voted in favour of the resolution (resolution ES-10/22) presented by Egypt on behalf of the Group of Arab States. We did so to add our voice to the overwhelming majority of Member States calling for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire and to reiterate our call for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages. We welcome its adoption by the Assembly on Tuesday (see A/ES-10/PV.45) and urge its full implementation. The people of Israel and of the occupied Palestinian territory deserve nothing less.

After two months of relentless conflict, the situation in the Gaza Strip is dire. The number of civilian casualties is staggering, and it continues to grow. Thousands more have been injured, and millions have been displaced. That is completely unacceptable. We condemn the daily killing of civilians and the targeting of civilian infrastructure. International humanitarian law places obligations upon State and non-State actors, which must be respected by all parties to any conflict.

The humanitarian catastrophe unfolding on our watch is unbearable, and it grows more urgent by the day. The level of aid entering Gaza has increased, but it is still not enough to meet the needs of more than 2 million people. It is not nearly enough. The conditions highlighted by Commissioner-General Lazzarini of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) on 7 December are a distressing call to action that we cannot — and must not — ignore. People in Gaza need water, food, medicine and fuel. They need it now. UNRWA must be able to continue its vital work. Aid must be able to enter

at sufficient scale, and safe, unhindered humanitarian access, including to children and other vulnerable groups, must be ensured.

Ireland also supported the two draft amendments introduced on Tuesday (A/ES-10/L.28 and A/ES-10/L.29). We did so in order to once again condemn the heinous acts carried out by Hamas on 7 October, which can never be justified. Accounts of sexual violence during the attacks are appalling.

As this conflict persists, we must also remain vigilant to the very real possibility of further regional escalation and must work to prevent it. The situation in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is deeply concerning. More than 100 Palestinians have been killed in the West Bank since 7 October, coinciding with a dangerous increase in extremist settler violence. That must stop, and perpetrators must be held to account.

Ireland commends the Secretary-General for his recent actions to address this conflict at the United Nations, including invoking Article 99 for the first time in 30 years. The Secretary-General's commitment to the United Nations playing a positive role in de-escalating this conflict is hugely important. He deserves our collective support. We welcome that the General Assembly once again stepped up where the Security Council failed. However, we deeply regret that the Council was unable to adopt a similar draft resolution (S/2023/773) owing to the veto of a permanent member (see S/PV.9442). As I have said many times, the veto is an anachronism that must be abolished.

It is imperative that we continue to work for a lasting peace in the Middle East, based on the two-State solution and respect for international law. That is the only prospect for a sustainable peace. For our part, Ireland is determined to work with international partners to deliver a durable humanitarian ceasefire and move towards a meaningful political process. It is the only way to ensure peace and security for both the Israeli and Palestinian peoples.

Mrs. Eat (Cambodia): My delegation strongly supports the Secretary-General's efforts and appeal in addressing the humanitarian crisis and ensuring the unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance in Gaza. We are deeply concerned by the escalation of violence, the untold human suffering and the immense loss of innocent human lives, among them many women, children and the elderly.

Cambodia co-sponsored and voted for the resolution on the protection of civilians and upholding legal and humanitarian obligations (resolution ES-10/22), proposed by Egypt on behalf of the Group of Arab State. We welcome its adoption by the General Assembly on 12 December (see A/ES-10/PV.45). Cambodia believes that a humanitarian ceasefire is not just an obligation, but an urgent necessity to avoid further deepening of the catastrophe and horrific harm to civilian lives. It is absolutely important that all parties ensure safe and complete access for humanitarian relief to people who are in dire need in Gaza. All parties must respect international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Using civilians as human shields is despicable and deplorable. Civilians must be protected, and civilian infrastructure must not be targeted. Cambodia therefore joins others in calling for the unconditional release of civilians held hostage by Hamas and other parties and voted in support of the draft amendment in that regard, proposed by Austria (A/ES-10/L.28).

I wish to reiterate that Cambodia condemns all acts of terrorism and violence against innocent civilians, regardless of their race, culture or religion. In the same vein, Cambodia condemns the heinous attack on civilians on 7 October. We consistently stand in solidarity with the international community in the fight against terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, while fully appreciating the numerous debates over which actions constitute terrorism.

Now more than ever, it is of paramount importance to address the root causes of the Palestine-Israel conflict, to enable both the peoples of Israel and Palestine to coexist side by side in peace and harmony. Cambodia urges all relevant parties to revive efforts to resolve the conflict through diplomacy, dialogue and peaceful means to end the humanitarian crisis and achieve enduring peace. To that end, there is a need to build an environment that is conducive thereto, starting with the silencing of the sound of guns.

Allow me to end my statement by repeating what I have said earlier: hatred and vengeance only feed another cycle of hatred and vengeance. The current trajectory of the situation in the Middle East will neither engender sustainable security nor bring lasting peace and harmonious coexistence to the peoples of Palestine and Israel.

Ms. Lassen (Denmark): Denmark is deeply concerned about the humanitarian situation in Gaza. The international community has a responsibility to prevent a collapse of the humanitarian system and to avert a humanitarian catastrophe. Against that backdrop, Denmark voted in favour of the resolution (resolution ES-10/22). We would have preferred a text that unequivocally condemned Hamas's heinous terrorist attack on Israel on 7 October and called for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages taken by Hamas. We also would like to underline that we understand the call for a humanitarian ceasefire to be a call for temporary measures to allow for humanitarian needs to be met. As such, a humanitarian ceasefire does not deny Israel the right to defend itself in accordance with international law, including international humanitarian law.

Mr. Šimonović (Croatia): We have gathered here once again at the General Assembly to discuss the devastating humanitarian and human rights crisis in Gaza that erupted with the heinous terrorist attack by Hamas on Israel on 7 October. Since then, both the Israeli and Palestinian civilian population has been thrown into severe jeopardy, and the region is on the brink of disaster. It has also led to the deaths of more than 140 United Nations staff members — the greatest loss of life among United Nations personnel in the history of the Organization. We commend the Secretary-General for invoking Article 99 of the Charter of the United Nations and regret that the Security Council once again did not reach the necessary compromises to act.

As a matter of principle, Croatia stands by the right of the State of Israel to defend itself and the State's fundamental duty to protect its population. We also support the demand for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages held by Hamas and other groups, as well as for ensuring immediate humanitarian access to them. As a matter of principle too, we stand for human rights, the protection of civilians and adherence to international humanitarian law, most notably with regard to the protection of civilians.

We are facing a humanitarian emergency in Gaza. Civilian casualties are mounting, including among women and children. The resolution (resolution ES-10/22) put to the vote is purely humanitarian, stripped of any political content. We were asked to confirm what all of us are obligated to protect — basic human rights and international humanitarian law — which, we believe, should be beyond any matter of political

perspective and is in the interest of all. Therefore, once again, as a matter of principle, Croatia voted in favour of the resolution.

Mr. Hmoud (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, allow me to express to you, Mr. President, my heartfelt thanks for your response to the request for the resumption of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, in accordance with Uniting for Peace resolution (resolution 377 A (V)) of 1950. The convening of this meeting follows the failure of the Security Council to adopt the draft resolution (S/2023/970) proposed by the United Arab Emirates, the Arab member of the Council, which calls for the immediate cessation of Israel's war against the Gaza Strip. It was in response to the letter dated 6 December 2023 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2023/962), invoking Article 99 of the Charter of the United Nations to draw the Council's attention to the near collapse of the humanitarian system in Gaza and the grave situation threatening international peace and security.

The adoption on 12 December of resolution ES-10/22, which calls for an immediate ceasefire by an overwhelming majority of the General Assembly, with 153 countries voting in favour of it and which was sponsored by more than 100 Member States, clearly reflects the collective will of the international community for the need to end the raging Israeli war against the Palestinian people in Gaza. In that regard, Jordan reaffirms the need for all States to cooperate to end the war against Gaza and make international concerted efforts to pressure Israel to implement the resolution and end its brutal aggression on the innocent civilians in the Gaza Strip. That entails seriously holding Israel accountable for its grave violations of international humanitarian law and taking collective and individual measures to halt Israel's violations.

The international community's response on Tuesday (see A/ES-10/PV.45) reflects more than ever the urgent need and legitimate demand to deter Israel from committing further inhumane crimes against Palestinian civilians in Gaza, which have so far led to the martyrdom of almost 19,000 Palestinians, the majority of whom are women and children. Those statistics attest to Israel's desire for revenge against the entire people of Palestine. History shows that Israel's carnage and wars against Palestinian men and women have never been in self-defence. They have always been motivated by vengeance, violating human dignity and

right to life of that courageous people and breaking their will and resilience. Such fantasies will never be realized. Israel will realize that whatever it does will only increase the Palestinian people's determination and resilience to regain their occupied territory, which they will never relinquish, no matter how long it takes.

The scenes of Israel's heinous crimes in Gaza, which are documented on a daily basis — the most recent of which include the execution of civilians hiding in a school in northern Gaza, the targeting of international facilities and schools run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, the beastly stripping naked of civilians, in a barbaric manner, and the using of Palestinians as human shields by the occupation army during military operations within the Strip — shatter any justifications and arguments in defence of Israel and justification of its crimes in Gaza. That leaves no doubt that the war is nothing other than a war of aggression, vengeance and collective punishment by Israel against the unarmed people of Palestine.

We reiterate the need to provide international protection for the brotherly Palestinian people and end the war, which has entered its seventieth day, as we see the international community's failure to prevent Israel from continuously and indiscriminately killing civilians and denying the people of Gaza their right to food, water, medicine and fuel, which constitute war crimes for which Israel must be held fully accountable.

