



# Security Council

Eightieth year

**9883**<sup>rd</sup> meeting

Friday, 21 March 2025, 10 a.m.

New York

*Provisional*

---

<i>President:</i>	Ms. Lassen. . . . .	(Denmark)
<i>Members:</i>	Algeria. . . . .	Mr. Bendjama
	China. . . . .	Mr. Fu Cong
	France . . . . .	Mr. Bonnafont
	Greece . . . . .	Mr. Sekeris
	Guyana . . . . .	Ms. Benn
	Pakistan. . . . .	Mr. Akram
	Panama . . . . .	Mr. Alfaro de Alba
	Republic of Korea . . . . .	Mr. Hwang
	Russian Federation . . . . .	Mr. Polyanskiy
	Sierra Leone . . . . .	Ms. Karim
	Slovenia. . . . .	Mr. Žbogar
	Somalia . . . . .	Mr. Osman
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Kariuki
	United States of America. . . . .	Ms. Shea

## Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

---

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



*The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.*

### **Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

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

**The President:** In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Israel and Jordan to participate in this meeting.

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

There being no objection, it is so decided.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Ms. Sigrid Kaag, Special Coordinator ad interim for the Middle East Peace Process, to participate in this meeting.

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

I give the floor to Ms. Kaag.

**Ms. Kaag:** Before turning to read the report of the Secretary-General, I would like to pay homage to my United Nations colleagues, along with all humanitarian workers in Gaza, be they Palestinian or international. Tragically, on 19 March, one United Nations staff member lost his life, and another five United Nations personnel were injured in strikes at the deconflicted United Nations site. I grieve with the family of the deceased and wish the injured a speedy recovery.

I would also like to express my profound alarm at the resumption of hostilities in Gaza this week, which has already killed hundreds, mostly women and children, and I would like to echo the Secretary-General's call for the resumption of serious negotiations for the ceasefire, unimpeded humanitarian access and for the remaining hostages to be released immediately and unconditionally.

I now turn to the reading of the thirty-third report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016). The report covers the period from 7 December 2024 to 13 March 2025.

Security Council resolution 2334 (2016) calls on Israel to "immediately and completely cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem" and to "fully respect all of its legal obligations in this regard" (*resolution 2334 (2016), para. 2*). Settlement activity has nevertheless continued at a high rate.

During the reporting period, Israeli planning authorities advanced or approved approximately 10,600 housing units in settlements in the occupied West Bank, including 4,920 in East Jerusalem. Tenders were announced for approximately 700 units in the area of the Efrat settlement, near Bethlehem, in the occupied West Bank.

Demolitions and seizures of Palestinian-owned structures accelerated across the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Citing the lack of Israeli-issued building permits, which are almost impossible for Palestinians to obtain, Israeli authorities demolished, seized, sealed or forced people to demolish 460 structures, displacing 576 people, including 287 children and 149 women.

Resolution 2334 (2016) calls for "immediate steps to prevent all acts of violence against civilians, including acts of terror, as well as all acts of provocation and

destruction” (*ibid.*, para. 6). Unfortunately, the high number of fatal incidents across the occupied Palestinian territory and Israel precludes me from detailing all.

In Gaza, according to the Gaza Ministry of Health, at least 1,897 Palestinians were killed, and at least 5,979 were injured during the reporting period.

According to Israeli sources, 59 hostages are still alive, being held captive. A total of 251 hostages were abducted on 7 October 2023 by Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups. Israeli sources also report 30 Israel Defense Forces (IDF) soldiers killed and at least 3 injured during the reporting period.

From 7 December 2024 until the ceasefire and hostage release deal took effect on 19 January, hostilities in Gaza continued, resulting in high numbers of Palestinian casualties, continued massive displacement of civilians and widespread destruction, including to civilian infrastructure.

Palestinian armed groups continued to hold hostages in horrific conditions and fired rockets indiscriminately towards Israel.

Since the ceasefire took effect on 19 January, 25 Israeli and 5 Thai nationals have been released by Hamas and other armed groups, as well as the remains of eight hostages who were killed on 7 October 2023 or while in captivity, among them two children. Released hostages have described or exhibited signs of serious ill-treatment.

During the same period, 1,777 Palestinian prisoners and detainees were released by Israel. Some reported serious ill-treatment, sexual abuse and humiliation during detention.

In the reporting period, at least 21 United Nations personnel were killed in Gaza.

Meanwhile, violence in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, continued at alarming levels. A total of 123 Palestinians, including 6 women and 19 children, were killed during Israeli security forces airstrikes, operations, armed exchanges, demonstrations and other incidents. Most Palestinians were killed in the context of Israeli operations in Area A, including during exchanges of fire with armed Palestinians. A total of 924 Palestinians, including 220 children, were injured by the Israeli security forces, including 361 by tear gas inhalation and 299 by live ammunition. A total of 117 Palestinians, including 6 children, were injured by settlers.

According to Israeli sources, 10 Israelis, including two children and three women, and five security forces personnel, were killed, and another 96, including at least three children and 10 women, and 32 Israeli security forces personnel were injured by Palestinians in shooting, stabbing and ramming attacks and other incidents.

Israeli security forces arrested 1,711 Palestinians during operations in the occupied West Bank. Israel currently holds at least 9,406 Palestinians, including 3,405 in administrative detention, according to the Israeli Prison Service.

On 19 February, the Israeli Military Advocate General indicted five IDF reservists for serious abuse, including sexual abuse, of a Palestinian detainee at the Sde Teiman facility.

On 17 January, a Palestinian National Security Forces operation that began on 5 December 2024 against armed groups in the Jenin refugee camp ended, with 16 Palestinians killed, including six Palestinian National Security Forces members.

On 21 January, Israel’s largest operation in the occupied West Bank since 2002 began and has since expanded across the northern West Bank in what Israeli authorities described as a counter-terrorism operation. This has included the continued use of airstrikes and the deployment of tanks, for the first time since 2002,

and the demolition of residential buildings and civilian infrastructure, displacing 40,000 people.

On 9 February, Israeli operations expanded into Nur Shams camp in Tulkarem, where IDF soldiers shot and killed two Palestinian women, one of whom was pregnant. Two Palestinian children were killed by Israeli soldiers in separate incidents in Jenin and Hebron on 21 February, bringing the total number of children killed to eight across the occupied West Bank since the operation began.

The IDF demolished 23 residential buildings in Jenin refugee camp on 2 February and another 14 in Tulkarm refugee camp on 18 February, stating it was targeting terrorist infrastructure. The Jenin, Tulkarem and Nur Shams refugee camps have been nearly emptied of their residents.

The IDF has also expanded widespread movement restrictions across the occupied West Bank since 21 January, including access to essential services and economic activity. On 23 February, the Israeli Government stated that the IDF will remain in some refugee camps for the coming year and that their residents will not be able to return.

Settler-related violence continued throughout the reporting period. Between 15 and 20 January alone, for example, large groups of Israeli settlers attacked 11 Palestinian towns and villages across the occupied West Bank, injuring 17 Palestinians, including two children, and damaging property.

Palestinian attacks against Israelis also continued. In Palestinian shooting attacks on vehicles in the occupied West Bank, a 10-year-old Israeli child was killed and three Israelis injured on 11 December, and two elderly Israeli women and one policeman were killed and eight people injured on 6 January.

The Security Council, in its resolution 2334 (2016), called upon both parties to refrain from provocative actions, incitement and inflammatory rhetoric. Unfortunately, such acts continued. Hamas officials continue to call for violence and attacks against Israelis and encourage escalation throughout the occupied West Bank. Palestinian officials, social media and media channels continued to glorify the perpetrators of attacks against Israelis. Senior Israeli officials continued to call for the displacement of Palestinians from the Gaza Strip, a return to full-scale war and the re-establishment of settlements in Gaza. Two ministers called on the Prime Minister to “open the gates of hell” on Gaza if all hostages are not released, taking over the entire Strip, removing its population and cutting off electricity, water, and humanitarian assistance. Some Israeli officials continued to call for the annexation of all or parts of the occupied West Bank.

Resolution 2334 (2016) reiterated calls by the Middle East Quartet for “affirmative steps to be taken immediately to reverse the negative trends on the ground that are imperilling the two-State solution” (*ibid.*, para. 4). When the ceasefire came into force on 19 January, the surge in the entry of supplies into Gaza and improved access enabled expanded delivery of life-saving assistance and services across Gaza by United Nations agencies and other humanitarian actors. More than 57,000 metric tons of food was brought into the Gaza Strip in the first month, and more than 1.9 million people have received food parcels since the ceasefire began.

However, since 2 March, the entry of all humanitarian and commercial supplies into Gaza has been halted by the Israeli authorities, severely affecting humanitarian operations. Israel has also cut power to southern Gaza’s desalination plant, limiting clean water access for 600,000 people.

On 1 February, medical evacuations started through Rafah crossing into Egypt. According to the World Health Organization, between 12,000 and 14,000 people, including more than 4,500 children, remain in urgent need of medical evacuation

On 18 February, the World Bank, the European Union, and the United Nations, in consultation with the Palestinian Authority (PA), released the Interim Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment report for Gaza and the occupied West Bank, which estimated \$53.2 billion is needed over the next decade, primarily for Gaza.

On 30 January, Israeli legislation that seeks to prevent the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) from operating in the territory that Israel regards as being part of the State of Israel, which includes East Jerusalem, came into effect. On 18 February, Israeli forces and municipality personnel forcefully entered the UNRWA Kalandia Training Centre in East Jerusalem, fired tear gas and sound bombs in its vicinity and ordered its immediate evacuation, affecting at least 350 students and 30 staff members. Israeli police officers also went to several UNRWA schools in occupied East Jerusalem and ordered their closure.

The PA's financial situation remains precarious. On 12 January, the Israeli Minister of Finance announced the full repayment of debt it claims was owed by the PA to the Israeli Electric Company by transferring \$550 million of the \$1.2 billion of Palestinian clearance revenue that Israel has withheld from the PA since October 2023. President Abbas issued a decree on 10 February cancelling payments by the PA to families of Palestinians killed during or imprisoned following attacks on Israelis. The decree specified that social welfare support based on need will be provided to families through a separate entity.

In resolution 2334 (2016), the Security Council also called upon all States “to distinguish, in their relevant dealings, between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories occupied since 1967” (*ibid.*, para. 5). No new steps are known to have been taken in the reporting period.

Resolution 2334 (2016) also called upon “all parties to continue,” *inter alia*, “to exert collective efforts to launch credible negotiations on all final status issues in the Middle East peace process” (*ibid.*, para. 8).

On 19 January and 17 February, the third and fourth meetings of the Global Alliance for the Implementation of the Two-State Solution were held in Oslo and Cairo, respectively. The meetings continued to advance efforts towards the implementation of the two-State solution, while supporting the ceasefire and hostage release deal.

On 4 March, Egypt hosted an emergency summit of the League of Arab States, which endorsed the Arab Islamic Gaza reconstruction plan prepared by Egypt and the PA.

In conclusion, allow me to share the Secretary-General's observations on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016).

First, the Secretary-General once again strongly condemns the horrific acts of terror by Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups on 7 October 2023 and the continued holding of hostages in Gaza. Hostages must be released immediately and unconditionally. The Secretary-General also strongly condemns the reported ill-treatment of hostages as well as the fact that there are reasonable grounds to believe that the hostages may be subjected to sexual violence and abuse. The Secretary-General reiterates his condemnation of Hamas' abhorrent public displays accompanying the release of living and deceased hostages. While in captivity, hostages must be treated humanely and allowed to receive assistance from the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Second, the Secretary-General again unequivocally condemns the widespread killing and injury of civilians and the destruction of civilian infrastructure in Gaza. Nothing can justify the collective punishment of the Palestinian people. He mourns the United Nations staff killed in Gaza and strongly condemn the killing

of all humanitarian personnel. The Secretary-General reiterates his call for the full investigation of all such incidents and accountability for any violations of international law that may have been committed. He also strongly condemns the reported ill-treatment, including sexual abuse, of Palestinian prisoners and detainees in Israeli detention facilities and recalls that their release must also be carried out in a dignified way. He stresses the importance of ensuring the humane treatment of all individuals deprived of their liberty, including freedom from any form of torture or abuse.

