



# Security Council

Seventy-eighth year

**9361**<sup>st</sup> meeting

Tuesday, 27 June 2023, 10.25 a.m.

New York

*Provisional*

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*President:* Mrs. Nusseibeh . . . . . (United Arab Emirates)

*Members:*

Albania . . . . .	Mr. Hoxha
Brazil . . . . .	Mr. De Almeida Filho
China . . . . .	Mr. Zhang Jun
Ecuador . . . . .	Mr. Pérez Loose
France . . . . .	Mr. De Rivière
Gabon . . . . .	Mr. Biang
Ghana . . . . .	Mr. Osei-Mensah
Japan . . . . .	Mr. Ishikane
Malta . . . . .	Mrs. Frazier
Mozambique . . . . .	Mr. Afonso
Russian Federation . . . . .	Mr. Nebenzia
Switzerland . . . . .	Mrs. Baeriswyl
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Eckersley
United States of America . . . . .	Mr. Wood

## Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.25 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 representative of Israel to participate in this meeting.

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

There being no objection, it is so decided.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Tor Wennesland, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process; and Mr. James Zogby, President of the Arab American Institute.

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

I now give the floor to Mr. Wennesland.

**Mr. Wennesland:** I am devoting my regular briefing on the situation in the Middle East to the twenty-sixth report on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016). The Secretary-General's written report, which Council members have already received, covers the period between 14 March and 14 June.

Let me start by saying that the two weeks we have had since 14 June have been terrible. Since the submission of the written report, we have seen an alarming spike in violence across northern and central occupied West Bank, leading to numerous Palestinian and Israeli casualties. Military operations — including air strikes in the West Bank — clashes, attacks and extremely high levels of settler-related violence have continued and intensified dramatically, alongside the use of more sophisticated weapons by the Palestinians, including improvised explosive devices and rockets launched towards Israel. Unless decisive steps are taken now to rein in the violence, there is a significant risk that events could deteriorate further.

The mounting violence is taking place against the backdrop of deeply worrisome settlement-related developments that alter the already fragile dynamics on the ground, as well as a worrisome deterioration in relations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority (PA). In that regard, I welcome today's calls between President Isaac Herzog and President Mahmoud Abbas and between Defence Minister Yoav Gallant and Secretary-General of the Palestine Liberation Organization Hussein Al-Sheikh on the occasion of Eid Al-Adha, in which, according to Israeli statements released to the media, Israel officials denounced those settler attacks in the West Bank and recommitted to holding perpetrators accountable.

On 19 June, an Israeli military operation in the Jenin refugee camp, in Area A of the occupied West Bank, led to heavy armed exchanges. An Israeli security force (ISF) vehicle was struck by a Palestinian improvised explosive device, injuring eight ISF personnel. Palestinian Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for the attack. According to the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), military helicopters carried out air strikes — the first in the West Bank since the second intifada — to facilitate the extraction of military personnel and disabled vehicles. Over the course of the day, seven Palestinians were killed by the ISF, including two children, and 90 were injured.

On 20 June, two Palestinians shot and killed four Israeli civilians, including two children, and injured four others at a gas station near Eli settlement, north of Ramallah. One of the perpetrators was shot and killed by an Israeli civilian at the scene, while the other was later killed by Israeli forces near Tubas. Hamas claimed the assailants as members and said the attack was a "natural response" to the ISF operation in Jenin.

From the night of 20 June through 25 June, Israeli settlers perpetrated 28 violent attacks against Palestinian villages across the northern and central occupied West Bank. In total, one Palestinian was killed, and 54 others were injured — 37 by the ISF, 16 by settlers and 1 by an undetermined agent — while four settlers or other Israeli civilians and one ISF personnel were injured by Palestinians. The attacks followed a similar pattern, with large numbers of settlers, many armed — and in some cases escorted by the ISF — setting fire to dozens of houses, vehicles and fields owned by Palestinians, followed by confrontations that have, in many cases, led to casualties. In some instances, the ISF fired live and rubber-coated metal bullets at Palestinians.

Also on 20 June, in Al-Lubban Ash-Sharqiya, a settler arsonist also targeted a gas station and three Palestinians, including a child, who were injured.

On 21 June, over 300 Israeli settlers again attacked the Palestinian village of Turmus Ayya, north-west of Ramallah. In the ensuing confrontations, one Palestinian was shot and killed by the ISF, and eight others were injured by live ammunition. The settler rampage continued that evening in Urif, south of Nablus, with hundreds of Israeli settlers again attacking Palestinians, their property and other structures, including a school and a mosque.

Over the following days, settlers attacked villages situated between Nablus and Ramallah, including Jalud, Sinjil, Deir Dibwan, Umm Safa, Al-Mughayer and, again, Turmus Ayya. To date, Israeli police have said that 11 Israelis have been detained, including two off-duty IDF personnel, in relation to the various attacks.

Amid those developments, on the night of 21 June, armed Palestinians fired towards Al-Jalamah checkpoint, north of Jenin. An Israeli drone subsequently launched a missile at their vehicle, killing three Palestinians, one a child. The IDF said that the three were responsible for a number of shooting attacks in the West Bank. Two were later claimed as members by Palestinian Islamic Jihad and the third by the Fatah-affiliated Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades.

On 26 June, Palestinians from the so-called Al-Ayyash Brigades attempted to launch two rockets from the Jenin area towards Israel. Both fell short in the occupied Palestinian territory, with no damage or injuries reported.

Reactions by officials to the numerous incidents have varied, with some rejecting the violence and condemning vigilantism, while others are making deeply alarming, inflammatory statements. On 24 June, the IDF Chief of Staff, the head of the Israeli Security Agency and the Israeli Police Commissioner issued a joint statement condemning the settler attacks, which they called nationalist terrorism, and vowing to take steps to combat them. These steps include increasing the presence of forces, stepping up arrests and widening the use of administrative detention against individuals participating in such attacks.

The previous day, an Israeli Minister and Cabinet member had visited an illegal settlement outpost and called on settlers to “run to the hilltops” and establish additional outposts, also illegal under Israeli law. He also

called for a widespread military campaign in the West Bank, urging the ISF to

“blow up buildings [and] assassinate terrorists — not one, or two, but dozens, hundreds, or if needed, thousands”.

The Minister’s call to establish unauthorized outposts was later repudiated by Prime Minister Netanyahu at a Cabinet meeting, where he said that

“calls to grab land illegally and actions of grabbing land illegally are unacceptable”

and that Israeli authorities would act to stop them, while promoting settlement expansion in approved locations. Meanwhile, Palestinian factions, including Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, celebrated the 20 June attack against Israeli civilians as an “act of heroism” and called for additional attacks.

Several concerning developments related to Israeli settlement expansion took place during the reporting period. On 18 June, the Israeli Government approved significant amendments to Israeli settlement planning procedures that could expedite advancement of Israeli settlements plans. The amendments remove, inter alia, the requirement for the Minister of Defense to approve interim settlement-planning stages, and delegate the Minister’s authority in that regard to the Additional Minister in the Ministry of Defense, currently Bezalel Smotrich.

In response to this decision, the Secretary-General of the Palestine Liberation Organization’s Executive Committee Hussein Al-Sheikh announced in a tweet that the Palestinian Authority would not participate in a long-awaited meeting of the Joint Economic Committee scheduled for 19 June. The meeting had been anticipated as an important opportunity for the parties to discuss urgent steps to improve their economic relationship and deliver on existing commitments. Similarly, plans for a Ministerial meeting of the Negev Forum later this summer, to be hosted by Morocco, were also postponed.

On 26 June, the Israeli Civil Administration’s Higher Planning Committee reportedly advanced plans for over 5,500 housing units in Israeli settlements in Area C. Some 750 units near Eli were added to the agenda after the 20 June attack there and following an announcement by the Prime Minister’s Office that Israel’s answer to terrorism is to strike at it forcefully and build up our country. The plans advanced reportedly include the retroactive regularization, under Israeli law, of three outposts adjacent to Eli.

With regard to other significant developments, on 16 June, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) announced that it had resumed its service delivery to Palestine refugees in the West Bank after nearly four months of disruption due to a work dispute with the West Bank staff union and a strike. UNRWA operations in the West Bank, including 42 health clinics and 90 schools for more than 40,000 children, have since fully resumed.

I will now turn to several observations with regard to the implementation of the provisions of resolution 2334 (2016) during the reporting period. I remain gravely concerned by the escalating spiral of violence we are witnessing in the occupied West Bank. I condemn all acts of violence against civilians, including all acts of terror, which exacerbate mistrust and undermine a peaceful resolution to the conflict. The violence must stop, and all perpetrators must be held accountable. I am particularly alarmed by the extreme levels of settler violence, including the large numbers of settlers — many of them armed — systematically attacking Palestinian villages, terrorizing communities, sometimes in the proximity of Israeli security forces. As the occupying Power, Israel has an obligation to protect Palestinians and their property in the occupied Palestinian territory and to ensure prompt, independent, impartial and transparent investigations into all acts of violence.