Since the beginning of the aggression, the statements by Israeli officials, including those made by them at the United Nations and before the Security Council, further demonstrate that Israel is targeting the Palestinian civilians, with the intention of mass killing, ethnic cleansing and genocide. All such evidence will be used to hold Israel legally accountable in the future. Jordan will continue to provide assistance to the brotherly Palestinians to the best of its ability, including through the two military hospitals in the Gaza Strip and Nablus, as well as the two medical facilities in the West Bank.

We reiterate that Jordan stands by the Palestinian people in standing firm on their territory. We categorically reject any attempt to separate the West Bank from the Gaza Strip. They complement each other and are an integral part of a single Palestinian State. In that regard, we stress that there can be no solution to the Palestinian question at the expense of any other

country. Attempts to apply forced displacement or to eliminate the Palestinian question altogether are red lines for the people and the Government of Jordan.

In conclusion, we reaffirm our steadfast conviction that implementing the right of Palestinians to return and be compensated in the context of a comprehensive solution to the conflict, in line with final status issues and the resolutions of the United Nations, is the only way to resolve the refugee issue within a comprehensive settlement of the Palestinian question, on the basis of a two-State solution and the relevant resolutions of international legitimacy.

Mr. Nasir (Indonesia): Indonesia co-sponsored resolution ES-10/22, introduced by Egypt on behalf of the Group of Arab States, because we value human lives and humanity. Indonesia therefore welcomes the fact that 153 countries voted in favour of the resolution. It is a clear message from the majority of the General Assembly that we refuse to be part of a chapter of history supporting the killing of thousands of women and children in Gaza. We refuse to be seen as countries that turned a blind eye to the atrocities in Gaza. We refuse to be complicit in the crimes against humanity and war crimes committed in Gaza.

Today, even after calls from every corner of the world for a ceasefire, including the Secretary-General's action invoking Article 99 of the Charter of the United Nations for the first time in decades (S/2023/962), we have continued to witness the killing of innocent civilians, the collapse of the humanitarian situation in Gaza and a failure of humanity. Let us be clear. What we are witnessing is bordering on genocide. The irony is that all of this is taking place on the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights — a Declaration that is committed to the belief that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. Today that clearly excludes Palestinians.

When is it time to say that enough is enough? Is it when we reach 25,000 killed, 50,000 killed or 100,000 killed? Is it when all the Palestinians have been successfully pushed out of Gaza? It is our collective responsibility to stop these atrocities now. We urge Israel and all the parties concerned to immediately and effectively implement this resolution, because we need to stop the atrocities and save lives. We need to provide humanitarian assistance throughout Gaza. We need

humanity to prevail. We need this resolution, together with the previous resolutions of the Assembly and the Security Council, to be implemented.

The time to act to stop the killing of women and children and the cycle of violence and to uphold humanity is now. We must act now to uphold the Charter of the United Nations.

Mr. Pary Rodríguez (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, Bolivia thanks Egypt, speaking on behalf of the Group of Arab States, for introducing resolution ES-10/22, which the General Assembly adopted on 12 December. Because we believe in the urgent need for a humanitarian ceasefire in the face of the terrible disaster that has been inflicted on Palestinian women and men in Gaza by Israel's bombs and weapons, my country supported and co-sponsored the resolution. Last week we also supported draft resolution S/2023/970 in the Security Council, which, regrettably, was blocked by the United States in another clear demonstration of the misuse of the veto, a right granted to the permanent members of the Council. Two months after the start of the aggression against the Palestinian people in what is a tragic situation, it is shocking that the Security Council has not sent a firm, united message designed to save lives and ensure that Israel ceases its genocide of the Palestinian people. The General Assembly has become a space for lofty speeches proclaiming that some are doing more than others to help the Palestinians. But they have forgotten the most important thing, which is that they have to act together in demanding an end to Israel's bombs and weapons and ensuring that they are not complicit. They must stop supplying weapons and ensure that the international community, and international law, take action against those who are responsible for these crimes.

The worst part is that the representatives of the Power that is occupying the Palestinian territory come to this Hall and are utterly unmoved by the tens of thousands of lives lost. If the death of around 20,000 innocent people is not enough, how many more deaths must the world mourn before they stop attacking people who are only fighting for their freedom? How many more children must surrender and lose their lives? Israel cannot continue to act outside international law. It must be held accountable for its actions.

Seventy-five years after the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Palestinian people are suffering the worst human rights violations

in history. The international community cannot remain a passive spectator in this conflict. All States and players involved must assume their responsibility to advocate for justice and peace in the region now.

Lastly, Bolivia is and will always be on the right side of history. We will be on the side of human rights and the rights of the Palestinian people.

Ms. Al-Thani (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank you, Mr. President, for resuming this emergency special session, in view of the Security Council's failure once again to adopt an Arab draft resolution (S/2023/970), submitted in response to the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip where our Palestinian brothers are facing the worst humanitarian catastrophe in the world. The draft resolution was a purely humanitarian one and sponsored by nearly 100 Member States. It followed the Secretary-General's unprecedented action taken through his letter to the President of the Security Council dated 6 December (S/2023/962), invoking Article 99 of the Charter of the United Nations and calling for an urgent humanitarian ceasefire.

The State of Qatar reiterates its condemnation of the Israeli aggression, which has resulted in more than 18,000 civilian casualties, a majority of them women and children, as well as the forced displacement of nearly 2 million people, while at the same time depriving civilians of the necessities of life, targeting civilian objects and killing journalists, in addition to targeting international facilities and the headquarters of the Qatari committee for the reconstruction of Gaza, in flagrant violation of international law and the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. Similarly, in his letter of 7 December addressed to the President of the General Assembly, the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East noted that it came at the darkest hour in the Agency's 75-year history.

It is high time for international humanitarian law to be applied without discrimination and without double standards. We therefore welcome the adoption on 12 December of resolution ES-10/22, introduced by the Group of Arab States, which 153 Member States of the General Assembly voted in favour of. That reflects the will of the international community to put an end to the daily bloodshed and the unspeakable human suffering. The importance of the resolution lies in its call for a humanitarian ceasefire and its call upon all

parties to comply with their international obligations in line with international law, including international humanitarian law, particularly those obligations related to the protection of civilians. Furthermore, it calls for the immediate and unconditional release of hostages and for access for humanitarian assistance to be ensured. The resolution also reflects the appeals by the Secretary-General and the Commissioner-General of UNRWA and clearly reflects the urgent humanitarian principles and necessities agreed upon internationally.

Tireless diplomatic efforts by the State of Qatar, in partnership with the Arab Republic of Egypt and the United States of America, led last month to a four-day humanitarian truce, which was subsequently extended to seven days. More than 100 hostages in the Gaza Strip, including women and children, were released, and hundreds of Palestinian women and children were released from Israeli prisons. The truce also allowed the entry of more much-needed relief assistance into the Gaza Strip. We will continue our diplomatic efforts to renew the truce.

The State of Qatar hopes that we will be able to build on what has been achieved thus far and reach a comprehensive and sustainable agreement to end the war and stop the bloodshed for our brotherly Palestinian people, that this will lead to serious negotiations and the launching of a political process that establishes a just and comprehensive peace, in accordance with the resolutions of international legitimacy, the Arab Peace Initiative and the two-State solution, and that an independent Palestinian State will be established along the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and where the brotherly Palestinian people can enjoy all of their rights.

In conclusion, the adoption by the General Assembly of the Arab resolution on 12 December has given new hope to civilians in the Gaza Strip for the restoration of their basic rights, particularly the right to life. It has also sent an important message that the international community, represented by the General Assembly, is able to address grave threats to international peace and security and flagrant violations of international law.

The President: We have now heard the last speaker in explanation of vote after the voting.

As agreed at the forty-fifth plenary meeting, held on 12 December 2023, the Assembly will resume its debate on agenda item 5.

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

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): The Israeli assault is a war against Palestinian civilians, Palestinian children, Palestinian history, Palestinian presence and Palestinian existence. It targets the population, the hospitals, the infrastructure, the homes, the bakeries, the landmarks and the historic mosques and churches that stand witness to our diverse and long history. Israel has destroyed and flattened entire neighbourhoods, displaced virtually every Palestinian in Gaza and brought back the scenes and memories of the 1948 Nakba with the massacres and forced transfer of our people.

It also targets our present and future, killing engineers, doctors, poets and academics. It also targets those who could document the crimes and inform the world — journalists. We mourn one of those journalists: Samer Abu Daqqa, who was wounded in an Israeli drone strike and left to bleed to death for six hours while ambulances were prevented from reaching him. His colleague, Wael Al-Dahdouh — whose wife, Amna; 15-year-old son, Mahmoud; 7-year-old daughter, Sham; and 18-month-old grandson, Adam, had been killed in a previous Israeli strike a few weeks before — was himself wounded in the same drone strike as Samer. After he was informed of the tragedy, Wael Al-Dahdouh said

(spoke in Arabic)

“It does not matter”.

(spoke in English)

We say to him

(spoke in Arabic)

“It does matter”.

(spoke in English)

Enough is enough.

That is how Israel conducts its assaults: through atrocities. Because its goal is not security — not the security of those held captive in Gaza, nor the security of the Israeli people — but the destruction and displacement of the Palestinian people, even if that means prolonging the conflict indefinitely.

A Palestinian mother looking over her little child explained that she named him Ayoub, for patience. Ayoub is one of our prophets. He is the prophet of

patience. She was aware that, being a Palestinian born in Gaza under occupation and under blockade, he would need endless patience to endure the suffering that would be inflicted upon him. But she never imagined that the suffering would reach such a magnitude. Like the mother of Ayoub, Palestinian parents have been praying with anguish that they would not have to wait any longer for the horrors to stop and for their children to be saved.