Third, the Secretary-General also condemns indiscriminate attacks and the use of human shields, which are prohibited by international humanitarian law. He urges all parties to respect their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

Fourth, the Secretary-General reiterates his call for a sustained ceasefire and urges the parties to redouble efforts to end human suffering. He commends the efforts of the mediators — Egypt, Qatar and the United States of America — to facilitate the implementation of the deal in full, as well as concerted international efforts, including in the region, to support an end to the war and plan for recovery and reconstruction in Gaza. He rejects the forced displacement of the Palestinian population from any part of the occupied Palestinian territory, which would constitute a grave violation of international human rights and humanitarian law. The Secretary-General strongly rejects any form of ethnic cleansing.

Fifth, the Secretary-General is appalled at the horrific humanitarian situation. Humanitarian aid is not negotiable. While the surge in humanitarian aid has been crucial to saving lives in Gaza, the humanitarian situation remains catastrophic. The United Nations has proven that, with access, the coordinated response can deliver the aid that people need. The Secretary-General strongly condemns the halting of humanitarian assistance into Gaza by Israeli authorities and urges the immediate resumption of humanitarian and commercial deliveries.

Sixth, the escalation of violence in the occupied West Bank is deeply troubling. Alongside the rising death toll, Palestine refugee camps in the northern West Bank are being emptied and are sustaining massive infrastructure damage during Israeli operations. The number of displaced Palestinians continues to rise, and residents continue to be denied the right to return home. The Secretary-General is deeply concerned by any long-term presence of Israeli security forces in the camps, which would further undermine the Palestinian Authority and be contrary to Israel's obligation to end its unlawful continued presence in the occupied Palestinian territory, as affirmed by the International Court of Justice.

Seventh, the Secretary-General urges security forces to exercise maximum restraint and use lethal force only when it is strictly unavoidable to protect life. He strongly condemns all acts of violence against civilians, including acts of terror. The Secretary-General is alarmed by the lethal attacks carried out by Israeli settlers against Palestinians, including sometimes in the proximity and with the support of Israeli security forces, as well as by Palestinians against Israelis. All perpetrators must be held accountable. The continued use of heavy weaponry in the occupied West Bank, including in residential areas, is extremely concerning. The Secretary-General also recalls that Israel, as the occupying Power, has a responsibility to ensure that the civilian population is protected against all acts of violence.

Eighth, the relentless expansion of Israeli settlements is dramatically altering the landscape and demographics of the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Palestinians are increasingly confined into shrinking and disconnected areas, presenting an existential threat to the prospect of a contiguous, viable, independent Palestinian State. The Secretary-General reiterates that settlements have no legal



validity and constitute a flagrant violation of international law. The demolition and seizure of Palestinian-owned structures entail numerous human rights violations and raise concerns about the risk of forcible transfer. The Secretary-General once again urges the Government of Israel to abide by its obligations under international law and recall the findings by the International Court of Justice in its advisory opinion of 19 July 2024, which declared, *inter alia*, that the State of Israel is under an obligation to cease immediately all new settlement activities and to evacuate all settlers from the occupied Palestinian territory.

Ninth, the Secretary-General reiterates his call to the parties for the status quo at the holy sites in Jerusalem to be respected and upheld, taking into account the special and historic role of Jordan.

Tenth, the implementation of two Knesset laws concerning UNRWA could dramatically hinder efforts to ease human suffering. The Secretary-General reiterates that there is no alternative to UNRWA. He condemns the breach of the inviolability of United Nations premises in the occupied Palestinian territory and the attempt to forcibly enter UNRWA schools and to seek their closure. National legislation cannot alter Israel's obligations under international law.

Eleventh, the Secretary-General welcomes ongoing efforts by regional countries, international partners and the Palestinian Authority to plan for Gaza's reconstruction, including the Gaza reconstruction plan endorsed by at the League of Arab States and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. The United Nations will continue to work closely with the Palestinian Authority and all stakeholders to ensure a future for Gaza that provides for protection, recovery and reconstruction for Palestinians to remain in Gaza, and security for Israel. This will require establishing appropriate security and governance frameworks. Gaza and the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, must be treated as one — politically, economically and administratively.

Twelfth, we must work collectively to establish a political framework that outlines tangible, irreversible and time-bound steps. The occupation must end as rapidly as possible. A viable two-State solution, with Israel and Palestine, of which Gaza is an integral part, living side-by-side in peace and security, on the basis of United Nations resolutions, previous agreements and international law, with Jerusalem as the capital of both States, is long overdue. The United Nations will continue to support all efforts towards that goal.

**The President:** I thank Ms. Kaag for her briefing.

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

**Ms. Shea** (United States of America): I thank the Special Coordinator ad interim, Ms. Kaag, for her briefing.

As the United States has consistently said, the future of the Middle East must look different. Fresh thinking is needed for a better tomorrow for Israelis and Palestinians alike.

The stated purpose of this meeting is to report on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016), the adoption of which was a mistake, and the ongoing discussion of which is a distraction from the real threats to international peace and security. Indeed, it is an impediment to the Council's work to address them. Hamas bears full responsibility for the ongoing war in Gaza and for the resumption of hostilities. Every death would have been avoided, had Hamas accepted the bridge proposal that the United States offered last Wednesday. Hamas continues to hold 59 hostages captive, including five Americans. They must be returned to their families immediately.

No country would willingly allow terrorist groups to threaten its people — and Israel is no different. Israel has the right to defend itself from groups that wish to do it harm. As it relates to the West Bank, the United States supports the efforts of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and the Palestinian Authority security forces to root out violent extremists in Jenin and Tulkarm. We welcome the announcement by the Palestinian Authority that it will end the practice of offering cash payments to the families of those who carry out terrorist attacks, which for far too long has incentivized violence against Israeli civilians and set back the prospects of peace. The time for half measures and false promises to end that abhorrent practice has passed.

Hamas has steadfastly refused all attempts to extend the ceasefire in recent weeks, including the bridge proposal that would have provided calm beyond Ramadan and Passover and allowed time to negotiate a framework for a permanent ceasefire. President Trump has made clear that Hamas must release the hostages immediately or there will be hell to pay. That is non-negotiable.

The pillars of America's approach remain resolute: stand with Israel and stand for peace. We recognize ongoing efforts by the IDF to prevent civilian harm. It has been more than 17 months since Hamas started this horrific conflict, upending many lives and causing such great suffering across the region.

The United States calls on the United Nations, and particularly Secretary-General Guterres, to join us in putting pressure on Hamas to end the bloodshed and put down its arms. Calls for both sides to respect the ceasefire display a false equivalency that is counterproductive. Such calls fail to acknowledge that Hamas is guilty of rejecting proposals to extend the ceasefire, and they ignore the reality that Hamas must disarm and play no role in the future of Gaza.

The United States offers condolences to the family of a United Nations staff member who was killed Wednesday in Gaza, and we welcome Israel's investigation into the incident. We also note that Hamas has misused United Nations facilities for far too long, and it is important for the United Nations to speak out about those repeated violations. We expect all parties to comply with international humanitarian law. We recognize Egypt's and Qatar's interest in mediating negotiations, and we look forward to continued discussions with Arab partners on the future of Gaza without Hamas.

We need bold thinking to avoid making the same mistakes in the West Bank, Gaza and further afield. In 2017, President Trump recognized the reality that Jerusalem is Israel's capital, and several other countries did the same. It is time for new thinking on Gaza as well, so that Gazans and the region may enjoy security and prosper. But we must also acknowledge that the Middle East continues to suffer from violence and instability fuelled by Iran and the terrorist proxies that it funds, such as Hamas, Hizbullah and the Houthis. The weakening of terrorist groups, such as Hamas and Hizbullah, provides the countries of the Middle East an opportunity to reshape their region in a way that affords all its people a better path forward. Stronger ties between Israel and its neighbours and an expansion of the Abraham Accords offer an alternative to Iran's malign influence and State sponsorship of terror.

We cannot tolerate a nuclear weapons-capable Iran that funds the destruction and destabilizing terrorism plaguing the region and beyond, but the Islamic regime is capable of ending those conflicts. Just as Hamas could end the war today — this instant — by releasing the hostages and laying down its arms, Iran could choose to join the community of nations by ending its support for terrorist proxy groups and providing the transparency on its nuclear programme that the global community has consistently demanded.

The United States will do its part and is committed to working with its Arab partners and Israel to create a brighter future for all of the region's people.



**Mr. Alfaro de Alba** (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank you very much, Madam President, for convening this meeting. We also thank Ms. Sigrid Kaag, Special Coordinator ad interim for the Middle East Peace Process, for her detailed briefing. We also acknowledge the presence of the representatives of Israel, Jordan and the Observer State of Palestine, who honour us with their participation this morning.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is one of the most protracted and painful of our era, and it is one that has claimed too many lives and that continues to defy international efforts to achieve a lasting peace. This week, the Council has met on three occasions to address various aspects of this conflict and its consequences. That, in and of itself, is a reflection of the complex context facing populations in the West Bank, Gaza and Israel today. It is also an urgent reminder that the solution to this crisis cannot be a military one and that it must be political and comprehensive.

Panama reiterates the urgent need for an end to hostilities, the unconditional release of all hostages and the resumption of political dialogue to reduce differences so that progress can be made towards a credible process aimed at achieving a lasting solution to the conflict. Panama recognizes that resolution 2334 (2016) is part of the international legal framework for resolving this conflict. At the same time, we understand that any implementation of that and other resolutions must always take into account the legitimate security concerns of all parties involved.

For decades, a lack of political will and deferred decisions have deepened mistrust and created an environment conducive to violence that has been exploited by extremism. While resolution 2334 (2016) focuses on the West Bank and East Jerusalem, its principles are equally relevant to stability in other territories, such as Gaza, where the absence of a political solution has facilitated the rise of extremist forces such as Hamas, which has contributed to prolonging violence and aggravated the suffering of civilian populations, preventing progress in the resolution of this conflict with each passing day.

Panama hopes that in the future, Gaza — free from the authority of extremist groups and together with the West Bank and East Jerusalem — can be fully integrated into a territorial and political structure that allows for peaceful coexistence between the peoples of Israel and Palestine, within secure and internationally recognized borders. Panama firmly believes that peaceful coexistence is possible, because our own experience is proof of that. In our country, Jews, Christians, Muslims and those of other faiths live together in harmony and mutual respect, and we hope that that reality will prevail in other parts of the world in the future. Therefore, Panama reiterates that only through a negotiated political solution will it be possible to achieve a just and lasting peace for Israelis and Palestinians that fully guarantees Israel's security and integrity and its right to live in peace.

**Mr. Bonnafont** (France) (*spoke in French*): France thanks the Special Coordinator ad interim for her briefing. The picture is bleak: almost 10 years after the adoption of resolution 2334 (2016), a landmark resolution in our view, almost everything has deteriorated, and the region is experiencing a seemingly endless catastrophe.

Yesterday and the day before yesterday, the Council already had an opportunity to discuss this situation, or rather, two of its most tragic dimensions: the harrowing fate of the Israeli hostages held by Hamas since 7 October 2023 (see S/PV.9882), and the tragic fate of the people of Gaza since the beginning of the Israeli military offensive (see S/PV.9881).

France's position is well known, and I will reiterate it in a few words. Nothing can justify the terrorist attacks committed by Hamas on 7 October. France categorically condemns them. As President Macron has said on a number of occasions, Israel has the right to defend itself, albeit in accordance with international humanitarian law and with the awareness that there is no military solution in Gaza. The January

agreement opened up prospects, with its three phases and its structure, which includes the ceasefire, the release of all hostages, the resumption of humanitarian aid and the initiation of discussions on the future. Forty-two days ushered in the promise of change. Since Israel's resumption of the blockade on humanitarian aid and the launching of a new wide-scale bombing campaign, terror and death prevail in Gaza again. The reason advanced by Israel to justify its about-turn is untenable: delays to the release of the hostages cannot justify the punishment of an entire people. Accordingly, we once again call for the dignified release of all the hostages and for the return of the bodies of the deceased. Hamas must proceed and spare the world the chilling spectacle that it inflicts on freed hostages. What does it gain from that, other than displaying its contempt for life in spectacular fashion? We therefore urge the Israeli Government to unconditionally resume humanitarian aid, to end the bombing, to stay the course of the negotiations, however slow they might be, and to stop responding to cruelty by unleashing of violence. For our part, we stand with those countries — the United States, Qatar and Egypt — that are working tirelessly to get Hamas to resume the releases and the Israeli Government to return to the January process.