I reiterate that security forces must exercise maximum restraint, use force proportionately and lethal force only when strictly unavoidable in order to protect life, and must conduct thorough, independent, impartial and prompt investigations into all instances of the possible excessive use of force. Children in particular must never be targets of violence, and they must never be used or put in harm's way. I strongly condemn any inciteful, provocative statements from officials on either side that further inflame the volatile situation on the ground.

I remain deeply troubled by the relentless expansion of Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, which fuels violence and is impeding Palestinians' access to their land and resources, reshaping the geography of the occupied West Bank and threatening the viability of a future Palestinian State. In that regard, I note with alarm the recent decision of the Government of Israel that may expedite the expansion in Area C. Israeli settlements constitute a flagrant violation of United

Nations resolutions and international law. I call on the Government of Israel to cease advancing all settlement activity immediately, end the demolitions of Palestinian-owned property and prevent the possible displacement and eviction of Palestinians, in line with its obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law. I urge Israel to approve plans that can enable Palestinian communities in Area C and East Jerusalem to build legally and address their development needs.

In conclusion, I underscore that the speed and intensity of the security deterioration we are witnessing on the ground are extremely dangerous. The events that are unfolding seriously challenge broader stability and undermine the Palestinian Authority. While the ceasefire that followed the Gaza escalation in May has held, there is a constant risk that the events in the West Bank could spill over into Gaza.

Likewise, the Palestinian Authority's fiscal and institutional challenges, exacerbated by funding shortages, including for United Nations agencies, affecting the delivery of crucial basic services, remain concerning and may further aggravate the deterioration of the situation on the ground. Let there be no doubt — neither the PA nor the United Nations will be able to provide humanitarian assistance if donors do not urgently step up financial support.

In recent days and weeks the United Nations has remained in close contact with all the parties to help restore relative calm and change the current disastrous trajectory. We must act urgently and collectively to stop the violence. At the same time, it is crucial to bring the parties back onto a path that addresses the political issues driving the current dynamics so that the process of resolving the core issues can begin. The deepening occupation and settlement expansion, the high levels of violence against civilians, including acts of terror, and, critically, the absence of a political horizon, are rapidly eroding the hope among Palestinians and Israelis, particularly young people, that a resolution of the conflict is achievable. I urge all leaders to put on the brakes and rethink the options. The choice is clear — either to continue along the downward spiral of violence and provocations, leading to a political vacuum, or to turn towards constructive dialogue linked to concrete actions that can create hope and a political horizon.

The United Nations remains committed to assisting those efforts, and to supporting Palestinians and Israelis in resolving the conflict and ending the occupation through the achievement of a two-State solution, in line with the relevant United Nations resolutions, international law and bilateral agreements.

**The President:** I thank Mr. Wennesland for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Zogby.

**Mr. Zogby:** I thank you very much, Madam President, for the invitation and the opportunity to address all the members of the Security Council today on the human rights conditions of the Palestinian people living under Israeli occupation.

From recorded votes in the General Assembly, I know most Member States' Governments recognize the magnitude and urgency of this concern, but many feel they lack the capacity to end the injustices of the occupation. Meanwhile, those who have the capacity to defend Palestinian rights either make do with statements of concern or take steps that actually enable the nightmare to continue.

Almost five decades ago, I was invited to address a United Nations forum on this very issue. I cited concerns with collective punishment of civilian populations, massive home demolitions, prolonged detention without charge, torture, land confiscation and settlement expansion. Instead of presenting numbers, I chose to put a human face on the victims. I did so because while Israeli victims of violence were known, Palestinians were objectified and depersonalized. It did not do justice to simply tally up the numbers of the men in the village whose hands were tied behind their backs, blindfolded, forced to sit in a village square overnight on cold ground or in direct sun in the heat of day. They needed to be known and the impact of that humiliation and abuse on their families had to be understood. And what about the thousands of families given an hour to clear out their belongings before the bulldozers came to demolish their homes to create a so-called security corridor or those awakened in the middle of the night as their homes were invaded, ransacked and photographed by occupation forces in order to map the neighbourhood, or the farmer standing powerless as their 100-year-old orchards were demolished to make way for a security zone? Behind each incident are real people whose lives

were upended and futures darkened, their families traumatized and angry. Tragically, those same horrors continued to define the Palestinian reality today.

Annually, the General Assembly speaks to those violations of rights. Its resolutions are ignored; the commissions Member States' create and the human rights monitors they empower are denounced and demonized. And when Palestinians prepare a case for the International Criminal Court (ICC), they are threatened with sanctions. And yet it remains important to note that those violations continue to occur daily, affecting the lives and futures of millions of real people. Their voices must be heard. Their rights must be protected.

There are those in my country who denounced the United Nations for its resolutions on Palestinian rights. They charge the United Nations with singling Israel out for criticism and suggest an unhealthy obsession with Israel. Such a charge is both false and a denial of Palestinian humanity. In the first place, the United Nations has a special responsibility for Israel and Palestine. Israel is the only country conditionally admitted for membership, obligating it to implement United Nations resolutions adopted prior to its admission.

Since then and especially after the 1967 war, Israel has violated a range of laws and conventions and done so with impunity. It is not Israel that is being singled out for criticism, rather it is Israel that is being singled out by some in my country and excused from accountability for its behaviour.

The deformities that has created are worrisome. There is an extremist political culture in Israel today that is a by-product of that entitlement and impunity. Polling data demonstrates that a majority of Israelis do not view Palestinians as equal human beings deserving of having their rights protected, with a substantial plurality supporting the annexation of occupied lands and the expulsion of Palestinians who live there.

At the same time, consider the impact that has had on the Palestinian people and their political culture. Think of the Palestinians forced to wait for hours at a checkpoint to get to a job, return home or visit a family friend in a nearby village, knowing that, at the end of the wait, they could be humiliated by a 19-year-old heavily armed soldier or the child who has witnessed his father being treated in that manner, and the fear of families of the little children or the adult detainees.



Given that traumatic nightmare visited upon millions of Palestinians for the past 56 years, is it any wonder that a recent poll shows a majority of Palestinians rejecting moderate leadership, despairing of peaceful change and now favouring armed struggle? That tragic deformity in Palestinian political culture is the result of the continued brutality of the occupation.

It is also important to see the impact the harshness the occupation is having on the Arab world. While polls we conducted four years ago found a large majority in most Arab countries favouring exploring peace with Israel, saying that it might temper Israel's behaviour and stop the violence, more recent polling suggests the hope has decidedly diminished.

If our goal is to reignite the prospects for peace, then our focus must be to stay the hand of the occupier and defend the victims of brutality. Right now, concrete action is required to help free the imprisoned children, the detainees and those living under the threat of demolition, land seizure and settlement expansion. Palestinian rights must be defended, because Palestinians are not children of a lesser God. Their lives and futures are as important as those of any other people on Earth.

There are actions that can be taken that make a difference. Council members can collectively challenge Security Council vetoes, whereas the Governments of individual Member States can take concrete gestures to support the Palestinian right to seek judgment from the ICC or they can implement specific measures holding Israel accountable for its human rights violations. Israel needs to know there are red lines which, if crossed, have consequences. And Palestinians need to know they are not alone, and violence is not the answer. Actions, not statements, will contribute to restoring Palestinian hope, ending Israel's sense of impunity and empowering those Palestinians and Israelis who seek a peaceful future. Only after we have changed the political dynamic and helped to transform the political deformities infecting both societies, can a political horizon emerge and meaningful negotiations take place.

**The President:** I thank Mr. Zogby for his briefing.

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

**Mr. Wood** (United States of America): I thank Special Coordinator Wennesland for his briefing, as well as Mr. James Zogby for his insights. We share their

alarm over the violence in the West Bank and remain deeply troubled by the escalation we have witnessed this year.

We were horrified by the brutal terror attack on 21 June on Israelis near Eli in the West Bank, which killed four people and injured several others. We condemn the attack in the strongest terms, offer our deepest condolences to the families of those killed and wish the injured a speedy recovery. We also condemn the recent extremist settler attacks on Palestinian civilians, which have resulted in one death, injuries and significant property damage. We extend our condolences to the families of those affected and have underscored to the Government of Israel the importance of holding fully accountable and prosecuting those responsible for those acts of violence. As the leadership of Israel's security services has acknowledged, it is vital for community leaders to publicly denounce those acts and to contribute to the efforts to prevent them.