Countries have a moral and legal obligation to act, to make the horrors stop and to save human lives. One million Palestinian children in Gaza are facing a death sentence that can take effect at any moment. Remember what the Secretary-General said: the Gaza Strip is a graveyard for children. No country should play a part in issuing such death sentences or accept to co-sign, with the murderers, death certificates for our children.

People around the globe have been calling for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire, including, of course, the Secretary-General and the leaders of United Nations humanitarian agencies. The United Nations, through the Secretary-General and all its agencies, has been calling for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire. The humanitarian and human rights communities have been calling for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire. The Security Council, through 13 of its members, was ready to call for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire, and it was blocked only by one vote, one veto. The General Assembly acted where the Security Council was prevented from acting: to uphold international law for the protection of civilians and to ensure the maintenance of international peace and security. The vote was unequivocal. The world is calling for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire, with 157 countries having voted in favour of the resolution (resolution ES-10/22), and only 10 voting against it.

There is no way to end the massacres of civilians, including children, at this unprecedented pace nor to address the occupation-made humanitarian catastrophe of an unprecedented scale, except through a ceasefire. Do members see what our people in Gaza are enduring? Do members see our children under the rubble? Do members see them starving? Do members see them having limbs amputated? Do members see them shivering? Our children are killed or orphaned. They know now much more about death than about life. They are not collateral damage. They are yet another generation that has fallen victim to the Israeli war machine. Our children have always been made targets, with the aim of terrorizing and traumatizing a nation in

the hope of defeating it. What is a war whose primary victims are civilians, mainly women and children? It is a war of massacres. Is there a right to massacre in international law? How could anyone defend this war when it has been waged through massacres, one day after another, even today as we sit in this Chamber? Israel is treating Palestinians like “human animals”, as it called them, slaughtering them and starving them. How can anyone support that or even stand idly by while it happens?

Those who are calling for the protection of civilians, for the upholding of the laws of war, for humanitarian assistance and access, while refusing to call for a ceasefire, are delusional at best. Israel has been committing heinous atrocities for more than two months — 70 days, in fact — deliberately making Gaza unliveable for human life for more than two months, forcibly displacing 2 million Palestinians for more than two months. That is an integral part of the assault — it is, by design, criminal, aimed at inflicting maximum pain to force a people out of their country. Israel has confessed to that goal, to that crime.

Members cannot oppose the ethnic cleansing of our people while, at the same time, supporting the assault that is enabling it. Those attempting to shame those who call for a humanitarian ceasefire have failed. The General Assembly spoke, the world spoke, 153 countries spoke. Shame on those who refuse to stand against atrocities. In the name of humanity, morality and legality, the General Assembly has acted, demanding an immediate humanitarian ceasefire. Israel has failed in its efforts to bully, intimidate and silence the Member States of the United Nations. Member States have voted “yes” to the Charter of the United Nations and voted “yes” to the Geneva Conventions. On this seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, they voted “yes” for human rights, and on this seventy-fifth anniversary of the Nakba, they voted against a new Nakba, to never again allow another Nakba to happen. We salute all members who stood with the Palestinian people and who stood with justice and with international law. That vote must be followed by resolute collective action to ensure the implementation of the resolution (resolution ES-10/22) without any further delay. Every day, every hour, every minute counts, as a human tragedy continues to unfold.

The Palestinian people are here to stay, and to stay in their homeland. They are entitled to freedom and independence. That is the only path towards shared

peace and security. Netanyahu is demonstrating every day that the targets of this assault are the Palestinian people and the Palestinian State. He says it openly. Supporting this assault is allowing Netanyahu to pursue his criminal objectives. Netanyahu's place is in a court in The Hague, not in power in Israel.

Ayoub was killed with his siblings in the bombing of their home by Israel. We all failed him and thousands of other children, thousands of women, men, families. We are here today to save all those who can still be saved. Every life is sacred, and there is nothing more sacred than the life of a child. Let us save the children of Palestine. To those who say they oppose atrocity crimes, we ask: is there an exception if it is Israel committing those crimes, or if the victims are Palestinians? There is no doubt that what is happening in Gaza constitutes atrocity crimes, war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. In the face of such atrocities, there is only one moral position, one defensible position: ceasefire now, ceasefire now, ceasefire now and stop the genocide. Stop the genocide being committed against the Palestinian people and their children.

Mr. Erdan (Israel): I could stand here and repeat the horrifying atrocities committed by Hamas on 7 October, when there was a ceasefire in place that was violated by Hamas's planned massacre. I could discuss the mass rape and mutilation of women, the burning alive of entire families, the beheading of babies, but I have already stood here and showed members footage from that dark day. I have repeatedly discussed the horrors and the bloodshed, but sadly, this body prefers to keep its head in the sand. Sadly, that is what the United Nations has become.

So, instead of talking about the past, I will try to remind this body of the present and talk about the future. The future that awaits us if the Hamas Nazis are not eliminated, if there is a ceasefire that will allow Hamas to regroup, to rearm, to continue their reign of terror in Gaza. That is the meaning of a ceasefire.

This resolution (resolution ES-10/22) that so many delegations — sickeningly, I have no other word for it — applauded calls for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire. Therefore, I must ask those delegations today: what does that mean? What is a humanitarian ceasefire? Is it a ceasefire for six hours to allow food and water to enter Gaza? Clearly not, seeing as how every single day Israel facilitates the entry of hundreds of tons of food and water. Is it a ceasefire for three days so that

medical supplies and fuel can enter? The answer is also no, as truckloads of those supplies enter Gaza through Israeli facilitation every day. How about a week-long ceasefire to evacuate wounded civilians? No again. That is already happening on the ground alongside field hospitals and floating hospital ships — Israel facilitates all those efforts.

Therefore, I ask again: what is the meaning of this humanitarian ceasefire? There is no such thing. It is one big lie, a whitewashing of the truth. A humanitarian ceasefire means a terrorist-saving ceasefire. We are not stupid. This resolution only seeks an end to the war against Hamas Nazis. Sorry for the words. Members do not give a damn about Israel and our future. An end to the war means turning our backs on the hostages. It means ensuring Hamas' continued role in Gaza. I do not get it. Were 18 years of oppression in Gaza — against Palestinians, by the way — digging terror tunnels into our territory and indiscriminately firing thousands and thousands of rockets at Israeli civilians — was all that not enough?

The only thing a ceasefire secures is a future for the genocidal jihadists. It is only Hamas that this resolution is defending. Members should stop hiding their intentions behind their suits and diplomatic wording. Humanitarian ceasefire — this resolution has a distorted agenda. At least make that clear to all Member States. This resolution aims to keep Hamas in power — period. And I want to remind those who may have forgotten, I want to remind the Assembly who those savage terrorists are, because they could have said something else in their resolution, they could have called on the terrorists to turn themselves in or to release all the hostages. Then the war would end tomorrow morning. Hamas is currently holding 132 hostages in Gaza. Those innocents were brutally taken from their beds, from a party, from the arms of their loved ones, and they are absolutely not being treated in accordance with international law. Hamas refused to even allow the Red Cross to visit them. Those are the most severe crimes that can exist, and the General Assembly cannot even bring itself to say the name Hamas — such cowardice.

But now, after some of the hostages have been released, we are beginning to hear the horror stories of what they endured. One of the released hostages, an agricultural worker from Thailand, described how the Israeli hostages held with him were tortured with electric cables. Eighteen-year-old Itay Regev recounted that, after being taken hostage, he was operated on by Hamas

without anaesthesia. His sister Maya, by the way, who was shot in the leg before being abducted, had her bone fracture mended backwards by Hamas. Twelve-year-old Eitan Yalomi was held in solitary confinement for 16 days, during which he was forced to watch the atrocities of the Hamas Nazis at gunpoint. When he cried, Hamas/ Islamic State in Iraq and Islamic State and the Sham (ISIS) threatened to kill him. All of those here who have children should think about that for a moment — Hamas forced children to watch their families and friends be butchered. Nine-year-old Emily Hand spent 50 days as a hostage. What happened is that today, weeks after her release, she still cannot speak. She is too afraid. She can only whisper. Why? Because Hamas terrorists threatened to murder her if she made even the slightest sound in the terror tunnel where she was being held.

There are still 132 hostages being held in Gaza. Ten-month-old Kfir Bibas and his four-year-old brother Ariel are still being held hostage there, for heaven's sake. I cannot begin to imagine the horrors they face every single day. Women, children and the elderly are suffering the unimaginable. So calling for a ceasefire now, while they are still being held, is the most immoral thing to do. If the General Assembly wants a ceasefire, then it should first and foremost be doing everything possible to bring all the hostages home. Empty words are just lip service. Words are not enough. Yet instead, it is the Hamas monsters, who are capable of exterminating families and torturing children, that the Assembly has chosen to defend. I am sorry, but it is abhorrent, and it is disgraceful.

But Hamas not only cares nothing for Israelis and Gazans. Surprisingly, they also care nothing for Islam. I do not know how, according to Islam, Hamas was permitted to rape and sexually abuse women and girls. Maybe it is because Hamas does not consider Israelis to be human beings? Since 7 October, Hamas has fired over 11,000 rockets and missiles at Israel, and today Hamas proved that murdering Israelis is even more important than preserving the Islamic holy sites they claim to protect. Watch this video.

A video was shown in the General Assembly Hall.

That took place hours ago — a Hamas rocket was fired towards the vicinity of the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif, and Israel's Iron Dome intercepted the missile and defended Al-Aqsa Mosque from Hamas. Think about that — Israel is defending Al-Aqsa Mosque from Hamas missiles.