The Council must not look away from the other facts that the Secretary-General's report highlights and that Ms. Kaag is reporting to us in accordance with resolution 2334 (2016). To reread the text of the resolution, in particular its operative paragraphs, in the light of the current Israeli policy is to gauge how far off the mark we are. Settlement activity in East Jerusalem and the West Bank Jordan is not stopping; it is being stepped up, becoming increasingly violent and taking place with the active participation of the Israeli security forces. The law exists and was upheld by the International Court of Justice in its advisory opinion of 19 July (see A/78/968): Israel must cease all settlement activity in the occupied territories because it is illegal. As the occupying Power, Israel is duty-bound to prevent violence from being committed by extremist settlers, to protect Palestinian civilians and to preserve the historical status quo at the holy sites. In a nutshell, it must avert any move towards *de facto* annexation of the occupied Palestinian territories. Minister Jean-Noël Barrot said today that France is wholly opposed to any form of annexation, be it in the West Bank or Gaza.

The law demands it, as does political common sense: the spiral of violence that was set in train since 7 October 2023, which is the culmination of a gradual deterioration in recent years, is not only wreaking destruction and killing innocent civilians; it is also fuelling hatred on both sides and making any prospect of peace more remote. Who reasonably thinks that a consensual solution will emerge from this nightmare? Who thinks that a negotiated solution between Israelis and Palestinians can succeed when minds are trapped in this cycle of violence? The mindset of escalation and of rejection of the Other is what must be shattered. That is why, for months on end, France has been striving with all countries, but first and foremost Arab countries, to arrive at a mechanism that, taking a ceasefire on January terms as its starting point, will rekindle dialogue. The international conference on the two-State solution was requested by an overwhelming majority of the General Assembly on 3 December 2024. France is working actively with Saudi Arabia on its preparation. At the same time, we are pinning our hopes on the Gaza reconstruction conference that Egypt is working on with the League of Arab States.

Lastly, it is the duty of the Council to be robust in reasserting that the United Nations — our shared home — must be respected. France expresses its alarm at the strikes on United Nations buildings. The attack caused a number of casualties and claimed one life. Two French nationals — United Nations staff members — sustained serious injuries. France extends its condolences to the United Nations, the victims and their families. It underscores that United Nations facilities and personnel must absolutely be protected from attack. Furthermore, France calls for an end to the

unfounded accusations that the United Nations, its bodies and its agencies are not fulfilling their remit of protecting the most vulnerable, are not upholding the law, are not affording relief to victims and are not condemning acts of terrorism and violations of humanitarian law. The United Nations is fulfilling its remit. Its staff are doing so to the best of their ability and all too often are paying the ultimate price. Let us ensure that all the lives of the Israeli, Palestinian and United Nations victims were not sacrificed in vain.

**Mr. Fu Cong** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank the Special Coordinator ad interim, Ms. Kaag, for her briefing and, through her, I wish to commend Secretary-General Guterres for the position he has taken on the Palestinian-Israeli issue.

The resumed fighting in Gaza has sparked widespread concern and apprehension in the international community. Israel began wide-scale air strikes on 17 March, resumed its ground offensive and occupied central Gaza. Israel also cut off access to humanitarian aid and subsequently to electricity, causing massive loss of life and exacerbating the already grave humanitarian catastrophe. China is gravely concerned at the breakdown of the hard-won ceasefire. The stark contrast between 15 months of bloody conflict and the 42-day ceasefire speaks volumes: renewed fighting is not the right way to bring the hostages back; it leads only to more killings. Securing a lasting ceasefire is the best way of saving lives and bringing the hostages home and is an overriding priority. We urge Israel to abandon its obsession with the use of force, immediately cease its military operations against Gaza and lift the blockade on the entry of humanitarian supplies to Gaza. It is hoped that the guarantors of the ceasefire agreement will act impartially and responsibly to promote the consistent implementation of the three-phase ceasefire agreement so that the ceasefire holds in Gaza.

With Gaza ablaze as war rages, the situation in the West Bank is equally critical. Over the past year or so, Israel has been expanding its settlements in the West Bank on a massive scale, demolishing many Palestinian homes and condoning settler violence. In particular, over the past two months ongoing Israeli military operations have used force to clear multiple refugee camps, displacing more than 40,000 people. Settlement activity violates international law and resolution 2334 (2016). Israel should cease its attacks on the West Bank, stop settlement activity and effectively curb settler violence.

China wishes to reiterate that implementing the two-State solution is the only viable way of resolving the Palestinian question. The international community should step up its efforts to promote the political process entailing a two-State solution and provide robust guarantees to that end. China supports the Gaza recovery and reconstruction plan jointly initiated by Egypt and other Arab States and supports a start to reconstruction in accordance with the principle of Palestinians governing Palestine. China opposes the forced removal of the Palestinian people from Gaza and any attempt to annex the West Bank and Gaza.

Elsewhere in the Middle East tensions are also rising. Peace and stability remain in peril. Israeli forces have occupied five sites in southern Lebanon, flouting resolution 1701 (2006) and violating Lebanese sovereignty and territorial integrity. Israel's recent frequent air strikes against Syria have also violated Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity. China urges Israel to withdraw from Syria and Lebanon without delay.

The political transition in Syria has reached a critical juncture. It is incumbent upon the Syrian interim authorities to ensure that the political process is inclusive and to duly fulfil their obligations under international law, including with regard to counter-terrorism. China expresses concern at the renewed escalation in Yemen and Red Sea and calls on the countries concerned to stop their air strikes against Yemen

and to scrupulously respect Yemen's sovereignty, security and territory integrity. The Houthis should end any attacks against, and harassment of, commercial vessels and maintain safe navigation routes in the Red Sea.

The Iranian nuclear issue has once again come to a critical crossroads. Proper handling of the Iranian nuclear issue is crucial to peace and stability in the Middle East. History and reality have time and again proven the futility of sanctions, pressure and the threat of force. Only dialogue and consultation provide the right way forward.

On 14 March, a successful meeting of China, Russia and Iran on the Iranian nuclear issue was held in Beijing and a joint statement was issued. Foreign Minister Wang Yi, during his meeting with the representatives of Russia and Iran, put forward China's five-point proposal on the proper settlement of the Iranian nuclear issue in the new context, calling for adherence to the peaceful settlement of disputes through political and diplomatic means and the creation of conditions for the resumption of dialogue and negotiation and cautioning against any action that may escalate the situation. China stands ready to work with all parties for a just, balanced and sustainable solution to the Iranian nuclear issue, uphold the international nuclear non-proliferation regime and promote regional and international peace and stability.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate that the question of Palestine is at the heart of the Middle East issue. Gaza must not become a battleground for political games. Civilian lives must not be sacrificed for political calculations. A lasting ceasefire must be achieved in Gaza. China supports the Security Council in taking all necessary actions to that end.

**The President:** Before giving the floor to the representative of Pakistan, as I understand that this is the last meeting of Ambassador Munir Akram in the Security Council, allow me to pay tribute to our dear colleague on the completion of his tenure as the Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations. I know I speak for all our colleagues when I thank him for his cooperation and dedication to the work of the Security Council and the United Nations. We will all miss his wisdom, wit and warmth. We wish him the very best in his future endeavours.

**Mr. Akram (Pakistan):** I thank you, Madam President, for those kind words. I hope they enjoy consensus in the Council.

Pakistan thanks Special Coordinator ad interim Sigrid Kaag for her comprehensive briefing. And we endorse the Secretary-General's conclusions and recommendations as conveyed by the Special Coordinator in her presentation.

We are meeting again to review the consequences of what we all know and understand is a process of ethnic cleansing and, as the International Court of Justice has said, "probable genocide". More than 50,000 innocent Palestinians, mostly women and children, have been killed in Gaza, and more than 100,000 have been injured. Since Israel broke the Gaza ceasefire on Tuesday, 591 Palestinians, including 200 children, have been killed and 1,042 injured in the Gaza Strip.

Pakistan strongly condemns Israel's latest escalation, including its renewed bombardment of Gaza and its systematic block of humanitarian assistance, as well its decision to cut off the power supply, which threatens water access in the Palestinian territories.

More than 90 per cent of Gaza's population faces starvation owing to Israel's blockade. Newborn babies are reportedly dying. Civilian structures — hospitals, schools and mosques — are being destroyed on the pretext of targeting combatants. Every principle of international law, including international humanitarian law, has been violated. But Israel has vowed to continue the slaughter irrespective of its consequences for Palestinian civilians. It is doing so with impunity — knowing well

that the world and the Security Council will be deterred from taking any action to enforce its resolutions calling for a ceasefire and an end to the mounting atrocities.

The Gaza genocide is now being extended to the West Bank. Israel's large-scale military operations, which began in Jenin and other areas of the northern West Bank on 21 January have expanded to Nur Shams, Tulkarm and Jenin camps, causing the largest population displacement since 1967. Daily military raids, settler violence and illegal land annexations are part of a systematic effort to ethnically cleanse the Palestinian people in the West Bank.

According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, between 7 October 2023 and 4 March 2025, 896 Palestinians, including children and women, were killed in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and 90 Palestinians, since the start of this year. The ongoing expansion of illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem flagrantly violates international law and resolution 2334 (2016) and constitutes a clear breach of the Charter of the United Nations. Security Council resolutions are binding and cannot be ignored or selectively observed.

The Security Council and the world community cannot sit back and watch that ongoing ethnic cleansing. A failure to halt that brutal war will unleash the worst instincts of powerful and predatory States; shred the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, designed to prevent aggression and the scourge of war; and create a Hobbesian hell of conflict and chaos. The elected members of the Security Council, which have a direct mandate from the General Assembly to work for peace and security and the defence of the Charter of the United Nations, must again come forward to initiate concrete measures to end that cruel war and restore the conditions for a durable peace in the Middle East. The Palestine issue is the heart of all the conflicts that are raging in the Middle East.

To address the Palestine question, the Security Council can and must take the following decisions.

First, we must demand that Israel immediately halt its military attacks in Gaza and its military operations and the settler violence on the West Bank, and that an indefinite and continuous ceasefire be established.

Secondly, the Israeli blockade of humanitarian supplies to Gaza must be ended and full access provided to the United Nations and other humanitarian agencies and organizations. The starvation of civilians cannot be used as a weapon of war.

Thirdly, negotiations should be resumed to implement the second and third phases of the ceasefire agreement of 12 January, including for the release of hostages and the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza. The ceasefire should be observed until those negotiations are concluded on the second and third phases of the agreement, as also envisaged in resolution 2735 (2024). We hope that the mediators — Qatar, Egypt and the United States — will work to secure the full potential of the 12 January agreement.

Fourthly, serious and high-level consideration should be accorded by all major partners to the Arab and Organization of Islamic Cooperation plan for the recovery and reconstruction of Gaza. The plan offers a practical and realistic path for economic and social rehabilitation and governance in Gaza, and for peace between the Palestinians and Israel.

Fifthly, simultaneously, a credible and irreversible political process must be launched to promote the two-State solution, including the establishment of an independent and sovereign Palestinian State within the pre-June 1967 borders, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.



If we can agree to initiate those steps, particularly if we can halt Israel's military campaign, sustain a ceasefire and end the humanitarian crisis, it would create conditions conducive to the success of the endeavour for a two-State solution at the conference co-chaired by Saudi Arabia and France, to be held in June. That is an outcome that the world should want and that should enjoy consensus within the Security Council.

**Mr. Sekeris** (Greece): I would like to thank Ms. Sigrid Kaag for her briefing today. We share our grief for the United Nations Office for Project Services staff member who died these past days and express our sincere condolences to his family and the United Nations. We hope for the speedy recovery of the other five United Nations personnel who were seriously injured.