We are also concerned about the impact of that violence on the United States citizens who have been victims of senseless acts of terror this year and of the recent violence in the West Bank village of Turmus Ayya, where United States citizens, including Americans, make up a majority of the population. We are actively engaging with the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority to secure the welfare of our citizens and to provide equal measures of justice and security for all the Palestinian and Israeli civilians affected by that violence.

We were also deeply troubled by Israel's recent announcement that it would be advancing more than 5,000 settlement units, as well as the reports of changes to Israel's system of settlement administration aimed at expediting the planning and approval of settlements.

Going forward, it will be vital for both Israel and the Palestinian Authority to take additional steps to de-escalate tensions. We call on all the parties to refrain from unilateral actions, including settlement activity, evictions and the demolition of Palestinian homes, terrorism and incitement to violence, all of which serve only to further inflame the situation. There have been moments over the past week in which some people have questioned whether such a future is possible. Other people have warned that we are witnessing an escalation of violence not seen for more than 20 years. I understand the reasons for their pessimism. The violence of the past week must serve as a call to action for all of us in the Council to redouble our efforts towards peace. The

United States will continue to work with Israel and the Palestinian Authority to promote steps aimed at lowering tensions and restoring trust, which can create the conditions to bring the parties back to the table.

Finally, while we welcome the end of the strike by the West Bank Staff Union of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which disrupted services for some of the most vulnerable, we remain concerned about the continuing financial crisis facing UNRWA, particularly as Palestinians are facing a prospect of rising food insecurity, among other humanitarian needs. Regional actors and the broader international community must urgently consider providing UNRWA with greater financial support.

**Mr. Nebenzia** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to thank Mr. Tor Wennesland, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, for his briefing on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016), on Israeli settlement activity in the occupied Palestinian territories. We listened very carefully to the briefing by Mr. James Zogby, President of the Arab American Institute. We heard with concern Mr. Wennesland's assessment regarding the turbulent atmosphere in the West Bank as Israel intensifies its unilateral steps to create irreversible facts on the ground, primarily through illegal settlement building, while continuing to forcibly evict Palestinians, destroy their homes and expropriate their property, alongside the decisions by the Israeli leadership to legalize outposts in the occupied territory.

Since the beginning of the year, we have repeatedly witnessed regular outbreaks of violence both in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, as well as along Israel's perimeter. In the past two months alone, more than 100 people, including a Russian citizen and members of his family, have been victims of such escalations. The most recent raid by the Israel Defense Forces in Jenin on 19 June, in which seven Palestinians were killed, resulted in pogroms and clashes between Israeli settlers and Palestinians, with civilian deaths and injuries on both sides.

Against a backdrop of violent activity in the occupied Palestinian territory, the Israeli authorities' efforts to expand and legalize Israeli settlements have continued unabated. In May plans were approved for the construction of more than 600 housing units in settlements in the West Bank, while access for Israelis to

the outpost of Homesh, which was evacuated in 2005, was officially opened. This month, the Israeli Government decided to ease the bureaucratic procedures required for the approval of the construction and development of more than 4,500 housing units in the West Bank, which is a violation of international law. The demolition of Palestinian homes is also ongoing, with some 200 people, including 80 children, evicted in May alone, and with more than 30 buildings and a donor-funded school in Bethlehem destroyed. The regular provocations and violations of the status quo at Jerusalem's holy sites are particularly worrisome. In particular, Itamar Ben-Gvir, Israel's Minister of National Security, once again made a march to the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, while Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu held an external meeting at the site of archaeological excavations at the Temple Mount.

In the absence of any prospects for a revival of the Middle East peace process, the further deterioration of the situation in the area of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict can only be cause for concern. The recurring violence in the occupied Palestinian territory, in parallel with a weakening of the international legal framework for a settlement as a result of the Israelis' unilateral actions, is a reminder of the danger of a continued vacuum in the negotiating process. It must be acknowledged that the situation will remain volatile as long as the parties fail to reach mutually acceptable agreements on all final-status issues, based on the universally recognized international legal framework for a settlement in the Middle East and a two-State solution, which we have consistently supported.

We have recently seen some positive developments in the Middle East region. Against that background, it is regrettable that the issue of a settlement in the Middle East, especially its Palestinian aspect, has continued to be left behind in those processes. For all practical purposes, collective diplomacy regarding a Palestinian-Israeli settlement has come to a standstill. That is largely the result of the unilateral decision by the United States of America and the European Union to freeze the activities of the Middle East Quartet of international mediators. In that context, the initiative put forward by Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov when he presided over the Council's debate on the Middle East (see S/PV.9309), whereby a consultative meeting could be held between Russia, the League of Arab States and a group of countries of the region that are actively involved in the issue, remains relevant and significant.

We would like to clarify right away that our proposal is not designed to establish new formats or structures. Its aim is to confirm and give impetus to the implementation of previous international decisions in the area, including the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, the Arab Peace Initiative, the Madrid principles, including land for peace, and a two-State solution, with Palestine and Israel coexisting in peace and security. Russia is committed to the creation of a Palestinian State within the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. Our position is consistent and will not be subject to any opportunistic changes. We believe that our initiation of such a discussion could help synchronize the approaches and efforts of the leading Middle Eastern players regarding a settlement in the Middle East, including with respect to overcoming the intra-Palestinian divide and then helping to establish the necessary conditions for resuming a direct Palestinian-Israeli dialogue on a set of final-status issues.

**Mr. Pérez Loose** (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Special Coordinator Tor Wennesland for his briefing this morning. I also thank the Secretariat for the report on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016). Ecuador reiterates its support for the Special Coordinator's work, which is increasingly important in an increasingly difficult environment. We also thank Mr. James Zogby for his briefing, which we listened to closely.

We are pleased that a few minutes ago the Council, through its President, made its voice of consensus heard and provided information about the consultations held last Friday on the issue that brings us here today. The written report that we have received on developments covering the period up to 14 June is worrisome, and several of the facts mentioned in it have already been brought up in this Chamber. The events of the past 10 days are even more deplorable because they make it clear that caution, restraint and common sense have been overtaken by inflammatory rhetoric, unilateral decisions, senseless violence and terror.

Ecuador firmly condemns violence of every kind against civilians and any act of terrorism, whatever its source. We also condemn the glorification of terrorism, which cannot be tolerated. At the same time, we stand in solidarity with the victims, Palestinians and Israelis alike. Those responsible for those reprehensible acts must be brought to justice and held accountable for what they have done. We reiterate our call on the

parties to respect international law, human rights and international humanitarian law, including the principles of distinction and proportionality, as well as their obligation to protect civilians.

Four months ago, in its presidential statement S/PRST/2023/1, the Council expressed its deep concern and dismay at Israel's announcement that it would continue its construction and expansion of settlements and legalization of settlement outposts. The presidential statement also reiterated that the continuing Israeli settlement activities are seriously endangering the viability of a two-State solution based on the 1967 borders. On 19 March, following a meeting in Sharm-El-Sheikh, the parties issued a communiqué stating that the Government of Israel and the Palestinian National Authority reaffirmed their joint readiness and commitment to working immediately to end unilateral measures for a period of three to six months, including a commitment by Israel to ending discussions of any new settlement units for four months, and to halting the authorization of any outposts for six months.

Despite that commitment, the Secretary-General reports that between 14 March and 14 June, Israeli authorities advanced some 920 housing units in East Jerusalem and approved 1,890 units in the West Bank. Only last week, it was announced that they would advance the planning of thousands of units in settlements in the West Bank, and that Israel has approved changes to the Israeli administrative system that will expedite the authorization of such housing units in the future. It is disheartening to note that the insistent calls from the Council and the parties' voluntary commitments have been ignored and disregarded. Given the situation, we reiterate, just as is noted in resolution 2334 (2016), that the establishment by Israel of settlements in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, has no legal validity and constitutes a flagrant violation of international law and a major obstacle to the achievement of a two-State solution and a just, lasting and comprehensive peace.

Lastly, it is in the hope of achieving that just and lasting peace that we reiterate our call to the parties to demonstrate, through their actions, their willingness to work for a solution to the conflict, avoid more provocations and remember that revenge is not justice. Above all, we call on them to end the dangerous cycle of violence that prevents the peoples of Israel and Palestine from living safely in peace and dignity.



**Mr. Osei-Mensah** (Ghana): I would like to begin by thanking Mr. Tor Wennesland, the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Process, for his briefing, and Mr. James Zogby, President of the Arab American Institute, for his perspective on the situation in the Middle East.