I ask the League of Arab States and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation: is this who they have chosen to defend — a group of genocidal terrorists that prefer jihad at any cost over Islamic holy sites? Just as ISIS destroyed mosques, Hamas ISIS is willing to blow up Al-Aqsa, and so many are willing to defend them — unbelievable.

Israel's operation in Gaza is not a response to 7 October. It is not. It is only to ensure that such atrocities never happen again, and the only way to do so is to obliterate Hamas' capabilities. There is no other way. There is no other option. Hamas is a cancer, and it must be eradicated, and every resolution adopted here that does not support Hamas' elimination only serves to empower those terrorists and promote a future of regional suffering. That is what Hamas' Iranian puppet masters want — we know it — but I cannot understand why the Sunni countries of the world are playing along. That is why, no matter how many destructive resolutions the Assembly adopts, Israel cannot stop until Hamas is defeated. This is about our future. This is about our survival, and no General Assembly resolution — I apologize — will force us to commit collective suicide. We will defend ourselves, and we will defend our future.

Mr. Mohamed Laghdaf (Mauritania): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of United Nations Member States belonging to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in my capacity as Chair of the Group.

Let me thank you, Mr. President, immensely for resuming this emergency special session once again, following its previous meeting, held on 27 October (see A/ES-10/PV.41).

We are once again reconvening an emergency special session of the General Assembly to demonstrate our strong conviction that the humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestine territory, and particularly in the Gaza Strip, has assumed a very critical dimension that the entire world cannot continue to ignore. The daily loss of innocent lives in Gaza and elsewhere in the occupied Palestinian territory has continued to shock the human conscience. That is due to the escalation of the brutal aggression by the Israeli occupying forces against the innocent civilian population, including women and children. Against that background, the global call by States and civil society has been very loud in calling for an immediate ceasefire in order to

put a definitive end to the unwarranted carnage and the growing humanitarian disaster. The OIC calls on this organ to assume its responsibility in that regard and to give strong expression to one of the main purposes of the United Nations, which is the maintenance of international peace and security and upholding international law.

In the face of the inability of the Security Council to act swiftly to prevent the potential global threat to peace and security represented by Israel's ongoing aggression in the occupied Palestinian territory, the OIC strongly calls on the General Assembly as the collective voice of the global community to assume its crucial role of defending the Charter of the United Nations and international legality. Accordingly, the OIC strongly deplores the escalation of attacks by the Israeli occupation forces in Gaza and elsewhere in the occupied Palestinian territory in their continuing aggression against the civilian population and their property, within the framework of Israel's brutal colonial campaign, aimed at annexing Palestinian homes and violating the sanctity of the holy Al-Quds Mosque and other cultural and religious sites.

In that regard, the OIC commends the recent action of His Excellency the Secretary-General in invoking Article 99 of the Charter within the context of bringing about an expeditious halt to the colossal loss of innocent civilian lives and its negative implications for the maintenance of international peace and security. The OIC also warns that the resumption of hostilities following the week-long temporary truce has continued to record human casualties among the vulnerable segments of the population of Gaza and elsewhere in the occupied Palestinian territory, even as there are dangerous signs of the imminent spillover of the crisis to other parts of the entire Middle East region.

Since the recent outbreak of armed aggression against the Palestinian people, more than 80 per cent of the population of Gaza has been displaced, while an unprecedented number of civilian deaths have been recorded, including approximately 133 relief workers from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. We had warned in a previous message that the forced displacement of the population of Gaza was akin to another Nakba, which subjected Palestinians to forced displacement and a resultant seizure of their ancestral homeland in utter violation of the principles of international law and international humanitarian law.

As the United Nations is set to celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we draw attention to the incessant violation of the human rights and human dignity of the Palestinian people, since they were forced to flee their ancestral land more than 70 years ago. That has been compounded by the brutal attacks against the population of the occupied Palestinian territory by both the Israeli occupation forces and the Israeli settler communities, which have been heavily armed by the occupying Power. The OIC calls on this world body to act swiftly to uphold the human rights and the dignity of the oppressed Palestinian people, who continue to live under colonial subjugation and a never-ending denial of their human, social and cultural rights.

Since the outbreak of the aggression in the occupied Palestinian territory, in particular in Gaza, the OIC has continued to call on the principal organs of the United Nations to assume their global responsibility by speaking up in the face of the historical injustice, mass displacement and war crimes against the Palestinians. In that regard, the OIC calls on global actors to exert all forms of pressure on Israel to heed the clarion call for a lasting humanitarian ceasefire, including allowing access to humanitarian corridors and the cessation of the attacks that have brought about a colossal loss of lives among the civilian population of Gaza and elsewhere in the occupied Palestinian territory. The OIC further calls on the international community to act swiftly and to hold the Israeli occupation forces accountable for the heinous war crimes against the Palestinian people and humankind, at large, and calls for an immediate intervention to halt the massacre.

The OIC also stresses the need to provide international protection for the Palestinian people in conformity with the standards of international humanitarian law, as has been repeatedly advocated by the General Assembly, including in resolution ES-10/20 of 13 June 2018, by dispatching an international protection force to protect innocent lives from ongoing attacks by the occupying forces and the extremist colonial settlers.

Furthermore, the OIC reaffirms that peace, security and stability in the region cannot be achieved without putting adequate moral and political pressure on the Israeli occupation Power, with a view to ending its colonial occupation of Palestine and oppressive practices against the Palestinian people. That includes the restoration of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian

people, in particular their right to self-determination, national independence and return to their homeland on the basis of international law and in accordance with United Nations resolutions.

In calling for swift action by the General Assembly, we recall the call by OIC leaders, who, at the summit they held in Riyadh on 11 November, demonstrated the need for urgent and concerted global action to resolve the lingering question of Palestine. In that regard, we call for lifting the siege of Gaza, the cessation of armed aggression by Israel, the condemnation of attacks targeting civilians and attacks on and the demolition and destruction of hospitals and religious and cultural sites, among other war crimes and atrocities, as they constitute acts of impunity and violations of international law. Accordingly, we express our commitment to supporting the mission of the follow-up ministerial committee established by the Arab-OIC Summit to interface with global actors on the need for an urgent resumption of the political process towards finding lasting but comprehensive peace in the Middle East region and the resolution of the Palestinian national question, in accordance with existing United Nations resolutions and the principles of international law.

In conclusion, OIC strongly supported resolution ES-10/22, presented by Egypt on the behalf of the Group of Arab States, as a credible way forward towards the realization of our common objective of addressing the dire humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including in Gaza, and achieving a successful breakthrough in the Middle East process.

Mr. Wallace (Jamaica): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the 14 member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

CARICOM deeply regrets the circumstances that necessitated the reconvening of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly today. We regret that, despite genuine attempts to halt the unprecedented levels of death and destruction in Gaza, a way forward was not agreed. We urge an immediate end to the alarming situation in Gaza and emphasize that there will be no winners at the end of this war. Instead, the mistrust, fear and insecurity that have come to characterize the relationship between Israel and Palestine will mount.

On that note, CARICOM makes three critical appeals.

First, we call on all parties to lay down their instruments of war in the name of humanity. We, the peoples of the United Nations, have affirmed our faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small. On this premise, we have resolved to unite our strength for the maintenance of international peace and security. The situation in Gaza demands this unity of purpose for the preservation of life and for the stability of the security environment in the Middle East. Guns, rockets and bombs cannot achieve those goals and will not broker security for Palestinians or Israelis.

Secondly, we reiterate the call for immediate and adequate humanitarian access so that civilians can receive the support they so desperately need at this time. A humanitarian ceasefire is urgently needed so that the United Nations and its partners can have the space and the conditions to reach the people of Gaza and to attend to their needs.

CARICOM's third appeal is for the parties to take steps that would allow for a return to the negotiating table. That includes the release of hostages taken on 7 October as well as the release of Palestinians being held for unacceptable periods of time in Israeli prisons without charge. It also includes ending illegal settler violence against Palestinians in the West Bank and the infringement of Palestinians' right to the freedom of movement.

A permanent resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict requires very strong political will on both sides. Those with influence over the two parties must work to secure such political will for settling all the outstanding questions in the conflict. Chief among those questions is the establishment of a State for the Palestinian people and guaranteed security for Israel.

As States Members of the United Nations, we have a collective responsibility to devise ways of moving forward on these critical issues. Previous resolutions of the Security Council, the General Assembly and other United Nations organs provide the legal and moral bases, but we must now seriously contemplate how we take them forward. The status quo, or worse, must not be allowed to continue.

CARICOM is at your disposal, Mr. President, to advance these questions.

Mr. Moncada (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has the honour to take the floor on behalf of the Group of Friends in Defence of the Charter of the United Nations, whose member States appreciate the convening of today's important meeting in the light of the continuing deterioration of the situation on the ground.

More than two months have now gone by since the start this regrettable spiral of violence and destruction, which has caused the deaths of thousands of innocent civilians, in particular women, girls and boys, including more than 100 United Nations humanitarian personnel, and the destruction of thousands of homes in the Gaza Strip. Two months have gone by, during which Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip have lived hell on Earth, as described by the Secretary-General.

There is today no safe space in the Gaza Strip for civilians, who are being bombed indiscriminately, day and night, from air, sea and land, and suffering ruthless ground operations carried out by Israeli occupying forces. No civilian infrastructure of any kind is safe from air attacks. Refugee camps, which house more than 1.3 million Palestinian civilians out of the more than 1.9 million who have been forcibly displaced in recent months, have been the target of repeated attacks.

The Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) also recently warned that, as data and statistics show, the United Nations flag no longer offers any protection for civilians in Gaza. Schools and hospitals have not been spared and are still the targets of constant attacks. The lives of babies, girls, boys, women, men, older persons, the ill and the wounded are in danger.

International humanitarian law has been completely trampled upon in recent weeks. The question is, where are all those people who, in other cases, have appealed to the notion of the responsibility to protect the interests and well-being of the human rights of millions of Palestinians, subjected to years of aggression under the illegal Israeli occupation? How many more times will we bear witness to the use of the veto in the Security Council to protect Israel, the occupying Power, from its accountability for the crimes that it is blatantly and systematically perpetrating in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip?

The international community is today witnessing a veritable slaughter of the Palestinian people. We regret to admit it, but the organ that the United Nations Charter entrusted with ensuring the maintenance of international peace and security has been incapable on several occasions, the most recent being last Friday, to fully and effectively exercise its functions. It has not even been able to adopt a much-needed resolution that unequivocally demands a ceasefire. We cannot deliberately ignore the humanitarian catastrophe that is taking place before our very eyes. We must act, and we must do so now, to prevent further loss of life. As was rightly stated by the Commissioner-General of UNRWA, the current humanitarian situation is untenable.

In that context, States members of the Group of Friends of the Defence of the Charter of the United Nations emphasize the importance of ensuring full respect for, and adherence to, the provisions of international humanitarian law, including the principles of proportionality and distinction, as well as the safety and security of all civilians — especially children, and all humanitarian and medical personnel on the ground — in line with the relevant provisions of General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, including resolution ES-10/21, adopted by this organ over a month ago in the face of the ongoing crisis.

The situation is truly at a breaking point, as stated by the Secretary-General upon invoking the provisions of Article 99 of the Charter — a step we commend and consider to be in the right direction in the light of the gravity and continued deterioration of the situation on the ground. We therefore reiterate our demand for an immediate ceasefire and an end to the ongoing atrocities. Not only is that necessary in the name of humanity, but also for ensuring that humanitarian assistance — including crucial life-saving supplies such as enough fuel, *inter alia*, for conducting basic humanitarian operations, as well as food, medicines and clean water — enters the Gaza Strip and can be swiftly distributed to all those in desperate need.

Similarly, we also call for the adoption of urgent measures aimed at ensuring, on the one hand, the safety and well-being of all civilians and, on the other, for facilitating the provision of international protection for the Palestinian civilian population in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip. That must be carried out on the basis of the

recommendations made by the Secretary-General in his 2018 report to the General Assembly (A/ES-10/794), as well as in other relevant Security Council resolutions.

We also renew our call for unimpeded humanitarian access to be granted consistently, safely and to scale in order to meet the urgent needs created by the catastrophe in Gaza, which, needless to say, is a truly human-made crisis. That is key in order to avoid the total collapse of critical civilian infrastructure, which would inevitably lead to more civilian casualties, widespread hunger, disease and poverty and even greater human suffering and despair, thereby further deepening the already disastrous humanitarian crisis in Gaza. Half of the population there is largely comprised of children and refugees, and over 85 per cent of people have now been internally displaced since the escalation of the conflict began more than two months ago.

We stress once again that a just, lasting and comprehensive solution to the question of Palestine in all its aspects and in accordance with international law can be achieved only by peaceful means. We therefore call for urgent efforts to address the root causes of this protracted conflict, which has years of occupation and its consequences at its core, and to ensure accountability for the crimes committed. Today there is a more urgent need than ever to create a credible political horizon leading to the realization of the inalienable right to self-determination of the Palestinian people through the attainment of the independence and sovereignty of the State of Palestine along the pre-1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital. That is to say, we need a political horizon leading to the realization of the two-State solution on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions.

To conclude, we reaffirm our full commitment to preserving, promoting and defending the prevalence and validity of the Charter of the United Nations — a historic treaty that constitutes a true act of faith in the best of humankind and which, to date, although under persistent attack, keeps us all bound to our promise of saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war and to ensure respect for the dignity and worth of human beings. Let us act collectively and responsibly, without delay, to uphold our solemn duties under the Charter of the United Nations. In that connection, we welcome the adoption by an overwhelming majority of the resolution presented by the Group of Arab States.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): I thank you, Mr. President, for reconvening the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly in response to the request of the Group of Arab States and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of a group of countries including Algeria, Libya, China, Cuba, Egypt, Eritrea, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Libya, Nigeria, the Syrian Arab Republic, Venezuela and my own delegation, Pakistan.

We are witnessing a human tragedy of epic proportions unfolding in front of our eyes. Israel's indiscriminate bombardment from the air, land and sea, along with intense ground operations across Gaza, has now continued for over two months, killing more than 18,000 people — 70 per cent of them women and children — and wounding close to 50,000. Entire families and neighbourhoods have been wiped out. According to recent reports, the number of people killed is the highest in proportion to the population since this century began.

The Palestinians are being bombed without mercy or compunction. Their essential lifelines of water, food, medicines and fuel have been cut off. Even the 1.93 million of the 2.2 million Gazans who have been internally displaced cannot hide from the Israeli bombs. According to the Secretary-General,

“The people of Gaza are being told to move like human pinballs, ricocheting between ever-smaller slivers of the south, without any of the basics for survival;

“But nowhere in Gaza is safe.” (*S/PV.9498, p. 4*)

Tragically, 134 staff members of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) have lost their lives, many along with their families and their homes. That is the highest-ever recorded killing of United Nations personnel in the Organization's history. The international community should honour their memory. UNRWA and other United Nations agencies have been at the forefront, playing a critical role in the provision of humanitarian assistance to the people of Gaza. We salute their untiring efforts and commitment.

In the letter recently addressed to you, Mr. President, from UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini, he reminds us that “at the darkest hour in the Agency's 75-year history” the humanitarian situation is

now “untenable”. Mr. Lazzarini implored the General Assembly to take “immediate action”.

We are appalled at the magnitude of the suffering being faced by helpless Palestinian civilians, especially children and women. The collective punishment endured by the besieged people of Gaza is unprecedented in modern history. We must also be appalled by those who, by blocking the call for a ceasefire in the Security Council, have enabled the continuation of the Israeli slaughter of innocents.

We laud the Secretary-General for invoking Article 99 of the Charter of the United Nations — the first time during his tenure — describing the situation as being at a breaking point. He noted in his address to the Security Council that

“[t]here is a high risk of the total collapse of the humanitarian support system in Gaza, which would have devastating consequences.” (*ibid.*, p. 2)

He particularly stressed that

“[t]here is clearly ... a serious risk of aggravating existing threats to the maintenance of international peace and security.” (*supra.*)

We deeply regret that calls from the Secretary-General and the General Assembly have not been heeded by Israel, which continues its criminal attacks against the Palestinian people. Israel has also ignored the call from the Security Council to comply with its obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law, notably with regard to protecting civilians, especially children, and refraining from depriving the civilian population in the Gaza Strip of basic services and humanitarian assistance that are indispensable to their survival. We strongly and unequivocally condemn the indiscriminate use of force by Israel. Israel’s attacks on civilians, civilian objects and infrastructure, the blockading of water, food and fuel and the forced displacement of people within the occupied territory are flagrant violations of international humanitarian law and amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity and may amount to the crime of genocide.

We are deeply disappointed that the Security Council once again failed to call for a ceasefire in Gaza on 8 December (see S/PV.9499), even in the face of a human tragedy of epic proportions taking place there. That is unjustifiable. Despite the invocation of Article 99 by the Secretary-General and his warnings

of humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza, the Council has failed to perform its primary responsibility. The continuation of Israel’s campaign in occupied Palestine is aggravating human suffering, with massive civilian casualties and the forced displacement of millions of Palestinian people. It could also trigger a wider and more dangerous conflict. A heavy responsibility rests on all those who have contributed to the prolongation of uninterrupted bombing of the people of Gaza. We reject Israel’s portrayal of its aggressive actions as anti-terrorism measures and of its relentless bombing of Gaza as an exercise of self-defence. The root cause of the crisis lies in Israel’s prolonged occupation and denial of Palestinians’ inalienable right to self-determination. Israel’s murderous campaign against the occupied people of Palestine struggling for their freedom cannot be justified under the guise of self-defence.

The Joint Arab-Islamic Extraordinary Summit, held in Riyadh on 11 November, underscored the centrality of the Palestinian cause and extended full support for the legitimate struggle of the Palestinian people to liberate all their occupied territories and the need to end the Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people; described the ongoing Israeli aggression as a retaliatory war crime that cannot be justified under any guise; and demanded that all countries stop exporting weapons and ammunition to the occupation authorities that are used by their army and terrorist settlers to kill the Palestinian people and destroy their homes, hospitals, schools, mosques, churches and all their properties.

We welcome the diplomatic efforts undertaken by the Ministerial Committee mandated by the Joint Arab-Islamic Extraordinary Summit, chaired by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia, including visits to capitals of the five permanent members of the Security Council. We hope that their efforts will lead to the restoration and reinvigoration of the peace process. We consider it necessary to intensify international efforts in the search for a durable and peaceful solution. Therefore, we reiterate the demand to advance the peace process in accordance with the resolutions of the Security Council, the United Nations and the Arab Peace Initiative aimed at finding a just and comprehensive solution and establishing an independent Palestinian State according to the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital. We also welcome the efforts undertaken by Egypt, Jordan and Qatar to facilitate the provision of humanitarian assistance for alleviating the suffering of the Palestinian people.

In conclusion, it is our hope that resolution ES- 10/22, adopted by the General Assembly acting under the “uniting for peace” process, which seeks an immediate humanitarian ceasefire, will be implemented. The Israeli killing machine must be stopped in Gaza and the West Bank. In addition to an immediate humanitarian ceasefire and the provision of unimpeded humanitarian access to the besieged people of Gaza, we also demand the following.