The world craves peace in Gaza. That is the main takeaway from our discussions this week. Israelis deserve peace. Palestinians deserve peace. The ceasefire and hostage release agreement in Gaza demonstrated during its short, but crucial lifespan that progress is possible when the parties are bold enough to commit to it. The flow of humanitarian aid was greatly improved, and Israel allowed the return of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians to northern Gaza, while the guns were widely silenced. However, the resumption of hostilities and the alarming death toll on civilians that has ensued is cause for grave concern.

Greece has repeatedly condemned the 7 October terrorist attacks perpetrated by Hamas, as well as the ongoing detention and cruel and inhumane treatment of its hostages. We reiterate our demand for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages, unequivocally condemning Hamas' terror.

It is the people of Gaza who suffer in the face of Hamas' intransigence and Israel's relaunch of operations. We echo the calls for the crossings to open as soon as possible and for humanitarian aid to flow again, at scale and unhindered, in Gaza. The suffering of civilians must end. At this critical juncture, we call for the immediate and full implementation of the ceasefire agreement.

In the meantime, we urgently call for the unconditional, massive and unhindered delivery of humanitarian aid at scale and the restoration of access to electricity and water. While the unhindered and continuous flow of aid into all parts of Gaza should remain a priority, the role of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East remains pivotal and indispensable.

Greece is a staunch proponent of international law, which frames and guides its foreign policy. In line with its principles, we call for respect for the 1949 Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. We recall that, as outlined in resolution 2334 (2016), acquisition of territory by force is inadmissible by international law.

We deplore the increase in settlement activity in the West Bank. Such attempts are contrary to international law and the relevant Security Council resolutions and have no legal validity. The cessation of settlement activity is essential for salvaging the two-State solution. We are particularly concerned about reported escalation of violence in the West Bank and the displacement of some 40,000 people, particularly from refugee camps in the north. Attacks on civilians, including children, as well as on civilian infrastructure, constitute violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law. The reported demolition and seizure of Palestinian-owned structures is also concerning.

As this is the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, soon to be followed by Easter for all Christian denominations, we are reminded of the importance of the special status quo of the holy sites in Jerusalem. Considering the universal importance of the holy sites, Greece reaffirms its deep interest in the preservation of the status quo.



*(spoke in French)*

Escalation would be a dangerous choice for any party, especially in this volatile region. Lebanon is struggling to get back on its feet, the security situation in Syria remains volatile, and regional stability seems precarious. In that context, the laudable efforts of the United States, Egypt and Qatar to bring the parties back to the negotiating table must be crowned with success, and the political process must be revitalized in order to achieve a two-State solution, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions, while recognizing Israel's right to exist in peace and security. We therefore look forward to the international conference to be held in New York this summer, co-chaired by France and Saudi Arabia.

In the same spirit, the Arab plan for the recovery and reconstruction of Gaza put forward by Egypt is a constructive proposal, and Greece looks forward to participating in the development of such activities — not least within the framework of the forthcoming international conference on reconstruction, to be held in Cairo this spring.

A strengthened and reformed Palestinian Authority, able to exercise effective governance in the West Bank and possibly Gaza, must be at the heart of our post-war efforts. For the Israeli hostages and the Palestinian people, who all hope to return home safely, we must redouble our efforts for peace. We must replace their despair with hope, while combating the root causes of radicalization. Hope can be reborn, provided that we have the courage to take the path of peace.

**Mr. Žbogar** (Slovenia): I thank Special Coordinator ad interim Sigrid Kaag for her briefing.

Upon receiving the Nobel Peace Prize in 1994, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin stated, “There is only one radical means for sanctifying human life ... The one radical solution is [a real] peace.” His words remain as valid today as they were back then.

We have been witnessing what many are calling the “Gazafication” of the West Bank, in particular through the Iron Wall operation. That campaign has led to the most extensive destruction and displacement in the West Bank since 1967. Looking at the pictures of destruction in the northern West Bank, one might think they were taken in Gaza. Military operations, particularly in Jenin and in other refugee camps, are deeply disturbing. We condemn the killing of civilians, including children and, recently, a pregnant woman. We call on the Israeli Government to halt these large-scale military operations, as well as the pattern of destruction, demolitions and the unlawful use of force against civilians.

It is not only the sights, but also the dynamics that remind us of Gaza: violence is spreading like wildfire, forced displacement is unfolding and a humanitarian crisis is advancing across the West Bank. That is intertwined with increased checkpoints and movement restrictions, fragmenting Palestinian communities and restricting access to essential services, and it is compounded by settler violence. The one radical solution is a real peace.

We underline Slovenia's support for the ceasefire agreement in Gaza, in line with resolution 2735 (2024). We note with great concern that, rather than moving towards the next phases of its implementation, the situation has deteriorated. A spillover of violence from Gaza has already taken place in the West Bank, and there are growing limitations — to the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, to the Palestinian Authority, to the political process and the viability of two-State solution, to the work of non-governmental organizations and to civic space, including free speech, as observed through the raids on the Educational Bookshop.

We are deeply alarmed by the overall patterns observed in the West Bank, Israel and, more broadly, in the trajectory of the Israel-Palestine question. We once again underline our steadfast rejection of annexation and of deportation of Palestinians and call for an end to the occupation and the return of displaced persons to their homes. Resolution 2334 (2016) is legally binding and must be implemented. The one radical solution is a real peace.

Finally, we echo High Commissioner Türk's words that any plan for a better future must deal with the past. Therefore, accountability is crucial. Killings must be investigated and perpetrators held to account. We would value and appreciate being briefed on the progress of investigations of numerous crimes committed in Gaza against civilians and humanitarian staff. The same goes for all human rights violations and abuses that have taken place in Gaza and Israel. Pages of history already written, including those contained in the reports of accountability mechanisms, such as the "More than a human can bear" report by the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel (A/HRC/58/CRP.6) must be a wake-up call for a new chapter to take place — a radical future, the one of a real peace, for Israelis and Palestinians alike.

**Mr. Kariuki** (United Kingdom): I thank Special Coordinator ad interim Kaag for her briefing.

We welcome this opportunity to discuss the evolving situation in the occupied Palestinian territories. First, I will address recent developments in Gaza.

This week saw more bloodshed return to the Gaza Strip. It is appalling that hundreds of Palestinians have been killed following Israeli strikes since 18 March. We strongly oppose Israel's resumption of hostilities. Escalation and endless violence are in nobody's interests. We are outraged that a United Nations compound in Gaza was hit on Wednesday morning. Our thoughts are with the victims and their families. There must be a full investigation into what happened. We urge all parties to return to dialogue and to implement the ceasefire agreement in full. That must include the return of the 59 hostages who have been cruelly held by Hamas for more than 500 days. As we said in the Council yesterday (see S/PV.9882), Hamas must be held accountable for their depraved actions. We also call on Israel to immediately restore humanitarian access and electricity to Gaza. Refusing to do so risks breaching international humanitarian law.

Secondly, we must look to the future and redouble our efforts to secure long-term peace for Israelis and Palestinians. That means a credible plan to allow Palestinians in Gaza to return home and rebuild their lives, with Hamas removed from power. To be clear, we oppose any attempt to forcibly annex land in Gaza. We welcome the Arab initiative of a recovery and reconstruction plan for Gaza, and we urge all parties to engage constructively with it. Sustainable peace also means addressing worrisome developments in the West Bank. We are seriously concerned by the scale of the Israeli military operation in the West Bank and the displacement of nearly 40,000 Palestinian refugees.

We recognize Israel's right to self-defence but civilians must be protected, and Israel must ensure its operations are proportionate to the threat posed. Israel must halt settlements, which are illegal and undermine the viability of a Palestinian State and the security of both Israelis and Palestinians. Violent settlers must be held to account. The United Kingdom has introduced three rounds of sanctions on violent settlers and their supporters to ensure accountability for abuses of human rights, in the absence of sufficient Israeli action. We will consider all further options.

Reports of the killing of Palestinian civilians in the West Bank, including children, are abhorrent. The Israel Defense Forces must take all precautions to prevent

civilian deaths and must investigate civilian deaths thoroughly and demonstrate full accountability to the law.

The level of restrictions on Palestinian movement in the West Bank are crippling. They only fuel further instability. It is important, especially during the month of Ramadan, that religious freedoms be respected.

Restrictive visa and registration processes are also deeply concerning. Israel must ensure that the United Nations, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, can provide essential humanitarian and service delivery in a safe and secure environment.

Seventeen months on from the dreadful attacks of 7 October 2023, we urge all parties to implement the ceasefire agreement in full and to work towards a two-State solution, with a safe and secure Israel alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian State. That is the best way to deliver a peaceful future for Israelis and Palestinians alike.

**Mr. Hwang** (Republic of Korea): I would also like to thank Special Coordinator ad interim Sigrid Kaag for her comprehensive briefing.

We are now awaiting Eid al-Fitr, one of the biggest holidays for Muslims around the world, including those in Palestine. When this year's Ramadan started, a month ago, we were filled with both hope and anxiety that the hard-won ceasefire in Gaza could, and should, be extended. However, we are shocked and saddened that a renewed offensive is endangering Palestinian civilians in Gaza again.

We are also heading towards this year's Passover, commemorating the anniversary of the exodus of the Jewish people. It is deeply regrettable that the families of hostages still held in Gaza are losing hope that they will be able to spend this year's holiday with their loved ones.

Since the resumption of the offensive in Gaza, earlier this week, hundreds of Palestinians, as well as a United Nations staff member, have lost their lives. At the same time, 59 Israeli hostages are still being held by Hamas, many of whom are presumed dead. As such, we call on the parties to this conflict to prioritize innocent people's lives and go back to negotiations to secure a return to the ceasefire and the release of the hostages.

While the international community is horrified by the recent resumption of casualties and destruction in Gaza, we should not look away from the grim situation in the West Bank that has been constantly deteriorating. We are seriously concerned by the ongoing Israeli operations in the northern West Bank, which have displaced more than 40,000 Palestinians in only two months. It is disturbing that, since 21 January, when Israel commenced military operations there, more than 70 Palestinians have been killed.

We are also alarmed by the ongoing expansion of settlements, contrary to resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly, as well as international law, combined with persistent violence by settlers and the demolition of Palestinian homes.

We are deeply concerned that the recent report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees detailed significant expansion of settlements in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and pointed out how Israel's gradual transfer of powers over the occupied Palestinian territory to the Israeli civilian authorities is consolidating that worrisome trend.

The ongoing violence and vandalism by Israeli settlers against Palestinian civilians and their property, often with total impunity under the protection of Israeli forces, are unacceptable. Those unjustifiable acts — including the targeting of

livestock and olive trees — are negatively affecting the livelihoods of Palestinians and driving them off their land, changing the demographic composition of the West Bank.

Resolution 2334 (2016), adopted in 2016, was a milestone Security Council resolution. It provides a number of important elements, including the cessation of settlement activities and immediate steps to prevent all acts of violence against civilians, based on international humanitarian law, which prohibits an occupying Power from imposing permanent changes on the occupied territory. In that regard, it is regrettable that, according to UNHCR, the number of Israeli settlers in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, already exceeds 700,000. Also troubling is the fact that some Israeli leaders have recently advocated for re-establishing settlements in the Gaza Strip as well.

We note with deep concern that, since the horrendous terrorist attacks by Hamas on 7 October 2023, opposition to the vision of the two-State solution has increased in Israel, as demonstrated by last year's overwhelming approval in the Israeli Knesset of a rejection of Palestinian statehood. However, we need to acknowledge that sustainable peace and stability can be achieved only when both the legitimate aspirations of Palestinians and the legitimate security concerns of Israelis are met simultaneously. Therefore, the Republic of Korea reaffirms its belief that the two-State solution — with two democratic States, living side by side in peace — is the only viable option to achieve a just and durable peace. We encourage both Israel and the Palestinians to recognize that proposition as being attainable.

**Ms. Karim** (Sierra Leone): I would like to thank Ms. Sigrid Kaag for her comprehensive briefing on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016) and the current situation unfolding in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

The provisions of resolution 2334 (2016) are unequivocal in outlining Israel's legal obligation to protect all civilians. They specifically condemn actions aimed at altering the demographic composition of Palestinian territories, including the construction and expansion of settlements, home demolitions and the displacement of Palestinian civilians, all of which constitute violations of international law. Those actions represent a significant obstacle to peace and the two-State solution.