We note the Special Coordinator's emphasis on the detailed measures being undertaken to restore calm in the region. We welcome the roles that friendly Governments have recently played to defuse tensions in the region, stabilize the situation on the ground and encourage dialogue and direct negotiations between senior political figures on both sides to find a political solution to the conflict.

It is regrettable that the period under consideration has been characterized by an increase in Israeli settler activities, which have resulted in the displacement of Palestinian families, encroachment on Palestinian lands, physical attacks, arrests without due process and the killing by both parties of children and unarmed civilians in the occupied Palestinian territories, especially the northern West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem. We condemn and express our deep dismay at the continuing pattern of violent attacks and direct confrontations between Palestinians and Israelis.

We remain concerned about the developments in the volatile security and dire humanitarian situations in the occupied Palestinian territories and beyond, which have been fomented by actions by both Palestinians and Israelis during the period under consideration. They include, first, the Higher Planning Committee of the Civil Administration of Israel's decision to expedite the issuance of construction permits for the planned construction of 4,560 new housing units in the West Bank, following the Knesset's repeal of certain clauses in the 2005 disengagement law — which ordered the evacuation of Jewish settlements — in order to allow Israelis to re-enter four settlements in the occupied West Bank; secondly, the use of live ammunition by the Israel Defense Forces in a security operation in a refugee camp in Jenin on 19 June, which resulted in the deaths of many Palestinian civilians, including children, and more than 90 injured to varying degrees; thirdly, the recent increasing use of provocative statements and radical policy proposals by notable high-ranking right-wing Israeli and hard-line Palestinian politicians, which undermine and threaten the prospects for the widely accepted concept of a two-State solution, and last but not least, the increase in incidents of rocket fire by

Palestinian armed groups and militias from Palestinian-controlled areas of the occupied Palestinian territories into Israeli territory and Israeli settler communities bordering the West Bank, which is an obstacle to peace.

Those unilateral actions run counter to various Security Council resolutions, especially resolution 242 (1967), reaffirmed in resolution 338 (1973), which provides the framework for peace negotiations based on the land-for-peace formula and has become the foundation for all subsequent negotiations and peace treaties in the region. We call on both parties to show maximum restraint and refrain from further unilateral actions by establishing a joint civilian committee that will work to promote confidence-building measures. We emphasize the importance of holding to account all who are responsible for acts of violence, human rights violations, war crimes and human rights abuses. We reiterate our demand that all the parties to the conflict comply fully with international humanitarian law, including in relation to the protection of civilians, and with the Charter of the United Nations and the many relevant United Nations resolutions, including resolution 2334 (2016). We appeal to both parties to respect and recommit to all previous agreements between them, especially the commitment to de-escalating the situation on the ground and preventing further violence, as agreed in the Aqaba and Sharm El-Sheikh declarations.

We call on Israel to exercise maximum restraint and act responsibly in a manner consistent with international law by promptly investigating all incidents involving the alleged disproportionate use of force against Palestinians, while abiding by its legal obligations and responsibilities under the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.

In conclusion, I reaffirm Ghana's commitment to playing a meaningful role in finding a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East based on the relevant Security Council resolutions and a two-State solution based on the pre-1967 lines.

**Mr. Biang** (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I thank Special Coordinator Tor Wennesland for his briefing. I also thank Mr. James Zogby for his briefing, which we listened closely to.

Since Israel's military raid on Jenin on June 19, the situation on the ground has deteriorated dramatically. The intense clashes in the northern part of the occupied West Bank have resulted in many casualties, including

young people. The cycle of violence evident in acts of terror and brutality and the disproportionate use of force against civilians, including women and children, must end.

We are concerned about the Israeli Government's decision of 18 June to modify the settlement planning procedures introduced in 1996, and by the advancement of 4,000 housing units by Israel's Civil Administration's Higher Planning Committee. We reaffirm that the policies of settlement and the evictions of Palestinians from their homes and demolitions of those homes are not only contrary to international law but also increase tensions and therefore create major obstacles to the realization of a two-State solution. We urge sincerely for efforts to achieve that solution and to build a comprehensive, just and lasting peace. At the same time, respect for the historical and legal status quo of the holy sites of Jerusalem is critical to the peaceful coexistence of the Israeli and Palestinian peoples. It represents a key consensus that neither party should call into question, which would jeopardize the possibility of dialogue in the Middle East peace process. To that end, Gabon reiterates its support for the vital role played by the Kingdom of Jordan in its official custodianship of Jerusalem's Muslim holy sites. We urge all parties to refrain from all forms of inflammatory rhetoric and posturing and other provocations that could reignite tensions.

The situation in Gaza remains particularly difficult, marked by restrictions on the movement of people and goods to and from Gaza. Those restrictions are contributing to the precarious living conditions of more than 2 million Palestinian residents. Although the movement of goods across the two borders has increased and the number of exit permits issued by Israel for work purposes rose sharply during May, the conditions for eligibility for exit permits remain drastic. We call for Israel to lift the blockade of Gaza completely, in accordance with resolution 1860 (2009), in order to allow unhindered access for humanitarian aid. We reiterate our call for funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East in order to guarantee the Agency's stabilizing action at a time when it urgently needs to restore its operating capacities.

In conclusion, Gabon reiterates its call for restraint, dialogue and a cessation of hostilities. We urge the parties to respect the Council's resolutions, in particular resolution 2334 (2016), and to implement the commitments made in Aqaba and Sharm El-Sheikh. We call for the greater involvement of States that have

influence on the parties with a view to achieving a lasting political solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which is worsening tensions throughout the region.

**Mrs. Baeriswyl** (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I would like to join others in thanking Mr. Tor Wennesland, the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, for his detailed briefing. I also took careful note of the briefing by Mr. James Zogby.

As we have just heard, June was once again marked by a very high level of violence in the occupied Palestinian territory. Switzerland reiterates that the settlements are illegal under international law. They also constitute a major obstacle to peace based on a two-State solution, as is also noted in resolution 2334 (2016), which obliges Israel to refrain from taking any measures that would introduce permanent changes, in particular demographic and administrative ones, to the occupied territory. In that respect, Switzerland calls on Israel to rescind the change announced on 18 June to the approval procedure for construction in settlements, as well as the announced construction of more than 4,500 new housing units in settlements.

Following the operation carried out on 19 June by Israeli security forces in the Jenin refugee camp, which cost the lives of seven Palestinians, including two children, and left nearly 100 injured, we want to remind the Israeli authorities of their obligations under international law. In particular, the use of force must meet the criterion of proportionality and respect all people's right to life and security. The use of a helicopter gunship in Jenin during that operation and the targeted assassination by drone on Wednesday evening also mark a worrisome escalation. Switzerland condemns the acts of violence perpetrated in the occupied Palestinian territory, in particular the attack that claimed the lives of four Israelis, including two minors, near the Eli settlement on 20 June. Switzerland also condemns the violence perpetrated this week across the West Bank by hundreds of armed settlers in retaliation, notably in Turmus Ayya, in which one Palestinian was killed and the property of Palestinian residents damaged. We call for those responsible for those attacks to be held to account. In that respect, we have noted the Israeli armed forces' denunciation of those acts and call for it to be followed by concrete measures. The armed forces must assume their responsibility by protecting the Palestinian population from such attacks.

The escalation of violence in the occupied Palestinian territory is alarming, with incidents in 2023 continuing those of the previous year — 126 civilians, including 35 children, have been killed. The death of a two-year-old child from an injury sustained during an Israeli operation in Nabi Salih on 5 June served as a reminder that children are all too often the victims of the conflict. They should never be the target of violence or put in danger.

In February the Security Council adopted a presidential statement (S/PRST/2023/1) calling on the parties to create the conditions necessary for peace. For a time, the meetings in Aqaba and Sharm El-Sheikh in the spring had made it possible to resume a dialogue with a view to reducing tensions, and Switzerland supports the efforts made in the wake of the presidential statement. We urgently call on the leaders of all parties to work for de-escalation and a resumption of genuine talks addressing the root causes of the conflict. Switzerland stands ready, including through its good offices, to support such efforts aimed at restoring a political horizon based on a two-State solution.

**Mr. Eckersley** (United Kingdom): Let me start by thanking the Special Coordinator for his helpful update. We also take note of Mr. Zogby's briefing.