First, we call for the establishment of a special tribunal — an accountability mechanism to investigate Israel’s atrocity crimes, identify and prosecute those responsible for war crimes committed and to provide reparations for damage, loss or injury arising from those crimes committed by the Israeli occupation forces.

Secondly, we call for the establishment of an international protection mechanism to protect Palestinian civilians, especially women and children, in Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, from further attacks and oppression by the occupation forces and extremist colonialist settlers.

Thirdly, we consider it necessary to intensify international efforts in the search for a durable and peaceful solution to the Palestine question.

Mr. Milambo (Zambia): On behalf of the Group of African States, I would like to express my sincere thanks and gratitude to you, Mr. President, for convening this timely and important meeting. I also extend my profound thanks to the Permanent Representatives of the Arab Republic of Egypt and the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, in their capacities as Chairs of the Group of Arab States and Organization of Islamic Cooperation group, respectively, for requesting the resumption of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly.

We are meeting today at a very difficult time. The situation in Gaza and the occupied territories is deteriorating and remains a matter of deep concern. The ongoing bombardment of Gaza has claimed thousands of lives, including thousands of children, not to mention the injured and those trapped under the rubble, and the dire humanitarian situation has dramatically worsened an already fragile situation. The cost on the civilian population is unbearable and unacceptable by any standards. We condemn the escalating violence and loss of civilian lives. All human life matters and must be protected, and everyone’s fundamental rights and dignity must be upheld.

We strongly urge the international community, and specifically the United Nations, to formulate a comprehensive plan for rebuilding the destroyed civilian infrastructure and properties in the affected areas. The plan should encompass not only the physical reconstruction of buildings and facilities, but also the restoration of essential services and support systems that form the backbone of daily life and economic activity. It is imperative that the initiative become a central component of all subsequent deliberations and actions, ensuring that the recovery process is integral to the path forward, promoting stability and fostering long-term peace and prosperity in the region.

We have regrettably witnessed the inability of the Security Council to act and adequately deliver on this issue, while the situation was deteriorating on an unprecedented scale. It is crucial for all parties to demonstrate genuine commitment to achieving lasting peace in the region. We call for an immediate ceasefire and a cessation of hostilities and urge all the parties to engage in a meaningful dialogue in order to de-escalate tensions and find a peaceful resolution to the conflict. We call for the release of prisoners and hostages. The cycle of violence and suffering has to end, and a durable solution must be found through a just and comprehensive peace.

Today more than ever, we should intensify our efforts to find a just and lasting solution to the conflict on the basis of the two-State solution and the establishment of a sovereign Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions and within the framework of the relevant African Union pronouncements. Africa’s support for the Palestinian cause is premised on the values of freedom, justice and humanitarian principles that Africa defends in international forums alongside all those striving to ensure that Palestine regains its right to exist as a viable State. Africa has consistently expressed deep concerns about the consequences of impunity, unilateral policies, acts of provocation and non-adherence to international law.

We therefore welcome the General Assembly resolution (resolution ES-10/22) adopted on 12 December, which demands that a humanitarian ceasefire be established and that all parties comply with obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law, notably with regard to the protection of civilians.

I shall now deliver a statement in my national capacity as the representative of Zambia.

Zambia supported the resolution on the protection of civilians and upholding legal and humanitarian obligations adopted on 12 December and aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the African Group at large.

The grave humanitarian situation in Gaza demanded our most urgent attention, and that is what the General Assembly gave it by adopting the resolution. How can we stand idly by and watch as innocent children, women and many others die? How can we do nothing or say nothing when hundreds of thousands remain under siege?

Mr. Makayat-Safouesse (Congo), Vice-President, took the Chair.

In view of the gravity of the humanitarian situation, the focus should primarily be on saving lives and livelihoods. This is a time to pause and allow our humanitarian side to take action. Zambia therefore re-emphasizes the call for an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip in order to allow much-needed humanitarian assistance to reach the people of Gaza. We support the call for the release of hostages and the cessation of all aggression. That was the basis of our support for the resolution, and it is our hope that there will be a cessation of hostilities in order to allow for humanitarian aid to be delivered.

On the wider question of Israel/Palestine, Zambia remains steadfast in its belief in the two-State solution.

Mrs. Frazier (Malta): The circumstances leading to the resumption of this emergency special session are deeply regrettable. By all accounts, we are facing a catastrophic situation, one exacerbated by a Security Council that has been unable to find agreement on how to respond to the needs of the crisis. In that regard, Malta has fully supported the Secretary-General's invocation of Article 99 of the Charter of the United Nations. We echo his principled belief that we must not give up. The hostilities in Gaza are fuelling unprecedented levels of human suffering. Public order in Gaza is now on the verge of collapse. That scale of loss and destruction is a serious threat to regional peace and will have lasting international repercussions.

Malta reiterates that an immediate humanitarian ceasefire is now critical. It is for that reason that we voted in favour of and co-sponsored the resolution

adopted last Tuesday (resolution ES-10/22) and the draft resolution (S/2023/970) voted on by the Security Council on 8 December (see S/PV.9499). Malta also continues to unreservedly condemn Hamas's acts of terror, including the heinous attacks of 7 October and the indiscriminate rocket fire on Israeli civilians. Hamas's strategy of embedding itself among civilians and civilian infrastructure in Gaza and reports of sexual violence committed are also reprehensible. Malta once again calls for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages, in accordance with Security Council resolution 2712 (2023), and further deplores any acts of violence they may be suffering while in captivity.

We recognize Israel's right to protect its people, but all actions must be in line with international humanitarian law, including the principles of distinction, proportionality and necessity. Nevertheless, the fact that civilians in Gaza are lacking the basic needs for survival is a matter of urgency. The health-care system is on its knees. Collapsing hospitals and the handful of United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) facilities are sheltering over 1 million people, compounding serious risks of widespread disease. Amid such inhumane conditions, children also continue to suffer disproportionately, their future seemingly buried under the rubble.

Commissioner-General Lazzarini has been clear on the fate that awaits UNRWA if nothing is done to alleviate its impossible burden. An unprecedented number of United Nations employees have been killed. UNRWA will soon be unable to pursue its mandate. Inaction is not an option if we are to preserve any prospect of a political solution. We must stress that there is no scenario that justifies the denial of aid for 2.2 million people, 80 per cent of whom have been displaced. In conformity with international law, all parties are obliged to ensure that civilians and civilian infrastructure are protected. Unhindered humanitarian aid and the safety of United Nations and humanitarian workers must be guaranteed. The only way to achieve those imperatives is through a humanitarian ceasefire.

The situation in the West Bank has seen unprecedented escalation in the past eight weeks, including through increasingly heavy incursions, restrictions and mass detainment of Palestinians. The resurgence of illegal settler encroachment and violence is particularly worrisome. We stress that settlements are illegal under international law and constitute an

obstacle to peace. Furthermore, we are alarmed at escalation along the Blue Line and the Red Sea. We strongly call on all parties — including non-State actors — in the region to exercise restraint, de-escalate and respect the norms of international law. Further conflict fronts must be avoided at all costs.

Within this volatile context, peace will be achievable only through dialogue towards a political horizon that aims to holistically address both Israel's security concerns and the legitimate aspirations of Palestinians, including their right to self-determination. Malta reaffirms its unwavering commitment to a two-State solution along the pre-1967 borders, including addressing the legitimate aspirations of both sides, with Jerusalem as the future capital of two States living side by side in peace and security, in line with all relevant Security Council resolutions and internationally agreed parameters. We remain convinced that that is the only path to a lasting and sustainable peace in the Middle East.

Mr. Gafoor (Singapore): Singapore welcomes the resumption of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly to discuss the situation in Gaza.

We share the concerns expressed by the Secretary-General in his letter dated 6 December 2023 to the President of the Security Council, in which he described that,

“The current conditions are making it impossible for meaningful humanitarian operations to be conducted.” (S/2023/962, p. 2)

We also agree with his assessment that,

“The international community has a responsibility to use all its influence to prevent further escalation and end this crisis.” (*ibid.*)

I take this opportunity to express Singapore's strong support for the leadership of Secretary-General António Guterres and his tireless efforts to address the unfolding humanitarian tragedy in Gaza. We also commend the critical role played by many dedicated and courageous United Nations officials and agencies in providing humanitarian assistance to civilians in Gaza, in particular the role played by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). We express our deepest condolences to the families of the 135 UNRWA staff members who have lost their lives. The Singapore Government and the Singapore Red Cross Society have worked closely

with the Egyptian Government and the Egyptian Red Crescent to provide humanitarian supplies to Gaza. And we will continue to work closely with our friends and partners to support those humanitarian relief efforts.

We are meeting today because the humanitarian situation in Gaza has deteriorated significantly, with more than 18,000 Palestinians killed in Gaza and up to 1.9 million people reportedly displaced, which represents approximately 85 per cent of the population of Gaza. The Commissioner-General of UNRWA sent a letter to the President of the General Assembly on 7 December warning of an irreversible disaster. He also said that the humanitarian situation in Gaza is now untenable, with people “desperate, hungry and terrified”. We are therefore disappointed that the Security Council was unable to adopt the draft humanitarian resolution (S/2023/970) put forward by the United Arab Emirates last week, which Singapore co-sponsored.