We regret that this reporting period saw a significant escalation of tensions in the West Bank. Israel's Operation Iron Wall, which began around the same time as the most recent — but now breached — Gaza ceasefire in January, has resulted in intensified military operations in heavily populated areas in Tulkarm, Jenin, Nur Shams, Tubas and other areas. While Israel has reported that those operations are in response to militant activity, the military actions, combined with settler violence, raids and confrontations between Israelis and Palestinians, have devastated refugee camps and communities. That has resulted in the tragic loss of lives, including those of children, and displaced tens of thousands of civilians. That represents the largest population displacement in the northern West Bank since the 1967 war.

A military solution will not resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as decades of bombings, air strikes, and terror attacks have demonstrated. Israel's violation of the Gaza ceasefire agreement and Hamas' recent rocket attacks into Israel can only exacerbate an already fragile situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, plunging the civilian population further into devastation and suffering. Most troublingly, history has shown that such actions fuel continuous cycles of hatred and violence, with deadly consequences for both Israel and Palestine and for the wider region.

Despite those seemingly intractable challenges, our goal should remain to define a path towards a peaceful resolution of this conflict that ensures the safety of all civilians, the release of all hostages, unimpeded humanitarian assistance and a political horizon in line with international law.

With that in mind, we make the following three points.

First, we remain deeply concerned that, as the humanitarian needs in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip grow, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the main humanitarian organization in the territory, is facing severe security, administrative and operational challenges that hinder its ability to serve the thousands of civilians reliant on its assistance. Despite Israeli restrictions on humanitarian aid to Gaza, UNRWA and other agencies, including the World Food Programme and UNICEF, continue to provide life-saving food, water, medical care and sanitation. In that regard, we call for the immediate reopening of all humanitarian aid corridors. We also condemn the killing of UNRWA employees and one United Nations Office for Project Services staff member. Noting the statement by the Secretary-General's spokesperson that the locations of United Nations facilities in Gaza are well known to all parties, we call on all parties to respect and protect United Nations and humanitarian aid workers, in accordance with international humanitarian law. Simultaneously, we urge the international community to bolster support for humanitarian and reconstruction efforts in Gaza and the West Bank.

Secondly, Sierra Leone recalls General Assembly resolution ES-10/24, of 18 September 2024, which addressed the advisory opinion issued by the International Court of Justice on the *Legal consequences arising from Israel's policies and practices in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem* (see A/78/968). That resolution calls for an end to all actions that harm the civilian population in the occupied territories and undermine the two-State solution. We urge the parties to refrain from unilateral actions, provocations, incitement and inflammatory rhetoric, which erode trust, hinder dialogue and obstruct the path to negotiations. Israeli settlement expansion in the West Bank and the demolition of Palestinian homes must cease immediately.

Thirdly, we emphasize the critical importance of revitalizing the political process, which will undoubtedly pave the way for a negotiated two-State solution, promote sustainable development and foster a just and lasting peace in the region. In that context, the international conference to be co-chaired by France and Saudi Arabia in June 2025 offers a crucial opportunity to consolidate positions and agree on concrete measures to establish a durable political and security framework for the region. We also remain hopeful for the recovery and reconstruction of Gaza, guided by the proposal made by the League of Arab States in Cairo. The Palestinian Authority must be supported in its efforts to build a safe and prosperous State of Palestine that lives in peaceful coexistence with Israel.

In conclusion, let me reiterate that the call for all parties to act in accordance with international law, including international humanitarian law and the relevant Security Council resolutions, is not a mere formality. It is a reminder of each Member State's duty to uphold the principles of humanity, justice and accountability and to do so consistently, without selectivity or double standards.

**Mr. Osman** (Somalia): I wish to express our sincere appreciation to the Special Coordinator ad interim, Ms. Sigrid Kaag, for her comprehensive briefing, and Somalia fully supports the Secretary-General's report.

Recent days have brought devastating developments that eclipse our darkest predictions. The spiral of violence in Gaza and the West Bank has reached catastrophic levels, with the past 48 hours marking an especially tragic escalation. Overnight strikes have claimed innocent lives — families, asleep in their beds, have been torn apart. Many victims still lie beneath the rubble of Tuesday's attacks, their fate unknown.



We are deeply disturbed by the continued targeting of United Nations personnel and facilities. The killing of one staff member of the United Nations Office for Project Services and multiple personnel of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East represents an unconscionable violation of international humanitarian law. Those dedicated humanitarian workers, serving under the United Nations flag, should never become casualties of conflict. The targeting of United Nations premises, which serve as civilian shelters and humanitarian aid distribution centres, must be investigated, and the perpetrators must be held accountable.

Since 2 March, we have witnessed an alarming deterioration in the humanitarian situation in Gaza and the West Bank. The flow of essential aid has virtually ceased, leaving Gaza cut off from basic necessities such as food, fuel, power and medical supplies. Let us be clear: international law mandates Israel, as the occupying Power, to ensure civilian access to those fundamental necessities. The timing of the blockade — during the holy month of Ramadan — is compounding an already critical situation. The statistics are stark: merely 10 per cent of Gaza's population has access to clean water, and the territory's sole desalination facility has ceased operating owing to the power shortages. Moreover, Palestinians must be allowed to observe the sacred final 10 days of Ramadan in the Al-Aqsa Al-Sharif Mosque, as is their right. We firmly reject any use of humanitarian aid as a negotiating tool and the deployment of starvation as a military strategy. Such actions represent a clear breach of international humanitarian law and fundamental human dignity.

The situation in the West Bank continues to deteriorate, marked by the persistent violations of resolution 2334 (2016). The acceleration of settlement expansion, demolitions and evictions directly contravenes the resolution's provisions. My Mission strongly condemns the closure of schools run by UNRWA and the terrorizing of students and UNRWA staff, as reported by Ms. Kaag. Those actions, coupled with increasing settler violence and the establishment of new outposts, are a violation of international law and a deliberate attempt to undermine the viability of the two-State solution. The Council and the international community cannot remain silent as those violations of resolution 2334 (2016) continue unabated, threatening the territorial contiguity of the future Palestinian State.

We must present a united front against genocide, forced demographic changes, ethnic cleansing, displacements of Palestinian communities and attempts to annex territories in Gaza and the West Bank. If there is a true commitment to sustainable peace, international law must be upheld, and that includes putting an immediate halt to all those violations.

The way forwards demands three critical steps.

First, there must be an immediate restoration of unrestricted humanitarian access, and the severe funding shortfall — currently at a mere 4 per cent of required resources — must be addressed. That must include guaranteeing the protection of humanitarian workers and United Nations personnel.

Secondly, a swift return to a ceasefire and a complete cessation of hostilities must be ensured. All parties must fully implement resolution 2735 (2024) and engage constructively with the mediators from Egypt, Qatar and the United States to complete the subsequent phases of the ceasefire agreement.

Lastly, only the establishment of a free and sovereign Palestinian State, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, in accordance with the relevant resolutions, can provide a lasting solution to this enduring conflict. My delegation remains committed to those endeavours and will continue to work towards achieving a just and lasting peace in the region.



**Mr. Bendjama** (Algeria): At the outset, I would like to thank the Special Coordinator ad interim, Ms. Sigrid Kaag, for her briefing.

While we began to discuss the reconstruction of Gaza and the plan endorsed by both the League of Arab States and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and to trigger efforts aimed at mobilizing financial resources for its realization, in prospect of the upcoming meeting in Cairo, the Israeli occupying Power, as expected, has taken a different approach. They have resumed their aggression. They have resumed their indiscriminate bombardment of Gaza. They have blatantly breached the ceasefire agreement, completely disregarding their commitments and the mediators, who are also the guarantors of the agreement. The Israeli Minister of Defence warns of the “total destruction” of Gaza. In fact, that should not be surprising, as peace has never been their priority, or part of their agenda. On the contrary, constant instability and war are their objectives.

Images of horrors that we once thought were part of history, following the ceasefire agreement sealed in January, are now resurfacing. People in Gaza are just terrified, helpless and devastated. In just one night, last Wednesday, more than 400 people were killed in Gaza, including 174 children, 89 women and 32 elderly individuals. More than 500 people were injured, dying by the minute from the lack of medical equipment after 18 months of aggression and blockade. Those figures should be added to the more than 48,000 Palestinians — among them 17,000 children, 12,000 women and 2,000 elderly people — killed since 7 October 2023.

The Israeli occupying forces are also targeting those who have chosen to serve Palestinian civilians and uphold humanity — I am referring to aid workers. In recent days, one staff member from the United Nations Office for Project Services and five workers from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East were killed. Those victims were considered legitimate targets by the Israeli occupying forces. Such barbarity serves as a grim reminder of why we, the international community, established international humanitarian law. However, for the Israeli occupying Power, international law and international humanitarian law are meaningless.

Let me be clear: the protection of civilians is not an option; it is an obligation. Facilitating access to humanitarian aid is not an option; it is an obligation. Respecting principles such as distinction and proportionality is not an option; it is an obligation. All parties must abide by international humanitarian law and comply with their commitments, as agreed in the ceasefire agreement and reflected in resolution 2735 (2024). The ceasefire must continue, and all phases of the deal must be implemented towards a permanent and complete ceasefire. When it comes to respecting international law, there must be no double standard. Every single rule must be respected by all.

The Israeli genocidal tactics are not limited to Gaza but are obvious throughout the entire occupying Palestinian territories. The Israeli occupying authorities do not deny or conceal their objective: the annihilation of the prospect of the Palestinian State and the ejection of the Palestinian people from their homeland. And the Israeli authority’s objective in the West Bank, specifically, is clear: to establish total sovereignty over it. Its *modus operandi* is also well known: the killing of Palestinian civilians, the demolition of their homes, displacement, dispossession and, finally, settlement. More than 40,000 people have been forcibly displaced in the past two months in the West Bank. Refugee camps in Jenin and Tulkarm are now literally empty of their residents, who were refugees protected by international humanitarian law.

Hundreds of houses have been destroyed. Five hundred houses and civilian infrastructure have been demolished in Jenin. The dispossession of Palestinian land

has reached unprecedented levels. And recently, the Israeli authorities announced the evacuation of lands west of Jenin for the first time since the Oslo Accords.

In the West Bank and since 7 October 2023, nearly 900 Palestinians, including 180 children, have been killed and 4,000 have been injured. At the same time, more than 10,000 housing units are being built for Israeli settlers, and 50 Israeli outposts have been constructed — an unprecedented number. Settler violence continues with total impunity. And reports document an average of 120 incidents of settler violence in the West Bank every month. Those are blatant violations of United Nations resolutions, in particular resolution 2334 (2016). We must ask ourselves honestly: is that the behaviour of a party that seeks peace?

The source of suffering in the occupied Palestinian territories for all parties, for all of us, is the prolonged Israeli occupation of Arab land. One cannot occupy a territory, deny its people their rights, humiliate them and take their lives and expect to achieve security. True security can be attained only through diplomatic means and dialogue and by recognizing the rights of the Palestinian people. Unfortunately, the Israeli occupying authorities have chosen a different path and are trying to create a new reality in the territories that would make the establishment of a Palestinian State impossible.

Israel is a United Nations Member that is openly challenging the collective will of the international community, the will of the Security Council, as no other Member has in history. When will we rise to the level of our obligations? When will we impose respect for and the implementation of our collective decisions to establish a Palestinian State with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital?

**Mr. Polyanskiy** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to thank Ms. Sigrid Kaag, Special Coordinator ad interim for the Middle East Peace Process, for her detailed briefing on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016). Unfortunately, as became clear from her statement, there is still no progress on this issue.

Today is the third time this week that we have had the opportunity to discuss the situation in the Gaza Strip against the background of the resumed Israeli military operation there. Today our focus is the ongoing operations by Israeli forces and clashes between locals and settlers in the West Bank, which risks repeating the Gaza scenario.

The scope of operation Iron Wall is broadening, with heavy weaponry, including tanks, being used there for the first time in two decades. One person was killed and several were wounded as a result of an Israel Defense Forces raid on the Al-Ain refugee camp, in Nablus province. One of the prisoners, who had been released under the latest deal between Hamas and Israel, succumbed to his wounds and died in Bayt Jala. From November 2023 to 21 October 2024, a total of 612 Palestinians and 24 Israelis were killed in the West Bank.