As we have heard, the security situation in the West Bank and the occupied Palestinian territory continues to deteriorate. Last week saw more loss of life and showed how quickly and unpredictably events can change. It also underscored the urgent need for restraint, calm and respect for the dignity of human life. Seven people, including two children, were killed in an Israeli raid in the city of Jenin in the West Bank. While the United Kingdom supports Israel's right to defend itself, its security operations must be in line with international humanitarian law and every effort must be made to avoid civilian casualties. Terror attacks, such as the killing of four Israelis near the settlement of Eli by Hamas-affiliated gunmen on 20 June, are barbaric and unjustifiable and undermine the safety and security of Israelis and Palestinians alike. The United Kingdom condemns those attacks without qualification. The glorification of the killers by Hamas and other organizations is abhorrent and heightens tensions where de-escalation is needed. We also unequivocally condemn recent scenes of settler violence in Turmus Ayya, where homes and property were burned down and civilians attacked, resulting in the death of one Palestinian. Every perpetrator of such hate crimes should be held to account, and we urge that steps be taken to prevent similar crimes happening

again. Turning now to the report presented by the Special Coordinator on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016), let me make three points.

First, the report demonstrates the damaging effect of what it calls the relentless expansion of settlements on the prospects for peace. The United Kingdom's long-standing position remains unchanged. We oppose settlements, which are illegal under international law, and we call on Israel to cease and reverse its policy supporting their expansion. Secondly, the report also makes clear the value and importance of the dialogue that took place between senior Israelis and Palestinians earlier this year to building trust and managing relations. We echo the call for all sides to honour the commitments made in Aqaba and Sharm El-Sheikh. Finally, the United Kingdom shares the report's concerns about the shortfall in the funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. The Agency provides vital services and hope to millions, and we call on all Member States to work together to address the shortfall urgently.

**Mr. Zhang Jun** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Special Coordinator Wennesland for his briefing. I also listened attentively to Mr. Zogby's statement.

The Palestinian question is at the heart of the Middle East issue and bears on the lasting peace, security and stability of the region. China has always upheld the principles of fairness and justice on the Palestinian question and has always firmly supported the Palestinian people in their just cause for the restoration of their legitimate national rights. On 14 June, in a meeting with President Abbas during his visit to China, President Xi Jinping stressed that the fundamental solution to the Palestinian question lies in the establishment of a fully sovereign and independent Palestinian State, based on the 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital. President Xi pointed out that Palestine's economic and livelihood needs should be met, and that the international community should step up its development assistance and humanitarian aid to Palestine. He also called for adhering to a path towards genuine peace talks, respecting the historical status quo of the holy sites in Jerusalem and refraining from excessive and provocative rhetoric and actions.

A large-scale, more authoritative and more influential international peace conference should be convened to create the conditions for the resumption of peace talks and contribute concrete efforts to help Palestine and Israel to live in peace.

Last week, in the face of escalating tensions in the occupied Palestinian territories, China, together with the United Arab Emirates and France, facilitated, on 23 June, the convening of urgent consultations in the Security Council.

In connection with the briefing just delivered by the Special Coordinator, I would like to make three further points.

First, it is important to break the cycle of violence to pursue common security. The report of the Secretary-General provided an alarming account of violence and Palestinian casualties in the occupied territories, as well as civilian casualties on the Israeli side. I would like to reiterate China's opposition to unilateral actions that exacerbate tensions in the occupied territories, to all violence against civilians and to irresponsible provocation and incitement. The occupying Power must fulfil its obligations under international humanitarian law and guarantee the security of the people and their property in the occupied territories.

Palestine and Israel are neighbours and cannot be moved away from each other. No country should pursue absolute security at the expense of the security of another country. That is impossible both in theory and in reality. The international community must give equal attention to the legitimate security concerns of both sides and promote a vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security observed by both sides, which must be encouraged to achieve common security through dialogue and negotiation.

Secondly, it is important to uphold the international rule of law and cease unilateral actions to change the status quo. The construction of settlements in the occupied territories violates international law and runs counter to the obligations of resolution 2334 (2016).

Israel recently adopted a new settlement resolution that streamlines and expedites the settlement approval process and approved the construction of several thousand new settlement housing units, about which China expresses its concern. Every inch of settlement expansion represents a further squeeze on the living space of Palestine, a further encroachment on the land and resources of the occupied territories and a further weakening of the two-State solution. We once again urge the cessation of all settlement activities and unilateral actions to change the status quo of the occupied territories.

Thirdly, it is important to honour political commitments and advance the two-State solution. It should be noted that the crisis and instabilities in the occupied Palestinian territories today are rooted in the occupation and settlement expansion for over half a century and in the protracted stalemate of the Middle East peace process. The fundamental solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the Palestinian question lies in the resumption of peace talks and the implementation of the two-State solution. The international community must always place the Palestinian question high on the international agenda and take practical steps to advance the two-State solution. The Security Council must demonstrate a sense of urgency and be prepared to take meaningful actions, assume its responsibilities under the Charter of the United Nations and provide oversight and safeguards for the implementation of the political commitments.

China stands ready to work with the international community to actively contribute to a comprehensive, just and enduring solution to the Palestinian question at an early date, to the peaceful coexistence of Palestine and Israel, to the common development of the Arab and Jewish peoples and to the lasting peace and stability of the Middle East.

**Mr. De Rivière** (France) (*spoke in French*): France is seriously concerned about the deteriorating situation in Israel and the occupied territories. We condemn in the strongest possible terms all attacks targeting civilians and in particular the terrorist attack perpetrated on 20 June in the West Bank, which killed at least four Israelis and wounded several others. France reiterates its unwavering commitment to the security of Israel and its citizens.

France condemns the increasing violence by Israeli settlers against Palestinian civilians, including the destruction of their homes and property. That violence must stop. We call on the Israeli Government to respond. The perpetrators of violence must be brought to justice.

France has expressed its deep concern with regard to the clashes that occurred on 19 June during an Israeli army intervention in Jenin, which left at least six Palestinians dead, including a child, and many wounded Palestinians. We recall Israel's obligations under international humanitarian law on the proportionate use of force and the protection of civilians in the occupied Palestinian territories.



France condemns all attacks on civilians, including those committed against children. In that very worrisome context, France calls on the parties to avoid unilateral actions or provocations likely to fuel the spiral of violence.

The Security Council must respond to the sharp acceleration in settlement activity in the occupied Palestinian territories and ensure compliance with resolution 2334 (2016). Settlement activity fuels tensions on the ground and undermines the two-State solution. France therefore calls on the Israeli Government to stop building housing units in the settlements. France calls on Israel to uphold the commitments made in Aqaba, Jordan, and Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, in February and March. France will never recognize the illegal annexation of territories, nor the legalization of unauthorized settlements.

The Council has a collective responsibility to defend the two-State solution, even if it is increasingly precarious. As the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of France reminded us, alongside her German, Jordanian and Egyptian counterparts on 11 May in Berlin, it is urgent to work concretely towards restoring a credible political horizon based on a two-State solution, living side by side in peace and security. That is the only solution that can bring about a just and lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians.

France stands ready to contribute to any peace initiative. The United Nations, in particular the Special Coordinator, has an important role to play in supporting those efforts.

Finally, despite growing humanitarian needs in the occupied Palestinian territories, the World Food Programme and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East will be forced to suspend some of their activities in the West Bank and Gaza unless they receive new funding. We call on Member States to contribute to the funding of humanitarian assistance on which many Palestinians depend for their survival.

**Mr. Ishikane** (Japan): Japan welcomes the united message of the Security Council.

I thank Special Coordinator Tor Wennesland and Mr. James Zogby for their briefings.

We regret that the situation in Israel and Palestine remains volatile owing to provocative rhetoric, unilateral actions and violence. Japan is seriously concerned about

the deteriorating security situation on the ground, as exemplified by the recent clashes in and around Jenin. We strongly condemn the terrorist attack on 20 June that killed four Israelis in the West Bank, as well as the subsequent violence by settlers against Palestinians. Japan is alarmed by the possible recurrence of such events during the Eid al-Adha holidays.

Japan is seriously concerned about Israel's announcement, on 19 June, regarding its decision to advance planning for the building of more than 4,000 new units and its announcement, on 21 June, regarding its decision to advance planning for 1,000 units at the Eli settlement. Settlement activities are in violation of international law, constitute a serious obstacle to peace and undermine the viability of a two-State solution. We once again call on Israel to cease settlement activities immediately.

Japan recalls the importance of the joint communiqués issued in Aqaba and Sharm al-Sheikh as an outcome of serious efforts to calm tensions. We strongly call on all the parties concerned to take concrete steps to ensure de-escalation. In particular, both Israel and Palestine need to exercise maximum restraint and refrain from any inflammatory words or actions.

I would like to take this occasion to draw the Security Council's attention to the funding crisis faced by United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini has warned that by September, just over two months from now, UNRWA will exhaust its funds and no longer be able to provide core services and vital aid on which more than 5.9 million registered Palestine refugees depend. As for Japan, in 2023, we have so far contributed a total of \$40.1 million. UNRWA is key to regional peace and stability, and we urge our Member States to provide the necessary donations to make sure the Agency is fully funded.