Singapore also co-sponsored resolution ES-10/22, entitled “Protection of civilians and upholding legal and humanitarian obligations”, which the General Assembly adopted with an overwhelming majority of 153 votes in favour on 12 December. Singapore supports the call made in that resolution for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire, which is essential for the urgent and unhindered provision of humanitarian aid to civilians throughout Gaza. I would like to reiterate Singapore's grave concern about the worsening humanitarian situation in Gaza, which has led to the loss of many thousands of innocent civilian lives. Singapore also supports the call made in the resolution for all parties to comply with their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law, notably with regard to the protection of civilians.

We recognize that Israel has the right to defend its citizens and territory. But, in exercising that right, Israel must comply fully with international humanitarian law. This means responding in a proportionate manner. This means avoiding the indiscriminate killing of civilians. This means avoiding the collective punishment of civilians. And this means avoiding the permanent mass displacement of civilians.

Singapore strongly supports the call made in the resolution for the immediate release of all remaining hostages. The taking of hostages is prohibited under international law. Hamas and other parties involved must ensure the safety and security of the hostages and facilitate their immediate release.

It is a fact that the heinous terrorist attack carried out by Hamas in Israel on 7 October led to the killing of more than 1,200 Israelis, the majority of whom were innocent civilians. We regret that resolution ES-10/22 does not condemn, or even make reference to, the actions of Hamas. Singapore would like to place on the record our view that terrorist attacks carried out by any party cannot be condoned or justified by any rationale.

Singapore continues to hold the view that the only viable path to a durable, just and comprehensive solution to the crisis is a negotiated two-State solution, consistent with relevant Security Council resolutions. We support the right of Israelis and Palestinians to live within secure borders. Both Palestinians and Israelis deserve to live in peace, security and dignity. And we call on leaders from both sides to show leadership, exercise restraint and take the difficult, but necessary, steps towards a two-State solution.

Mr. Niang (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): Senegal aligns itself with the statements made by the Permanent Representatives of Mauritania and Zambia on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the Group of African States, respectively. In addition, I would like to say a few words in my national capacity.

My delegation would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for the speedy resumption of the tenth emergency special session in response to the request jointly made by the OIC and the Group of Arab States to discuss the situation in Gaza.

By invoking Article 99 of the Charter of the United Nations and faithfully carrying out his mandate, the Secretary-General put the Security Council in the position of facing its responsibilities, thereby urging it to overcome differences for the sake of addressing a serious threat to international peace and security. When resolution 2712 (2023) was adopted on 15 November, my country welcomed the Council's efforts to bring about a humanitarian pause in tandem with the first wave of the release of Israeli hostages and Palestinian prisoners. At the same time, like the international community as a whole, Senegal expressed the fervent hope that that pause could be used to establish a permanent ceasefire — the only long-term condition that will allow for the safe and unhindered humanitarian access that the majority of States are calling for.

There have been 18,400 deaths over the past 67 days, 70 per cent of them women and children — but journalists have died too — which is on average almost 300 deaths a day, with one child killed every 10 minutes.

Yet the bombardment continues to rip apart Gaza, which had already been suffering from the air, sea and land blockade of more than 16 years. Israel's reprisals have been completely disproportionate, plunging 2.3 million people into enduring misery, and there is no safe refuge — neither in the north nor in the south, neither for the people of Gaza nor for the humanitarian workers. As we pay tribute to the memory of the 133 personnel of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East who were killed in bombings, Senegal reiterates its encouragement to the teams of Mr. Philippe Lazzarini, the Agency's Commissioner-General, as well as to all United Nations entities and non-governmental bodies that are committed to mitigating the effects of the humanitarian crisis. To that end, United Nations entities and their implementing partners must be able to have access to the population, without having to make the ultimate sacrifice.

In that context, my country once again deplores the fact that the Security Council failed to adopt the draft resolution submitted by the United Arab Emirates (S/2023/970), despite the almost unanimous support of its membership and the co-sponsorship of 103 States Members of the United Nations, including Senegal.

We will continue to emphasize that there is an urgent need, first and foremost, to save the lives of Palestinian people in Gaza. They are demanding only that the bombing stop. That is why the adoption of this resolution (resolution ES-10/22) by an overwhelming majority conveys a strong message to the international community from the General Assembly. It also encourages the Security Council, which must overcome its political rifts in order to meet the current challenges. Only a humanitarian ceasefire will truly protect the people of Gaza, preserve the infrastructure that is still standing and rebuild the infrastructure that has been destroyed.

Meanwhile, my delegation will continue to urge Israel, the occupying Power, to exercise restraint and spare civilians, all humanitarian, medical and media personnel, and hospitals, places of worship and United Nations facilities. This means that the humanitarian ceasefire, on which the resolution is focused, must be our priority, to ensure that Gaza is no longer an open-air cemetery, and its residents are no longer forced into exile.

As Albert Camus said, misnaming things adds to the world's misfortune. In many respects, the term "catastrophe" aptly describes the situation that has prevailed in Gaza for more than two months. This catastrophe has ramifications in all occupied Palestinian

territories, including the West Bank, where settlement activity is exceedingly aggressive and hostile. That observation is even more bitter as we commemorate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

That is why Senegal, which has always condemned any and all attacks on civilians, reiterates its call for respect for international law and the right of the Palestinian people to a viable, contiguous State with East Jerusalem as its capital, as stipulated in the relevant United Nations resolutions. My country continues to call upon the Security Council and all stakeholders for a meaningful de-escalation as the first step in the resumption of peace talks aimed at the two-State solution — Israel and Palestine, living side by side, within safe and internationally recognized borders. How many people in Gaza must we watch die before we resolve to stop this massacre? How many children who died before even having lived must we bury to end this massacre? The law cannot continue to fail the Palestinian people much longer. Silencing the weapons is never giving up when it comes to protecting innocent lives.

Mr. Gaouaoui (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate the General Assembly on adopting resolution ES-10/22, which was submitted by the Group of Arab States. It is an unambiguously clear message from the international community, demanding that the aggression against the defenceless Palestinian people come to an end and humanitarian aid reach the besieged Gaza Strip. In that context, my country rejects any rhetoric that seeks to equate the victim with the executioner and to justify the brutal massacres against the people in the occupied Palestinian territories.

We are meeting again as the aggression against the defenceless Palestinian people throughout the occupied Palestinian territories, particularly in the besieged Gaza Strip, has reached a seventieth day of torturing and killing people, which will remain a stain on humanity. However, that will not, unfortunately, deter the occupier or stop the aggression.

Once again, the Palestinian people and all those in solidarity with them who believe in their rights and just cause have had to resort to the General Assembly. The General Assembly is the platform of peoples that truly represents their hopes and aspirations, especially since the Security Council is unable to fulfil its mandate under the Charter of the United Nations, namely, to maintain international peace and security.

We note that the Security Council must comply with the General Assembly resolution, as the Council's authority comes from the authority of the Member States, under Article 24, paragraph 1, of the Charter, which states that:

“In order to ensure prompt and effective action by the United Nations, its Members confer on the Security Council primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, and agree that in carrying out its duties under this responsibility the Security Council acts on their behalf.”

We express our deep regret for the failure of the Security Council to adopt a humanitarian resolution aimed solely at ending the aggression and delivering humanitarian assistance to those who need it. That was the appeal made by relief agencies and the appeal of the Secretary-General in his letter to the Security Council (S/2023/962). A purely humanitarian resolution was not adopted, which is unjustifiable and incomprehensible. It only perpetuates the aggression against the defenceless Palestinian people, while the occupying forces know that they are strongly covered against any Security Council resolution and sanctions. The relevant resolution would have allowed the provision of necessary aid to the people facing difficult conditions in the Gaza Strip. Rejecting the resolution only exacerbated the suffering of Palestinians and unfortunately prevented the international community from providing timely aid.

The images of destruction and the number of victims appeal to our conscience. We would like to sincerely ask: what do we benefit from the United Nations, which was established by the founding fathers to protect future generations from the scourge of war? Today, according to estimates from non-governmental organizations, between 24,000 and 25,000 Palestinian children in the Gaza Strip have become orphans, and nearly 640,000 children have had their homes damaged or destroyed, leaving them without shelter. There are thousands of Palestinian prisoners and detainees, including women and infants, who have been detained by the occupation forces since the start of the aggression, with no news of their fate. Furthermore, nearly 85 per cent of the population has been internally displaced, of whom approximately 1.1 million have registered in 97 United Nations shelters in the southern part of the Gaza Strip.

We reiterate our rejection of any attempt by the occupation to liquidate the Palestinian question by displacing the civilians in Gaza and the West Bank.

We stress that such a measure is a flagrant violation of article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which prohibits the occupying forces from forcibly transferring a population, or deporting any protected persons from territories under occupation.

We also condemn in the strongest terms the destruction of houses and displacement of the population from occupied Jerusalem, just as we strongly condemn the expansionist settlement policy in the West Bank and Jerusalem. That policy constitutes a clear and flagrant violation of resolution 2334 (2016), undermining the last prospect for establishing an independent Palestinian State.

We must take a serious and firm stance to put an end to the flagrant violations against the Palestinian people. That is a collective responsibility which we must shoulder together as a first step. Enabling the Palestinian people to enjoy their inalienable and legitimate rights is our ultimate goal in establishing a Middle East in which everyone can enjoy stability and prosperity.

Mr. Abdelmadjid Tebboune, President of Algeria, stated that the desire for life and liberation cannot be suppressed by bombing, destruction, plans for forced displacement or ethnic cleansing. Yet those are the actions taken by the Zionist occupation against our brotherly people in occupied Palestine, which has been perpetrating war crimes and crimes of genocide for more than two months in the Gaza Strip. History will condemn all those who support those acts as war criminals and enemies of life and humanity.

Mr. Moretti (Brazil): I thank the President of the General Assembly for reconvening the tenth emergency special session. The decision is both timely and necessary, given the appalling humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip.