There is an ongoing systemic destruction of Palestinian dwellings. In the Jenin refugee camp alone, 66 houses were demolished by the Israeli authorities in just one day, which Fatah has already called an ethnic cleansing. Since the beginning of the operation, 40,000 refugees have had to leave their temporary homes. There are greater restrictions at checkpoints in the West Bank, and it has become much more difficult for people to get to markets, offices and medical and educational facilities.

In parallel, senior Israeli officials are voicing their plans to fully annex the territory of what they call historic Judea and Samaria. Twelve hectares of land have been annexed in the southern part of Jalbun, Jenin governorate, and the Israeli authorities notified Ramallah of that. In total, about 700,000 Israeli settlers live among the 2.7 million Palestinians in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, which was

captured in 1967 by Israel. Over the past year, plans were approved to build tens of thousands of new residential units there.

All of those steps are ultimately aimed at undermining the two-State solution, which is openly opposed in the Knesset. We call on Israel to immediately cease all settlement activity, to withdraw all settlers, to stop the forced displacement of Palestinians and to prevent attacks against them by settlers and law enforcement officials.

What is happening in the West Bank is a perfect illustration of the fact that there is no alternative to political solutions to conflicts. We have a paradoxical situation here, wherein Israel, wishing to ensure security for its citizens, continues settling Palestinian land, thus provoking hatred on the part of the Arab people who have been living here for centuries. And their violence is met by the Israelis with ever increasing cruelty and accelerated settlement, which perpetuates the vicious circle.

Given that Israel is using brute force almost exclusively to ensure its security, we should not be surprised that radical movements are extremely popular among ordinary Palestinians and that militarized groups in the occupied Palestinian territories never struggle with recruitment. The only sensible alternative to that is for Israel to stop its discriminatory practices and settlement activity and to return to the path of negotiations, which should ensure the peaceful coexistence of two peoples in two States.

That will require full and unconditional compliance with resolution 2334 (2016) and the abandonment of plans to annex Palestinian territories and forcibly displace Palestinians. What is also needed is the provision of proper political and financial assistance to the Palestinian Authority. Strengthening the Palestinian Authority is the best guarantee for Israel's security.

Unfortunately, we have to recognize that given the resumed Israeli military operation in Gaza, we see no tangible prospects for normalization in the West Bank. It is therefore imperative to swiftly return to a ceasefire, to ensure unfettered humanitarian access and to continue the exchange of detainees. It is of the utmost importance that any agreements are sustainable in nature; otherwise, as practice has shown, they can collapse at any moment.

We are convinced that the Security Council can and must play its role in the negotiation process and in ensuring that its outcomes are respected by all parties. We call on the mediators to prioritize this scenario. We hope that common sense will prevail and that the parties will be able to return to the negotiating table.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm our unwavering commitment to the establishment of a Palestinian State within the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, coexisting in peace and security with Israel, in line with the approved international legal decisions. Our position is consistent and is not subject to situational changes. We are also firmly committed to supporting the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, the Agency charged with assisting the Palestinians until they have a State of their own.

**Ms. Benn** (Guyana): I thank Special Coordinator ad interim Kaag for presenting the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016).

Guyana stresses the imperative of full and faithful compliance with resolution 2334 (2016). We are troubled by reports of heightened violations, by all parties concerned, of said resolution, in violation of international law, including the legal directives of the International Court of Justice. Guyana recalls the Council's vision of a region where two democratic States, Israel and Palestine, live side by side in peace within secure and recognized borders. We call on the Council to shoulder its responsibilities in that regard and to work constructively to bring an end to the current

hostilities and military operations in Gaza and the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, which add to the toll of death, displacement and destruction and continue to put thousands of Palestinian lives and livelihoods at great risk.

The Council has long taken note of the impact of Israeli settlement policies and practices on Palestinians in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and on the prospects for the two-State solution and a durable peace between Israelis and Palestinians. We therefore cannot but be concerned that the ceasefire brokered between Israel and Hamas has been interrupted with a resulting new wave of violence once again entrapping innocent civilians, not least children, who, according to UNICEF, experienced on 18 March their “largest single-day death toll” in a year — with more than 130 of them killed. The Council has a duty to act, to end violence and bloodshed, to rekindle hope for durable peace and normality, where people are able to live, work and worship in freedom and avert any further endangerment to peace and security in the region and beyond.

We therefore urgently need a new political horizon to move us beyond the status quo and to advance the two-State solution. The recovery and reconstruction of Gaza is an integral part of this equation, and the plan proposed by the Group of Arab States is a good basis on which to take this forward.

To that end, allow me to reiterate four appeals.

First, Guyana calls once again for an immediate, unconditional and permanent ceasefire in Gaza and for the cessation of all actions and uprooting of all ideologies that rationalize the perpetuation of war. We call on Israel and Hamas to negotiate in good faith in order to bring about compliance with resolution 2735 (2024). We also call for the cessation of hostilities in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

Secondly, Guyana calls for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages held in Gaza. We also call for all Palestinians detained in Israeli jails to be released. Both hostages and detainees must be treated with dignity and respect and allowed humanitarian access by the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Thirdly, we call for the aid blockade to be removed and for full, rapid and unimpeded humanitarian access to all civilians in need, including to facilitate medical evacuations.

Finally, we call for Israel to comply with its international obligations as an occupying Power, including its obligation not to annex any of the territory pertaining to Palestine. Israel’s colonial settler policy and practices must cease and it must withdraw to the pre-1967 lines in accordance with the 19 July 2024 advisory opinion on the *Legal consequences arising from the policies and practices of Israel in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem* (see A/78/968). Guyana commits to continue its strong engagement on the question of Palestine, with a view to contributing to a just and lasting solution.

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

I would like to start by thanking Special Coordinator ad interim Kaag for her very detailed and insightful briefing.

Denmark deplores the breakdown of the ceasefire and the subsequent resumption of Israeli air strikes and renewed ground operations in Gaza, with further devastation for the civilian population. We deeply regret the death of a staff member of the United Nations Office for Project Services and five staff of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and echo the Secretary-General’s condemnation of any attacks on United Nations personnel. Denmark stands firm in our call for the immediate and unconditional release of the

hostages and for a permanent ceasefire in Gaza. We call on Israel to live up to its obligations under international law, including the resumption of unimpeded entry of humanitarian aid into Gaza.

In December 2016, the Council came together to adopt resolution 2334 (2016) (see S/PV.7853). That decision, born of the collective and urgent desire to further the two-State solution, offered hope — hope for a just and lasting peace for Israelis and Palestinians alike. Today, more than eight years later, that path to a two-State solution is threatened more than ever. It is threatened, in particular, by four compounding and converging developments — first, the conflict brought on by Hamas' terror attack on 7 October 2023 and the divisions it has deepened; secondly, the largest displacement of civilians in the West Bank since 1967, a result of the security situation and the Israeli military operation in the northern West Bank; thirdly, a weakening of the two pillars of stability in the West Bank, UNRWA and the Palestinian Authority; and finally, the topic of today's briefing, settlements.

Let there be no doubt that settlements, which are in clear violation of international law, also undermine prospects for a two-State solution. Their development robs Palestinians of their land and pushes them into isolated enclaves, making it virtually impossible to form a connected and viable land for a future Palestinian State. In 2024, we saw more rapid expansion of settlements in the West Bank than ever before. That includes the establishment of more than 50 new outposts. Eight of those are in Area B — the first establishments in that area since the Oslo Accords.

Reading those reports of zones, area classifications and constructions, it can almost sound like a technical issue. But in fact, settlements cause serious, lasting hardship and suffering. The reality is Palestinian families are ordered from their land; they are left watching as their homes are demolished; and they may return during the night to rebuild their homes, only to see them demolished again. Those families are then faced with an impossible choice — stay, and tolerate the intolerable, or leave, and permanently lose their land.

We once again call on Israel to immediately halt all settlement expansion on Palestinian land. Any unilateral attempt to change the demography of the occupied Palestinian territories is unacceptable and constitutes a clear violation of international law. According to the International Court of Justice, policies, practices or other measures that seek to bring the occupied territory under Israel's permanent control constitute acts of annexation contrary to international law.

Some settlements come about through settler violence, in which we have seen an alarming escalation — with very little accountability. We are deeply concerned by reports that the Israeli military often cooperates with settlers, including by sending troops to escort settlers and sometimes joining in efforts to expel Palestinian residents. That is unacceptable, and it must stop now.

We remind Israel of its responsibility, as the occupying Power, for abuses committed by its security forces, as well as its nationals. We call on Israel to hold those settlers to account. In the European Union, we have imposed sanctions on extremist settlers.

International scrutiny of those violations continues to be hindered, if the United Nations system and other actors are refused visas and therefore are unable to exercise their functions including independent reporting.

Let me be clear. Denmark remains firmly committed to Israel's security. That is why we cannot let the two-State solution disappear before our eyes. We have the frameworks. What is needed is full implementation of resolution 2334 (2016) and other relevant resolutions, full respect for the advisory opinions of the International



Court of Justice, a resumption of the ceasefire and release of all hostages and reform and revitalization of the Palestinian Authority.

In short, we need to create the conditions for the realization of the two-State solution. Israelis and Palestinians deserve a just and lasting peace now. Around this table, we must do everything in our power to support that.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

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

**Mr. Mansour** (Palestine): At the outset, we thank Special Coordinator ad interim Sigrid Kaag for her briefing, including on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016).

Israel believes it has found the solution to the Palestinian question, a solution it has often pursued in the past but never so openly, brazenly and viciously. The Palestinians will have to choose — death on their land or life elsewhere. Instead of ending its illegal occupation, it is attempting to end the occupied people.

That is evident in the genocide still under way in Gaza to promote the so-called voluntary migration of Palestinians, the code name for mass forcible displacement and transfer of the Palestinian people from their land. But that is also evident in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, in the latest and most massive ethnic cleansing campaign since 1967.

That crime is taking place as we speak in the northern part of the West Bank, while all eyes are on the horrific genocide in Gaza. Israel has forcibly displaced, as many of the members of the Council indicated, more than 40,000 Palestinians in a matter of weeks. It is destroying refugee camps in an attempt to convince Palestinian refugees that not only will they not return to their homes, villages and towns, but that their only prospect is to be displaced time and time again. Council members can see with their own eyes the destruction and expulsion of entire communities and the physical and violent uprooting of families from their homes and their lands, forced to leave their lives behind.

Palestinians have spent decades rebuilding their lives over and over again, and Israel, within days, has destroyed, yet again, all that they have built — devastation to achieve displacement, displacement to achieve annexation. The playbook is well known by now, the crimes fully documented.

We have said repeatedly that Israel's goal has always been maximum Palestinian land with minimum Palestinians, and that it wanted control of Palestinian geography and therefore was attacking Palestinian demography. We have said that so many times. Repeating, sometimes, is useful.

While the entire world says there is no alternative to the two-State solution — and we appreciate that all Council members keep repeating that — Israel on the ground continues to entertain the deadly illusion that it can destroy the Palestinian people to prevent the self-determination of our people and the independence of our State.

The Israeli Government is willing to use air strikes in densely populated neighbourhoods, to bulldoze entire camps and to resort to mass killing, mass detention and mass displacement, to destroy homes and infrastructure and, along with Israeli settlers, to intimidate, assault and terrorize an entire civilian population to achieve its illegal goals.

The question now is, what is the world willing to do to defend its vision, to uphold its laws and to stop this madness? We appreciate the Council's reiteration of commitment to international law, to the two-State solution and to the fact that settlements are illegal and should be dismantled, but that is insufficient. What is the



Council going to do to stop Israel from continuing on this path and to give it a strong injunction in order to wake it up and let it know that it will not be able to accomplish that objective? What is the Council going to do?

The Israeli plan relies on Israel's assumption that it will not face a decisive international response and clear consequences for its crimes and unlawful actions. Therefore, when the Council reiterates the principles, Israel takes note and continues with its illegal action. The reiteration, then, is insufficient, although it is good. What is the Council going to do to match its words with deeds, with what is required in order to accomplish the objective of allowing the Palestinian people to exercise their inalienable rights, including their rights to self-determination, independence, statehood and the return of the refugees?