Once again, we underscore the fact that, ultimately, the only way to resolve this conflict is through direct dialogue between the parties that leads to a two-State solution with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security. We welcome and encourage all international efforts seeking to create an environment suitable for such dialogue.

**Mr. Afonso** (Mozambique): Let me begin by expressing our appreciation to the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Mr. Tor Wennesland,

for his useful update on the situation in the Middle East region. We also extend our thanks to Mr. James Zogby, President of the Arab American Institute, for the perspective he just shared with us.

We are deeply concerned at the prevailing situation in Gaza, after recent information of yet another military attack by Israel against the Palestinian civilian population in the Jenin refugee camp, in the West Bank. We strongly condemn such attacks, which result in the death of civilians, and where humanitarian personnel and journalists were also targeted.

Mozambique has been following with the great attention the situation in the Gaza region as well as in the occupied Palestinian territories, where the escalation of violence has been increasing. This scenario is the antithesis of the Sharm El-Sheikh dialogue initiative, in which the parties showed signs of commitment to the search for peace solutions.

Mozambique calls for an immediate ceasefire and a slowdown in the escalation of violence in the region. We should encourage any hope for ongoing dialogue to continue in order to avert any more bloodshed.

Mozambique wishes to reiterate its long-standing principled position of support for the two-State solution, which respects the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and independence, and the State of Israel's right to existence. The dialogue for peace, the dialogue for negotiation and the dialogue for peaceful coexistence between Israel and Palestine must be based on this fundamental principle.

The people of Israel and the people of Palestine deserve a firm political commitment from their leaders for a sustainable dialogue and for avoiding violent confrontations, occupations and attacks. In the same vein, we commend the tireless work of Special Coordinator Wennesland in the region. He deserves — and he has — our full support.

Before concluding, I would like to underline the importance for the Security Council to guarantee compliance of its relevant decisions, as well as of United Nations resolutions, the Madrid principles and the Arab Peace Initiative.

Humanitarian assistance plays a decisive role in restoring hope to a long-suffering people. In this context, we call again for the strengthening of the role of and support for such humanitarian institutions

as the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and the World Food Programme.

**Mr. Hoxha** (Albania): I thank the Special Coordinator for the update and Mr. Zogby for sharing his perspective with us today.

Again, the key word of our meeting on this issue is violence. It has been particularly troubling and worrisome in the course of the last two years. It is becoming alarming and deadlier, more and more traumatizing and debilitating. It risks becoming a normal, banal thing, even with its deadly consequences and the endless carnage it causes on both sides. Yet we all know that violence has never been the right answer and will never be the solution. We should strongly resist the idea that parties are doomed to a never-ending conflict — it is a dead end because it kills hope and annihilates efforts for peace.

Last week was extremely fatal for both sides, and the loss of life among civilians, including children and women, is appalling. It is incumbent upon the parties to act and reverse this horrible trend of violence and escalation by refraining from unilateral acts, denouncing provocative actions, inflammatory rhetoric and incitement, and rejecting extremist calls and nationalist extremism that trigger destabilization and insecurity and foment more violence.

Albania strongly condemns the terrorist attack committed by Hamas in Eli last Tuesday, causing the death of four Israeli civilians. We stand with Israel and support its right to self-defence from terror through proportionate response. Terrorist acts are unacceptable and unjustifiable and should be condemned by everyone and at all times, as should the glorification or incitement for such acts.

We are equally concerned by the impact the conflict is having on Palestinians, often victims of disproportionate response. In this respect, we strongly condemn the repeated acts of ruthless settler violence towards Palestinian civilians. In a country based on the rule of law, no one has the right to self-justice, to blind revenge or collective punishment. We welcome the very strongly worded joint reaction of the Israeli security institutions and call on the law-enforcement agencies to thoroughly investigate all the cases of settler violence towards civilians, hold those responsible accountable and take the necessary measures to prevent such acts in future.

International humanitarian law applies equally and must be fully respected on both sides. We call on the parties to respect their commitments taken at the Aqaba and Sharm El-Sheikh meetings and work for appeasement. Like others in the Security Council, we are deeply worried by the recent announcement by the Israeli Government approving thousands of additional settlement units and by reports of changes to Israel's system of settlement administration that expedite the planning and approval of settlements. Settlements are illegal under international law, and they are an obstacle to peace and a driver of violence and insecurity for civilians. The full implementation of resolution 2334 (2016) is an international obligation.

In the course of the past 75 years, the efforts for peace in the Middle East have continued and at times have produced very encouraging results. In terms of volume, the countless ceasefires, proposals, plans and road maps for resolving the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians could fill an entire room. Yet we must recognize that today we are no closer to a lasting peace. Unfortunately, destroying is easier than building, and the antagonists — the forces against peace — are also very powerful. At the core of the longest conflict in modern history lie some fundamental and complex questions, such as those of identity, the claim to land and the legitimate right to existence of others.

That is why we fully support a two-State solution, which in our opinion is the only way to guarantee a secure Israel and a viable and democratic Palestine, with Jerusalem as their shared capital, living side by side as two States for two peoples, fully entitled to equal safety, security and prosperity. That is of course an uphill path, and the obstacles are many. But there is no alternative to peace, and peace is always made by the brave and the visionary. The sooner a political horizon for a genuine peace process is restored, the better our chances that we will no longer need to deplore the endless violence and its deadly consequences, enabling us instead to focus on supporting the genuine efforts for a settlement, with the hope of one day celebrating a long-lasting peace.

**Mrs. Frazier** (Malta): I too thank Mr. James Zogby for his remarks, as well as Special Coordinator Wennesland for his sobering briefing and his continued efforts to de-escalate the volatile situation on the ground.

In 2016, the Security Council adopted resolution 2334 (2016), which provides a clear road map towards peace. Nevertheless, the conflict continues, and serious

violations of the resolution persist, pushing us further away from a credible peace process in the Middle East. In recent weeks we have again seen alarming and deadly violence against civilians, which remains a tragic undercurrent in this prolonged conflict. Malta strongly condemns the terror attack that took place near the settlement of Eli in the occupied West Bank last week, resulting in the killing of four Israeli civilians. There can be no justification for such appalling acts of violence or for inciting or glorifying them. The subsequent attacks by Israeli settlers on Palestinian residents and properties in the West Bank are also unjustifiable and must not be allowed to continue to take place with impunity.

We are disturbed by the number of casualties and injuries resulting from the operations of the Israeli security forces in the West Bank. Military incursions such as that in Jenin on 19 June, which left several Palestinians dead, including children, and more than 90 injured, are deeply concerning. The disproportionate use of live ammunition and explosive weapons in populated areas during those operations only contributes to the cycle of violence. Malta urges Israel to exercise the greatest possible restraint, abide by international humanitarian law and prioritize the protection of civilians.

We want to emphasize that too many women and children, on both sides, continue to unjustly suffer the consequences of this conflict. We are also concerned about the detention by Israeli forces of Palestinian children for alleged security offences, and reiterate that depriving a child of liberty should be a measure of last resort and should last only the shortest appropriate period of time. We also remain concerned about the involvement of Palestinian youths in terrorist activities.

Malta strongly reiterates its concern about the Government of Israel's decisions to expedite the expansion of settlements and advance the construction of thousands of settlement housing units in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Such actions take us ever further from a just and lasting peace and imperil the viability of an independent, contiguous Palestinian State. We would like to remind the parties that the expansion of settlements, the demolition of homes and the displacement of Palestinians violate international law and the relevant resolutions of the United Nations, including resolution 2334 (2016). They also have humanitarian repercussions on Palestinian lives. We call on Israel to halt and reverse such unilateral decisions, which breed division and further inflame tensions.

Immediate steps need to be taken to de-escalate the situation, reverse the negative trends and relaunch credible negotiations and dialogue between the parties. We appeal to both sides to hold further meetings in the Aqaba and Sharm El-Sheikh quintet format in a spirit of de-escalation, and to implement the commitments made in the respective joint communiqués. The international community should come together to participate in and support the international and regional diplomatic efforts aimed at salvaging the stalled peace process. We must return to a political horizon that is conducive to a just and comprehensive resolution of the conflict, based on a two-State solution along the pre-1967 borders, addressing the legitimate aspirations of both sides, with Jerusalem as the future capital of two States, living side by side in peace and security, in line with the relevant resolutions of the Council and internationally agreed parameters. We firmly believe that this remains the only viable path to peace.

**Mr. De Almeida Filho** (Brazil): I thank Mr. Wennesland for his briefing and his valuable work on the ground. I also thank Mr. Zogby for his insights.