The gravity of the situation is evident in recent expressions of key players within the United Nations system. For the first time in his tenure, Secretary-General Guterres invoked Article 99 of the Charter of the United Nations (see S/2023/962). The Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has written to the President of the General Assembly, warning that the Agency's ability to carry out its mandate in Gaza has been severely limited by the current conflict. The numbers he mentioned are staggering: 1.2 million internally displaced persons are sheltering in UNRWA facilities, and 2.2 million people depend on its assistance for survival.

The ongoing Israeli ground offensive in the south of the Gaza Strip is already worsening the horrific humanitarian situation that we have been observing since the beginning of military operations. Civilians continue to bear the brunt of the violence, and the majority of them are children, as we know.

In those extreme circumstances, the only measure that can avoid an even greater catastrophe is a humanitarian ceasefire. We hear those who argue security reasons to oppose a humanitarian ceasefire. Brazil, however, believes that, in the face of such a tragedy in Gaza, any politically and morally tenable response must prioritize the immediate protection of civilians. They must be protected at all times, in peace and in war.

Brazil's commitment to the protection of civilians in the conflict now raging in Gaza has been demonstrated on several instances. We voted in favour of Security Council resolution 2712 (2023) on 15 November and in favour of the draft resolution submitted by the United Arab Emirates and vetoed on Friday (S/2023/970). Prior to that, we had submitted a draft resolution to the Security Council that called for immediate humanitarian pauses (S/2023/773). The draft was supported by the vast majority of Council members but was vetoed by a permanent member, as we recall. If it had been adopted on that occasion, thousands of lives would likely have been spared. Our vote on Tuesday (see resolution ES-10/22) reaffirms our unmovable position that multilateral action is urgently needed.

The cost of inaction is unacceptably high. We urge all those in positions of influence to actively and expeditiously seek to secure the conditions necessary for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire. It is also urgent and morally compelling to ensure the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages and to provide them with immediate humanitarian access, just as it is urgent and morally compelling to allow for a much-increased and more effective provision of humanitarian aid into and inside Gaza. It is unthinkable that UNRWA should no longer be able to fulfil its mandate. The current levels of assistance are simply untenable. Not taking the measures necessary to expand it to what is required to address the immense and growing needs would also amount to complicity.

A veto led the General Assembly to make recommendations on a question of international peace and security, which, as we all know, is a primary responsibility of the Security Council. The General Assembly did so because the Council once again failed

in fulfilling its responsibilities. Only a much-needed comprehensive reform of that organ, with the expansion of both its permanent and non-permanent membership, will make it fit for purpose and able to face the growing complexity of twenty-first century challenges.

The continued blatant disregard for humanitarian law in the conflict is truly shocking. As the world has been repeating again and again, warfare is bound by rules. Adherence to those rules is not a matter of choice. Demanding and securing respect for international humanitarian law in Palestine today will give us the necessary moral ground to do the same elsewhere tomorrow. That must be very clear in the minds of us all.

Mr. Abd Karim (Malaysia): I thank the President of the General Assembly for reconvening its tenth emergency special session. Malaysia, together with a group of countries, supported the request by the Group of Arab States and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) group for the resumption of the session.

Malaysia aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Mauritania on behalf of the OIC group.

This meeting — the second emergency special session to be convened in a span of less than two months — is necessitated by the immeasurable human suffering and catastrophic humanitarian conditions we are witnessing. With more than 18,000 civilians, including women and children, killed; with more than half of all homes bombed to ruins; with up to 1.9 million people internally displaced; and with the health-care system on the verge of collapse, the carnage and destruction seen in Gaza are beyond words.

While we welcome the convening of this important meeting, it could and should have been avoided. Malaysia, a nation that values peace and justice, had hoped for the Security Council to unite in the name of humanity and agreed to an immediate ceasefire in Gaza. Alas, that did not come to pass. What did happen on Friday (see S/PV.9499) was a stark reminder of the paralysis of the Council, caused by politicization based on the narrow self-interest of a Member State. With an immediate ceasefire, the killings could have been stopped, more humanitarian aid could have reached those in need and lives could have been saved. Regretfully, those acts of humanity were prevented from happening, despite the affirmative vote by 13 members of the Security Council and despite more than 100 Member States, including Malaysia, having supported the draft resolution presented by the United Arab Emirates (S/2023/970).

The dire humanitarian and health-care situation in Gaza demands our urgent attention. According to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, the humanitarian situation is now untenable. The World Health Organization has warned of the heightened risk of disease outbreaks owing to overcrowded shelters and the lack of basic supplies in already inoperable hospitals. Half of the population is starving, with 9 out of 10 people not eating every day. Children in Gaza are more at risk of dying from diseases than from bombings. We heard harrowing accounts of families enduring multiple days without food, shelter, water or access to health care.

Malaysia co-sponsored and voted in favour of the resolution entitled “Protection of civilians and upholding legal and humanitarian obligations” (resolution ES-10/22) for the sake of humankind. We welcome and strongly support the call by the Secretary-General and the overwhelming majority of Member States for a humanitarian ceasefire. It is the only decent and humane thing to do. Every moment we delay, lives are lost and hopes are crushed. We urge all parties involved to lay down their arms and silence the guns, which have brought nothing but death, destruction and despair. We reject the forced displacement of the Palestinians. Such action is an affront to human dignity. It is a clear violation of international human rights and humanitarian law. Malaysia calls for unimpeded safe passage for humanitarian aid. It is imperative to ensure that food, water, fuel, electricity and medicine reach those who need them adequately and without delay.

Under the pretext of the right to self-defence, Israel continues to commit crimes against humanity and to wage war against innocent Palestinians with impunity. Israel’s actions are neither proportionate nor lawful, and they run contrary to international law and the Charter of the United Nations. Atrocities against civilians committed by Israel are unjustifiable. The international community must robustly pursue all legal, political and economic channels to pressure Israel. We demand accountability for every crime and violation committed by Israel. Every instance of violations by Israel must be thoroughly investigated, and their perpetrators must be held accountable. Justice delayed is justice denied.

At the last emergency special session, on 27 October (see A/ES-10/PV.41), the Assembly soundly adopted a resolution calling for a humanitarian truce (resolution ES-10/21). We again hear the world speaking in one voice, and the demand is “ceasefire now”. We hear that demand for an immediate ceasefire not only here

in the General Assembly, but across the globe — in parliaments, in the streets of cities worldwide and across social media platforms. The clamour and appeal for an immediate ceasefire cannot be ignored. It is therefore imperative to ensure that the United Nations, envisioned as the bastion of international cooperation and conflict resolution, fulfils its duty and responsibility. The erosion of trust in the multilateral system not only hampers our ability to collectively address global challenges but also undermines the very foundations upon which the United Nations was built.

The key to ending the suffering of the Palestinians is to end Israel's illegal occupation of Palestine. The blatant seizure of Palestinian land by Israel for illegal settlements is not, and will never be, acceptable. The Gaza Strip constitutes an integral part of the Palestinian territory, and it must remain part of the Palestinian State. The future of Gaza lays solely with the will and independent choice of the Palestinian people. Malaysia strongly urges the international community to exert all necessary efforts to promote the realization of a just, lasting and peaceful solution, based on the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. We stand ready to be part of, and support, initiatives aimed at realizing the Palestinians' rights to freedom and independence.

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): Let me open by paying tribute to the United Nations for its vital and lifesaving work in Gaza and offer sincere condolences for the loss of more than 130 United Nations staff.

The scale of civilian Palestinian deaths and the massive displacement in Gaza cannot continue. The 7 October attacks committed by Hamas, which killed 1,200 innocent civilians, were an abhorrent act of terrorism that should be unequivocally condemned. All hostages must be released immediately. We have been clear that Israel must be targeted and precise in its efforts to address the threats posed by Hamas and must minimize civilian casualties and protect civilian infrastructure in line with international humanitarian law. My Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary have repeatedly delivered that message to Israel and will continue to do so. As the Prime Minister has also said, we support calls for a sustainable ceasefire, whereby hostages are released, more aid can get in and Hamas stops firing rockets into Israel.

We have heard clearly from the Secretary-General and the Chief of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East that a humanitarian catastrophe of grave proportions is unfolding. We agree that urgent action is needed to scale up aid into Gaza, and for our part, we have recently announced a further \$38 million of humanitarian assistance, bringing it to a total of \$76 million since 7 October. But more must be done to unlock humanitarian access and to deliver aid sustainably and without interference.

First, we welcome Israel's decision to open Kerem Shalom. That is a vital step towards ensuring significantly more aid reaches Gaza. We look forward to its urgent implementation. We must continue to increase the amount of humanitarian support to Gaza through as many direct routes as possible, and access to northern Gaza for humanitarian organizations must also be secured to enable them to deliver assistance to vulnerable Palestinians.

Secondly, Israel should immediately increase the range of humanitarian items allowed into Gaza. That includes fuel. We need to see supplies of at least 200,000 litres per day, the minimum the United Nations says it needs to support aid and essential services in southern Gaza alone, as well as shelter, public health and sanitation items and items for critical infrastructure.

Thirdly, Israel must rapidly approve visas for staff of United Nations and humanitarian organizations to manage and facilitate assistance to those in need. We need the United Nations to be able to do its job.

In conclusion, we reiterate the need to work towards a long-term political solution to this conflict based on the two-State solution, to deliver statehood for the Palestinians and security for Israel. Peace, justice and security are essential and must be a reality for both Israelis and Palestinians alike.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item for this meeting. We will hear the remaining statements on Monday, 18 December, in the afternoon, in this Hall, immediately after the adjournment of the forty-eighth plenary meeting of the seventy-eighth regular session.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.