Confronted with this unprecedented Israeli escalation, there must be an unprecedented escalation of international measures in response. If the Council does not escalate its concrete action in upholding international law and defending Security Council and United Nations resolutions, Israel is not going to change its behaviour. Therefore, the Council must act, as we were reminded yesterday by the President of the Security Council, and as she reminded us again today.

International law is clear. The International Court of Justice's advisory opinion is clear — a number of Council members referred to that. United Nations resolutions are clear, including resolution 2334 (2016), as are the calls and obligations most recently affirmed in General Assembly resolution ES-10/24. It is time for implementation. You, Madam President, are absolutely correct in wanting implementation. This is the time for implementation. It is time for accountability. There should be consequences for those who refuse to honour and respect their obligations under the Charter of the United Nations, including the obligation to implement of Security Council resolutions. They cannot belong to this club without abiding by the club's constitution and Charter. Members must honour, respect and implement what we collectively decide — otherwise, there will be consequences, meaning that the one who is not respecting the law should face the consequences of such rebellion.

The Security Council and the General Assembly have been calling for an end to the Israeli occupation for almost 60 years now. They have repeatedly condemned Israel's settlement activities, all the while witnessing the constant acceleration thereof. They have condemned settlers' violence while that violence attained new heights with every passing year. They have denounced those actions, all the while witnessing the fragmentation of the Palestinian land, the displacement of the Palestinian people and the pillaging of their natural resources. They have called for the historic status quo at Al-Haram Al-Sharif to be upheld while Israeli breaches continue and intensify, including during the holy month of Ramadan. In its advisory opinion on the *Legal consequences arising from Israel's policies and practices in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem* (see A/78/968), handed down last year, the International Court of Justice deemed Israel's continued presence in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, to be unlawful and called for that presence to be brought to an end as rapidly as possible. The Court stressed the many Israeli policies and practices that were illegal and called for them to be brought to an immediate end.

The Israeli Government — as accustomed and addicted as it is to impunity — will not heed those calls and instead continues to demonstrate its contempt for the fundamental rules and institutions of our international law-based order. Israel's aim is to render its illegal colonial occupation irreversible through the forcible displacement of our people and the annexation of our land. It is entrenching its occupation, instead of reversing and ending it. The decisions that States are willing to take, individually and collectively, in the coming days and weeks — in support of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, in rejection of the unlawful acquisition of

territory by force and in order to salvage the prospects of shared peace, security and prosperity in our region — will determine what happens next. The Council's action will determine what happens next. Those measures should be adopted right now, before it is too late.

The International Conference for the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution, to be held in June under the co-chairmanship of Saudi Arabia and France, must be a platform for mobilization and action — a platform in which States clearly determine how they can concretely contribute to upholding international law, and one in which they will affirm the steps that they will take to implement their obligations, including under resolution 2334 (2016), towards bringing an end to the occupation and salvaging peace. That conference is not going to be an ordinary conference to which people come and read out statements, at which a declaration will be adopted and business as usual will proceed. Rather, that is a conference that will be — and should be — different, through the will of all the members of the international community, by declaring ahead of time their commitments and obligations pertaining to how they can act to shorten the life of that illegal occupation in order to accomplish their global consensus on the two-State solution. That is what is needed, that is what should be done and that is what will be unfolding, with the help of all those who are serious about accomplishing the two-State solution — I believe — very soon, at the beginning of next month.

The Israeli Minister of War proudly declared days ago that

“Forty thousand Palestinians evicted so far, the Jenin, Tulkarem and Nur Shams refugee camps, now unpopulated. United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) activities in the camps ceased. I ordered the Israel Defense Forces to remain in the cleansed camps for the next year and prevent inhabitants from returning”.

At the same time, he declared that Israel will advance its plans for the annexation of areas of Gaza and continue pushing Palestinians out, while terrorizing our people with bombs, evacuation orders and shocking leaflets aimed at causing fear and panic.

Israel's intentions have never been clearer. The international response needs to be equally clear. Israel cannot be crystal clear about what they want to do, while the Council is not crystal clear about how it is going to stop it. The Council must also be crystal clear. While Israeli actions are met with worldwide condemnation and rejection, while States have, in fact, taken a number of measures and initiatives in opposition to those actions, we are far from reaching the necessary threshold to force Israel to revise its plans and calculations. We need to do more to reach the tipping point. We are not there. We need to do more. There is often talk about the need to be realistic. We need to be realistic about what needs to be done to bring us back from the brink. That is what we need to be realistic about, and that entails brave and unprecedented decisions by States to use all the tools available to them to change the course of history, to ensure that the arc of the moral universe bends towards justice.

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

**Mr. Danon** (Israel): I thank the Special Coordinator ad interim, Ms. Kaag, for her briefing.

Today and yesterday (see S/PV.9882), certain members of the Council made an outrageous comparison — one so morally obscene that it must be addressed at the outset. They equated the Israeli hostages, held in brutal captivity underground by Hamas, with Palestinian terrorists legally arrested by Israel. Let me be clear: the Israeli hostages are innocent men, women and children who were abducted for no reason other than being Israeli or foreigners who were in Israel on 7 October 2023.

They are being starved, tortured and hidden away in Hamas' underground dungeons. In contrast, the Palestinians who have been arrested by Israel are terrorists, many with blood on their hands. They have committed the most heinous acts of terror, from cold-blooded murder to producing suicide bombs to planning mass casualty attacks.

For the sake of freeing our hostages, we found ourselves in the impossible position of having to release many of those prisoners. Among them were 200 convicted murderers who had been serving life sentences for killing Israelis and Palestinians. But they had been convicted. Just because we were forced to exchange murderers for innocents does not mean that there is any point of comparison. Do not be mistaken: anyone who attempts to draw such a comparison is intentionally promoting Hamas' propaganda. The Palestinian prisoners are fed, clothed and protected. They have access to legal counsel and the benefit of a robust and independent judiciary, which will review their cases without bias. To compare them to hostages is not only an insult to the victims; it is plain moral bankruptcy. We have unfortunately come to expect such bankruptcy from some at this table.

Israel has returned to war in Gaza. That was not a decision that we made lightly, but one that was forced upon us by Hamas. After weeks of negotiations — we waited for weeks and offered to extend the ceasefire in good faith — Hamas refused to release our hostages and continued to stall negotiations. They knew that it was Ramadan, they knew that Passover was coming, but they decided to reject all offers. The world watched as Hamas spat in our face and the face of the Israeli people, who were waiting for the return of their loved ones. The world watched as Hamas rejected every opportunity to return 59 innocent men, women and children home.

Israel had no choice but to act. We are acting decisively. We are striking Hamas targets with precision. In recent days, Israel eliminated several top Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad terrorists. They include Mahmoud Marzouk — Ahmed Abu Watfa) — who was responsible for Hamas' internal security forces, Rashid Jahjuh, head of Hamas' general security forces, and Essam Al-Da'alis, head of the Hamas Government in Gaza and a key authority figure. Along with those arch-terrorists, several senior terrorist commanders have also been eliminated. We want our people back. But until Hamas returns our hostages, the destruction of their regime will continue without delay, without pause. Hamas has a choice. They can come back to the table and negotiate or they can wait and watch as their leaders fall one by one. We will not stop until our people come home — all of them.

Amid all the noise, one fact will forever remain unchanged: Israel will never again tolerate threats to our civilians from any place, from any group, anywhere. There will be no exceptions. Irrespective of however many times we spoke about Hamas in Gaza and about the threat that it poses to our communities, it was ignored. That will not happen again. We will do whatever is necessary to protect our people from Palestinian terrorism, from Houthi terrorism, from Iranian terrorism — from terrorism of any kind. If history has taught us anything, it is that the world cannot be trusted to do it for us. We will do it ourselves. The empty words from many of the Council members and their deafening silence in the face of terror have only emboldened those who seek our destruction.

The world watched as Hamas turned Gaza into a terror State. I want to remind the Council that we left Gaza in 2005. Mr. Mansour can tell Council members what they did to his colleagues: they threw them from the rooftops. They took over Gaza, and we saw what happened there. The world watched as Hamas turned Gaza into a terror State. Israel does not have the luxury of ignorance. We do not have the luxury of waiting for another massacre before acting.

Now let us speak about Judea and Samaria. Our actions in Judea and Samaria are essential. In the past 16 months alone, well in excess of 2,000 attempted terror

attacks originated in Judea and Samaria; no one has mentioned that. In just the past few months, 46 people were murdered in terror attacks; no one has mentioned that. More than 1,200 others were injured. This year, innocent lives have already been stolen, among them 75-year-old Tamar Edry. More than 100 more people have been injured. They are fathers, mothers, sons and daughters — entire families torn apart by the same forces that carried out the atrocities of 7 October 2023.

Those terrorists do not operate in isolation. What is happening in Judea and Samaria is not just an internal security matter. It is another front in Iran's multi-front war against Israel and the Jewish people. But it is also the by-product of the Palestinian Authority's stunning incompetence, negligence and growing irrelevance. I will elaborate on that later.

Let us be clear: the invisible hand behind the chaos is Iran. It is Iran that arms, funds and directs Hamas and other terrorist cells in Judea and Samaria, just as it does in Gaza, Lebanon, Syria and Yemen. It is Iran that has spent years infiltrating Palestinian terrorist organizations, smuggling in weapons, training their operatives and flooding the region with advanced explosives. Iran has established and maintains Islamist terrorist frameworks in Judea and Samaria through Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. It authorizes attacks and transfers millions of dollars every year to support those terrorists, some of whom the Palestinian Authority is also trying to capture. For example, Islam Azaiza was arrested not by us, but by the Palestinian Authority, for his involvement in terror attacks, including against the PA. However, it further came to light, during the interrogation, that it was not only him. There were eight other Palestinian terrorists who were managing funds supplied by Iran to support its terror in Judea and Samaria.

Iran's influence does not stop at funding. Through its terrorist mechanisms and proxies, it is attempting to transfer massive quantities of weapons, including munitions, anti-tank weapons and explosives into the hands of terrorists. The IDF's operation in Judea and Samaria are focused on disrupting those activities, breaking down terrorist networks and dismantling Iranian influence before it can spread further. Israel has also intercepted countless shipments of Iranian weaponry, disguised as civilian cargo, but we cannot stop everything. We cannot intercept them all.

The world should not pretend that those weapons are for anything other than the slaughter of innocent Israelis. Iran is working tirelessly to turn Judea and Samaria into a second Gaza. They succeeded already. Council members should look at what happened to Gaza in 2005. They succeeded. Now they are trying to do the same in Judea and Samaria.

But what has the Palestinian Authority truly done to stop it? It has done nothing. That is not for a lack of trying, because as Mr. Mansour can tell you, it has tried. The PA has attempted many counter-terrorism operations to dismantle the terror networks entrenched in its backyard, but it has failed. It has been unable to remove the terror groups controlling cities — not streets, not neighbourhoods — cities such as Jenin and Tulkarm.

We listen very carefully and very patiently to all of Mr. Mansour's very long speeches but let us be honest for a moment. Let us talk about the real facts about what is happening in Judea and Samaria. Let us talk about the Jenin operations that were conducted in January not by us, but by the Palestinian Authority, its special forces and security services. I do not know all the names of the organizations. In January in Judea and Samaria, the Palestinian Authority tried and managed to arrest 247 terrorists and seized hundreds of weapons in its operations but utterly failed to disrupt Jenin terrorist operations. It even allowed funds meant for Gaza to be stolen under its watch. Its forces were met in those camps with resentment, distrust

and defiance, not from Israel, but from its own people. They see the Palestinian Authority as weak, corrupt and incapable of governance. The PA has no control over Jenin. It has no control over Tulkarm. Its Administration is little more than a figurehead as its authority crumbles.

The PA has been unable to govern, unable to provide security and unable to contain the threat that now faces Israeli civilians. Just as we have seen before, the PA quietly steps aside and leaves the job to us, so we have to go to those camps. We have no desire to go to the camps in Nur Shams and in Jenin and take care of those threats and terrorist cells, but we have no other choice, because we know what will happen if we wait — we will see those terrorist cells in the streets of Tel Aviv or Jerusalem.