Last week, we witnessed a worrisome surge of violence in the West Bank, in yet another of the troubling cycles of spiralling violence that have continued for years in Israel and Palestine. Israel's escalating military actions, including air strikes — the first in the West Bank in nearly 20 years — are further exacerbating the tensions. The son of a Brazilian citizen was among those injured last week, shot in the head and shoulder during the invasion of the Palestinian village of Turmus Ayya by Israeli settlers. The scale of the hostilities, the number of casualties and the use of new armaments are reigniting the risk of an escalation of tensions in the West Bank. The reports tell of dangerous and hate-filled rhetoric, provocations and incitement from officials on both sides, fuelling violence. Brazil urges all the parties to promote calm and exercise the utmost restraint. We strongly condemn all violence against civilians, whether Palestinians or Israelis. Israel has an obligation under international humanitarian law to safeguard the civilian population from violence. We call on it to adhere strictly to the fundamental principles of proportionality, precaution, necessity and humanity in all of its military operations.

Brazil condemns the recent decision by the Government of Israel to advance the construction of housing units in existing settlements in the West Bank, as well as its modification of settlement-

approval procedures in order to expedite the process of authorization. Those decisions violate international law, specifically resolution 2334 (2016). As highlighted in the Secretariat's most recent report on the implementation of the resolution, those decisions are reshaping the geography and threatening the feasibility of a two-State solution. Brazil urges the Government of Israel to immediately and completely cease all settlement activities and to fully respect all its obligations under international law. Demolitions and evictions, including of internationally funded humanitarian projects and structures related to income-generation and the provision of essential services, also represent numerous human rights violations and raise concerns about the risk of forcible transfers.

The situation in Gaza also remains critical. The restrictions to access affect people in need of medical care and block the availability of essential medicines. Much more needs to be done to alleviate the humanitarian situation, improve the economy and lift the closure, in line with resolution 1860 (2009). Brazil echoes the calls for renewed efforts to restore the capabilities of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. Unless it receives new funding, the Agency may be unable to maintain critical services.

Brazil continues to believe that mere administration of the conflict is not a viable alternative. Resuming peace negotiations is of paramount importance. But without political will, there can be no way forward. Regrettably, the commitments made in Aqaba and Sharm-El-Sheikh to refraining from provocative unilateral actions and pursuing de-escalation measures have not been kept. We urgently need to find ways to break those terrible cycles and promote an effective process towards sustainable peace in the region.

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

I thank Mr. Tor Wennesland, the Special Coordinator, for his comprehensive briefing and his efforts against a deeply alarming backdrop. I am also grateful to Mr. James Zogby for his important remarks today. It will be crucial to ensure that the warnings we have just heard are heeded. Last week's events mark a dangerous escalation — that much is clear. But we must acknowledge that they also represent the inevitable outcome of a moribund peace process. As others have



said here today, the situation is approaching a point of no return, risking a complete breakdown of any semblance of stability and security. The spectre of the intifada and the widespread violence that gripped Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory more than two decades ago looms perilously large. We are courting disaster if we do not work collectively to avoid that outcome at all costs. Accordingly, I want to make three points.

First, the situation is long past expressions of concern and condemnation. The Security Council and the international community must take on their responsibilities and move beyond the evidently failed status quo. It is time for determined, intensified action to help de-escalate the situation on the ground and revive the peace process. That means greater diplomatic efforts at both the regional and international levels. The international community must also firmly underscore to the parties that incitement begets incitement, violence begets violence, and security is ephemeral in the absence of justice, the rule of law and accountability. The Council must be unequivocal in its rejection of all illegal actions in the occupied Palestinian territory, including those at the core of the current heightened tensions. That includes Israel's repeated and violent incursions into Palestinian cities and villages, especially Nablus and most recently Jenin. During this month, we also witnessed the first aerial bombardment in the West Bank since 2002 — another data point in an alarming deterioration on the ground that should set the Council's alarm bells ringing.

Secondly, the incitement of violence risks undermining what remains of the hard-won gains of the past and could also result in regional spillover. In a visit to an illegal outpost far into the interior of the West Bank, an Israeli senior official celebrated the settlement and called for the killing of thousands of Palestinians. That must be identified for what it is — dangerous and irresponsible incitement to violence — and condemned without prevarication. Such statements from the highest levels of Government fuel grievances and stoke tensions. Leaders should use their influential positions to responsibly renounce and condemn hatred and violence, not feed them.

Two weeks ago, the Council adopted the landmark resolution 2686 (2023). It recognized hate speech as a contributor to fuelling grievance and a driver of outbreaks and escalations of conflict. There is no place on Earth where the raw elements of conflict fuelled by hate speech are more evident than in this part of the

Middle East. We saw that play out with the burning of copies of the Qur'an by Israeli settlers last week in Nablus. Illegal practices in Jerusalem, particularly the repeated storming of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, continue to be a source of domestic and regional tensions. At a time when the region desperately needs peace and stability after decades of conflict, it is imperative to prevent such spillover. The sanctity of religious sites and places of worship must be upheld.

Thirdly, all the parties must refrain from unilateral measures and return to the commitments made most recently at the Aqaba and Sharm-el-Sheikh meetings. That is the only viable way forward. The most recent advancements of Israel's settlement policies, including the approval of a law to ease and expedite settlement activities and the retroactive legalization of outposts, are only two on a long list of alarming developments undermining the prospects for a two-State solution and moving all of us towards a one-State reality. We unreservedly condemn the Israeli Government's announcement of more than 5,700 new settlement units, making this year one of the highest in terms of such approvals. The Secretary-General's most recent report on resolution 2334 (2016) also outlines that unprecedented pace of settlement expansion. Israel's settlement activities violate international law and constitute a major obstacle to peace.

The United Arab Emirates further calls on Israel to put an immediate stop to terrorist attacks by settlers, such as those that took place in the town of Turmus Ayya, and to prosecute those responsible to the fullest extent of the law. In that vein, we welcome the recent contact between President Herzog and President Abbas earlier today, in which President Herzog condemned the settler rampages in the West Bank. Additionally, we take note of the comments by the Israeli Defense Minister, emphasizing that the settlers who perpetrated violence against Palestinian citizens will be brought to justice. We look forward to seeing that accountability process realized, in line with Israel's obligations to protect Palestinian civilians in the occupied Palestinian territory.

Once more, the United Arab Emirates reiterates its commitment to a two-State solution and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State, based on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side with Israel in peace, security and mutual recognition. We must not let go of that objective in this Chamber. Our words and actions matter too much for the future of both peoples and the entire region.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Israel.

**Mr. Erdan (Israel):** Last Tuesday, Elisha Antman, a 17-year-old who had just finished high school, was nearing the end of his shift at a restaurant near the town of Eli. That was Elisha's very last shift. He had been working there for nine months. He had saved up some money and made plans to spend his summer hiking. Last Tuesday was indeed Elisha's last shift. But tragically, he will not be taking a trip this summer. He will not be hiking. He will not be spending time with his high school sweetheart Maayan, with whom he had discussed building a life together. He will no longer pick up any of his eight younger siblings from school, whom he loved like the caring older brother that he was. Elisha will be doing none of those things, because along with three other innocent Israeli civilians, Elisha was murdered by Palestinian terrorists whose sole goal was slaughtering Jews. That is the heartbreaking reality that Israelis face every single day.

Sadly, the briefings that the Council receives on Palestinian terrorist attacks are completely underreported and hardly scratch the surface of what Israelis endure. Since the start of 2023, 1,337 rockets and mortars have been fired at Israel. There have been eight stabbing attacks and an additional eight attempted such attacks. There have been eight ramming attacks, the detonation of 68 explosive devices and 157 shootings by terrorists. Those numbers are already higher than those in the one-sided United Nations reports that the Council receives. But I have not finished. Since 1 January, 223 firebombs have been hurled at Israelis and — listen to this — Israelis have been the target of 1,728 rock-throwing attacks. Any cars with Israeli licence plates — including the cars of mothers driving their children to school and of elderly people on their way to doctors' appointments — are potential targets of Palestinian terror. But the Council does not see those numbers. Israelis have been the victims of more than 3,500 attacks since the start of this year, and sadly that number is growing every day.

The reality of Palestinian terror fuelled by the non-stop incitement and incentivization of violence that is spewed at every level of Palestinian leadership is the root cause of the conflict and all the escalation. And it is precisely that vile hatred that the Council continues to ignore. I really cannot understand why Council

members disregard the promotion by the Palestinian Authority (PA) of terror and the murder of civilians. I refuse to accept the lies that the Council is being fed. The situation on the ground — the terror that Israeli civilians in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria face every single day — is exponentially worse than its depiction in the briefings that the Council receives.