The choice Israel faces is simple, yet most nations in this Chamber cannot comprehend it: we either act or we wait for another massacre. We either eliminate threats or we wait until those threats take innocent lives. We have tried waiting before, and we will never make that mistake again. There will be no sanctuary for terrorists, not in Judea and Samaria, not in Gaza, not in Lebanon, not anywhere.

Let all enemies of Israel — whether in Gaza, Judea and Samaria, Lebanon, Yemen or Iran — understand that if they seek to harm our people, we will rise and strike.

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

**Mr. Hmoud** (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of Arab States, which my country is presiding over this month. I also would like to congratulate you, Madam President, on your country's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month and wish you every success in facilitating the Council's work. I also thank Ms. Sigrid Kaag, Special Coordinator ad interim for the Middle East Peace Process, for her valuable briefing on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016) on Israel's settlement activities and the violations that Israel continues to commit and the unilateral measures that it continues to implement throughout the occupied Palestinian territory.

Today's meeting is taking place at a critical and extraordinary moment, following the important role played by Egypt, Qatar and the United States in reaching an agreement on a ceasefire in Gaza and the release of hostages and detainees. Israel violated that agreement, according to which 33 hostages were handed over. Had the ceasefire continued to be implemented, it would have led to the release of the remaining hostages and the end of the war on Gaza and its people.

However, it seems that Israel does not want to end the war and decided to violate the agreement and resumed its aggression on Gaza and its crimes against the defenceless Palestinian people there. Israel not only prevented the entry of food and medicine and cut off electricity to Gaza, but it also launched a sudden and large-scale attack for the first time since the agreement came into effect in the early hours of last Tuesday, bombing civilians, mostly women and children, and killing hundreds of them within a few hours while they were sleeping in their tents.

The Israeli occupation bears full responsibility for the consequences of the violation of the ceasefire agreement and the relevant Security Council resolutions, especially resolution 2735 (2024). We call on the Council to work to put an end to the Israeli war and prevent the continued killing and targeting of civilians in Gaza and ensure their protection.

In that context, it is imperative for the Security Council and the international community to step up their efforts in pushing Israel to resume the implementation of the second and third phases of the ceasefire and end the collective punishment of civilians in Gaza, open the crossing points for the delivery of humanitarian and medical assistance and shelter, and restore the supply of electricity to all of the



Gaza Strip in an effective and sustainable manner. It is also imperative to begin implementing the Gaza reconstruction plan, to restore calm in the West Bank and to launch a genuine effort to bring about a just and comprehensive peace within a specified time frame so as to ensure the realization of the Palestinian people's aspirations of freedom in an independent State and to ensure safety and stability for the region and all its peoples.

The Extraordinary Arab Summit, held in Cairo early this month, insisted on the need for just, comprehensive and sustainable peace in order to settle the Palestinian question and rejected all efforts and attempts to displace the Palestinian people from their occupied land or impose unilateral solutions at their expense, particularly with regard to their right to self-determination in an independent State on Palestinian national territory, in line with international law and the relevant Security Council resolutions.

In that regard, the Arab Group highly appreciates the large-scale international rejection of attempts to forcibly displace the Palestinian people from their land. We also welcome the recent statements made by United States President Donald Trump, making clear that no Palestinians in Gaza would leave the Strip. We also reiterate that the early recovery and reconstruction plan for Gaza, submitted by Egypt in coordination with the State of Palestine and later endorsed by the Extraordinary Arab Summit, is an inclusive and comprehensive Arab plan. We appreciate the joint Egyptian-Palestinian efforts to convene an international conference on recovery and reconstruction in Gaza, in collaboration with the United Nations, which is to be held in Cairo soon. We urge the international community, regional and international partners, including international financial institutions, to actively participate and provide the necessary political and financial support to implement the reconstruction plans in order to accelerate the efforts to rehabilitate and rebuild the Gaza Strip following the destruction caused by the Israeli aggression.

Gaza is witnessing a catastrophic humanitarian situation as a result of the ongoing Israeli war that has destroyed infrastructure — homes, hospitals, schools and vital United Nations facilities — and has left tens of thousands of Gazan families without a home to live under harsh conditions without shelter or the ability to access basic services, such as clean water, electricity and healthcare. The humanitarian crisis is being further exacerbated by the ongoing war and siege imposed by Israel against the Gaza Strip, which prevents the delivery of humanitarian aid in a systematic manner. The Group also condemns the blocking of humanitarian aid, the shutting off of the electricity supply and the use of starvation as weapons of war, all of which are grave violations of the basic rules of international humanitarian law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention. We reiterate that the protection of civilians in Gaza should not be negotiable, nor should it be used as a bargaining chip or part of a deal. It is a duty of the occupying Power.

The West Bank and occupied Jerusalem are also seeing dangerous escalation and tragic conditions as a result of the ongoing Israeli measures, including military incursions into Palestinian cities, the displacement of the population, illegal settlement expansion activities, the demolition of homes, the confiscation of lands, the destruction of infrastructure and the violation of the sanctity of the holy sites in Al-Quds Al-Sharif. The Group condemns those measures, including the attempts to forcibly displace Palestinians from their homes or to annex their lands. Such actions threaten to escalate the situation at all levels, reduce prospects for achieving peace and stability in the region as a whole and are in violation of the relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2334 (2016), as well as the 24 July 2024 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the *Legal consequences arising from the policies and practices of Israel in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem* (see A/78/968).



We call upon the international community, and the Security Council in particular, to address the Israeli aggressions and violations in the West Bank and the attacks against Muslim and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem and to help respect and preserve the historic and legal status quo of those holy sites, particularly during the holy month of Ramadan, in order to preserve stability and security and to prevent the situation from escalating further. That includes attacks by settlers and Israeli extremists.

We reiterate the important and pivotal role of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip and all its areas of operation, in line with the mandate conferred upon it by the General Assembly and the relevant United Nations resolutions. The Arab Group condemns the recent legislation adopted by the Israeli Knesset that targets UNRWA and its services in the occupied Palestinian territory. We urge the international community to provide political, legal and financial support to ensure that UNRWA is able to continue to play its indispensable role. We reiterate the right of Palestinian refugees to return and to receive reparations, in line with the relevant United Nations resolutions.

The Arab Group condemns the Israeli attacks against the Syrian Arab Republic and the Israeli incursions into its territories. These are blatant violations of international law and aggressions against the sovereignty of Syria, as well as dangerous escalations that will only ignite further tensions and conflict in the region. We call upon the international community and the Security Council to take immediate actions to enforce international law and to oblige Israel to stop its aggression and withdraw from the Syrian territories it occupied in a blatant violation of the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces. The Arab Group reiterates that the Golan Heights are an occupied Syrian territory and reiterates its rejection of Israel's decision to annex the Golan and extend its sovereignty to include the territory. The Group also condemns the Israeli occupation's ongoing presence in five positions in southern Lebanon and the designation of two buffer zones within the Lebanese territories, preventing access to them. That is a violation of the sovereignty of Lebanon and of resolution 1701 (2006). We reiterate that the Security Council should shoulder its responsibility and oblige Israel to fully withdraw from all the Lebanese territories to the international recognized borders, in line with resolution 1701 (2006). We also warn that a delayed withdrawal may have consequences that could jeopardize the stability of the region. We commend the progress in the deployment of the Lebanese army in the area south of the Litani River, and we support Lebanon's safety, stability and sovereignty.

In conclusion, we call for the international community to make concerted efforts to stop the war against Gaza, to allow the entry of aid to the Palestinian people, to stop Israeli violations throughout the occupied Palestinian territory and to support the steadfastness of the brotherly Palestinian people on their land. We reiterate that we stand with our Palestinian brothers in their efforts to obtain their full legitimate rights, primarily their right to freedom and an independent sovereign State on their national soil on the basis of the two-State solution and the Arab Peace Initiative — the only path to achieve comprehensive, sustainable and lasting peace that would guarantee peace and stability for the region as a whole.

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

**Mr. Mansour** (Palestine): I am terribly sorry to take the floor again, but I need to make a few additional comments.

One million Palestinians arrested over the past decades are terrorists? One million of them? The 10,000 who are still in Israeli jails are terrorists? The children, the teachers, the doctors, the human rights defenders — are all terrorists? Does Israel

consider our people terrorists, all of them, whether from different political groups or factions or non-governmental organizations, even the most notable ones? Our civilians, from before their birth until after their death — are all of them terrorists in Israel's book?

They were considered as such by whom? By Israel's military courts, built to subjugate and oppress our people, to enforce illegal military orders that criminalize all civilian actions by Palestinians — including their very existence on their own land — and to allow all Israeli crimes, with full impunity? How many Israelis were held accountable for their crimes against the Palestinian people — from indiscriminate killing to unlawfully stealing our land? Palestinian prisoners are well treated, Israel claims, including the dozens killed while in custody. Does the representative of Israel mean those beaten, tortured and raped?

Israel's occupation forces conducted mass arrests of Palestinians — torturing them — then released some of them and made some of them disappear. But they keep many of them in custody and detention, whether charges exist against them or not. Israel's courts fail every international standard and have even refused to condemn or charge those responsible for torture.

We resorted to international courts and accepted their jurisdiction. Israel refused to do the same because its leaders are responsible for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. The representative of Israel is the spokesperson of this criminal enterprise, and yet he wants to offer lessons to the world. How many Israeli leaders and members of Israeli occupation forces would be in jail if they were to finally face independent and impartial justice? Many of them, starting with the Israeli Prime Minister, would be in jail.

As for Israeli military aggression in all Palestinian cities, it has nothing to do with security and everything to do with Israel's colonial aggression and occupation.

**The President:** I take note of the statement and comments made by the Permanent Observer of the Observer State of Palestine.

I would like to remind all members that this is a place of respect and decorum. Everyone is reminded to refrain from comments of a personal or disrespectful nature.

The representative of Israel has asked for the floor to make a further statement. I now give him the floor.

**Mr. Danon (Israel):** Mr. Mansour can continue with the manipulation and inflation of numbers, but there are facts, and I stand behind everything I said today — the failures in Jenin, the failures in Tulkarem, the weakness of the Palestinian Authority and, I think most important, the weakness of its leadership, failing to build a better future for the Palestinian by condemning Hamas.

President Abbas has not been able to condemn Hamas even once since 7 October 2023. Neither have any of the Ministers in the Palestinian Authority — not one condemnation. Even the Permanent Observer and his team, sitting here preaching and criticizing, has not even once condemned the terror of Hamas. The day he is capable of doing that, he can speak about the future for the Palestinian people. But unfortunately, it is much easier to incite against Israel and to blame us for everything, instead of fighting the radicals.

I would advise him — because he is very involved, and I respect that — to look at other countries in the region. When there is leadership that is too weak to confront the radicals, look where they are today. And when there is strong leadership in the Arab countries that are facing the radicals, look at the way they have been able to develop their societies.

Unfortunately, the way that the Palestinian Authority leadership is going — with the leadership of President Abbas and others, and Mr. Mansour — allows the radicals to control the narrative and to continue with the indoctrination of the next generation. People are celebrating 7 October 2023, not in Gaza, but they are doing so in Ramallah, in Jenin and in Tulkarem.

We will defend ourselves but think about the future of the Palestinian people.

**The President:** I also take note of the statement and comments of the Permanent Representative of Israel and again remind all members that this is a place of respect and decorum.

The Permanent Observer of the Observer State of Palestine has asked the floor to make a further statement. I now give him the floor.

**Mr. Mansour** (Palestine): I hear and respect the President's reminder, and I hope that it will be enforced. But be that as it may, those who lecture us about our conduct and do not look at the conduct in the streets of Tel Aviv and in other places in Israel are not qualified to lecture us about the conduct of my Government.

Let me also ask: have we heard in this Chamber condemnation of any conduct by an Israeli leader or officer or diplomat, or of the killing of tens of thousands of Palestinian children and women and attacks against our people everywhere, including in the Gaza Strip and in the West Bank?

Those who behave in that way are the least able to lecture us here in this Chamber about good conduct, and what is an effective Government and what is not.

**The President:** There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on this subject.

*The meeting rose at 1 p.m.*