Before I continue, I want to make one thing very clear. The State of Israel is a democracy governed by the rule of law. Extremists who decide to take the law into their own hands through vigilantism and violence cross a red line. Rioters who attack innocent Palestinians and destroy property are not and will not be condoned by Israel. On the contrary, the Israeli leadership — and we need no lectures from anyone else — from the Prime Minister, the President and the Defence Minister to the military's Chief of Staff, the Director of the Israel Security Agency and the Chief of Police, has condemned those attacks. Israel is working tirelessly to find those responsible for the recent riots in Judea and Samaria, and they will be held accountable. In Israel we condemn any kind of violence in the strongest terms, and we take action against those who perpetrate it. Sadly, however, the Palestinian Authority does exactly the opposite, not only normalizing violence and damage to property but even the murder of innocent civilians, including children, as well as terror, violence and the murder of Jews. The reality of incitement starts at the very top in Palestinian society, with President Abbas and his Fatah party officials, and it trickles all the way down, even to kindergartens.

Palestinians are taught to hate. They are educated to murder. They are told that martyrdom and jihad are the only way. And the reason behind that campaign of incitement is that the Palestinians are interested in one thing and one thing only — the destruction of the very notion of a Jewish State. That has been the case from well before 1967 and even before the establishment of Israel. Judea and Samaria have absolutely nothing to do with it. After all, if President Abbas were willing to accept that Israel is the homeland of the Jewish people, why would he constantly blame the United Kingdom over the Balfour Declaration? That is exactly what he said in the General Assembly Hall when the PA insisted on commemorating the seventy-fifth anniversary of Israel and calling it the Nakba — the catastrophe. Such cancerous hatred has poisoned the minds of children and adults alike. There are now entire generations of Palestinians who have no interest in peace but only in

spilling Jewish blood. And that is the root of the conflict. That is what should be addressed and condemned by each and every one of the Council members today and always. Nothing will change until the root cause of the conflict is tackled.

Here I am, sitting before the Council and harshly condemning the violence perpetrated by Jews against innocent Palestinians at the hands of a few extremist Israelis. But where is the Palestinian representative's condemnation of young Elisha's murderer, or of any act of terror? Does he condemn the recent brutal terror attack in Eli? Does his President condemn it? Will any Palestinian leader — anyone at all — condemn it? Of course not. He will not condemn Elisha's murder, just as he did not condemn the murder of Meir Tamari at the end of May, the heartless killing in April of Lucy Dee and her two young daughters, Maya and Rina, or any other vicious act of Palestinian terror. Not only is the Palestinians' refusal to condemn terror never mentioned here, their murderous pay-for-slay policy is also met with continued silence. That is a disgrace. For the Palestinian Authority, violence against Jews is not only not to be condemned, it is to be commended. By law, the Palestinian Authority allocates hundreds of millions of dollars to murderers and their families — 7 per cent of its budget, by the way. That is far more than the welfare given to Palestinian families living below the poverty line. The Palestinian Authority rewards terrorists and incentivizes bloodshed, and it does so with pride.

But sadly, the Council continues to believe that the situation on the ground is escalating because of building permits. The twisted culture of hate and incitement that is permitted from the top down, throughout Palestinian society, is the only reason that the violence continues. It is the only barrier to any form of reconciliation. I therefore want to ask the Council why we hold these repetitive discussions if the root of the problem is constantly ignored. How can the Council possibly intend to prevent violence if even the sick practice of rewarding terrorists is neither condemned nor addressed? At every one of these meetings, the focus is completely skewed. Instead of recognizing the truth that Palestinian incitement and hate fuel the escalation of violence, most Council members prefer to blame Israel. The escalation is not a result of rare acts by some despicable Israeli extremists who will be brought to justice. And it surely is not the result of issuing building permits in communities that already exist. That is not what drives Palestinian teenagers to take

up guns and knives and use them against Israelis. The violence is purely the result of the toxic brainwashing of Palestinians sponsored and organized by their leaders, whether that is the Palestinian Authority or Hamas and Islamic Jihad, which are designated terror organizations.

Palestinian terror attacks have been relentless, regardless of Israel's various Governments. Whether they are right-wing, left-wing or centrist, it makes no difference to the Palestinians. No matter who the Prime Minister is or who is in the Cabinet, Palestinian incitement persists, and, as a result, Palestinian terror persists. Time and time again, Israeli Prime Ministers offered the Palestinians a State. They offered negotiations, and time and time again the Palestinians rejected any peace plan. There is no clearer evidence that the true goal of the Palestinian leadership is not the establishment of a Palestinian State but rather the destruction of the Jewish State. As long as that fact is ignored and as long as any kind of comparison is made between neutralizing Palestinian terrorists posing imminent threats and attacking innocent Israeli victims of terror, the Council is promoting the Palestinians' murderous ideology. The very notion of a cycle of violence is completely false. There is no such thing as a cycle of violence. Terrorists are murdering Israelis as a result of poisonous Palestinian incitement, and Israel is taking action to defend itself. There is no cycle.

Regarding the issue of Israeli building permits in Judea and Samaria, I would like to clarify again that those steps are not an impediment to peace, and the building will not stop. Constructing homes in existing communities across Judea and Samaria is not an inflammatory step. Judea and Samaria are the heartland of the Jewish people, and I know everyone is aware why we are called Jews. We are called Jews because we are from Judea. It was the home of our forefathers. It was where our holy tabernacles stood. It was where our kings and prophets lived. It is an integral part of our heritage and who we are, both as a nation and as a faith. We, the Jewish people, hold moral, legal and historic rights to the land.

Despite the land being constantly referred to here as the occupied Palestinian territories, it has never been the sovereign territory of any Palestinian entity ever. These are disputed territories, and the Jewish people cannot be occupiers in our homeland — our own land. Does the Council know that Israeli communities make up less than 2 per cent of the entire area? Yet

there are hundreds of thousands of Israelis living in those communities. As shocking as it may seem to some, Israelis living in Judea and Samaria are human beings, too, and they too deserve the fulfilment of basic needs such as infrastructure and housing. The building there will not stop. I will also add that construction in existing communities definitely does not prevent the real first step towards peace, that is, sitting down at the negotiating table.

When the international community falsely blames Israel while ignoring the root cause of the conflict, I constantly ask myself the same question — what is Israel honestly expected to do tomorrow morning? Are we expected to simply give in to all of the Palestinian demands, to turn the hills of Judea and Samaria into rocket launch pads of terror overlooking Israeli cities, just like in Gaza? Is that what Israel is expected to do tomorrow morning? That is not an imaginary scenario. Just yesterday, two rockets were fired from Jenin towards Israel. Gaza is ruled today by a jihadist terror organization that is hell-bent on Israel's utter destruction. We all know what would happen to Judea and Samaria, which members call the West Bank, if Palestinian elections were held tomorrow, or if God forbid Israel were to totally withdraw from the territories. Hamas and other designated terror groups would win, take control and then throw Palestinian Authority officials off rooftops, just as they did in Gaza.

President Abbas, who is in the nineteenth year of his four-year term, does not represent the Palestinian people today — certainly not the Palestinians in Gaza, but also not the Palestinians in Judea and Samaria. Again, what is Israel expected to do until the Palestinians have a leader who is willing to sit down at the negotiating table? Should we deny our citizens basic human needs? Even now, the Palestinian Authority refuses to take any action against the growing jihadist entrenchment in its cities and the expanding terror infrastructure being built right under its nose. Israel will not stand idly by as Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and other new terror groups such as the Lion's Den grow in Jenin, Nablus or Jericho. If the Palestinian Authority will not act against them, Israel will. Yet once again this discussion is spent ignoring the true obstacle to a brighter future in the Middle East, while focusing solely on the Palestinians' anti-Israel lies and propaganda. It is shameful.

Sadly, these meetings have a tendency to neglect the real threats to the Middle East. It does not end with disregarding Palestinian incitement. The Middle

East is hurtling down a very short path to region-wide conflict and bloodshed, yet the Council continually fails to mention the nuclear Shiite elephant in the room. Today the Ayatollah regime, the world's number one State sponsor of terror, is galloping towards nuclear weapons. It is funding and arming its terror proxies across the Middle East — the Houthis in Yemen, terror groups in Iraq, Hizbullah in Lebanon and Syria, Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad in Gaza, and the list goes on. As a result of Iran's transfer of hundreds of millions of dollars, arms shipments, the sharing of weapons-manufacturing expertise and more, those terror groups have now become terror armies. Their influence is expanding, their weaponry is advancing, and they are becoming more emboldened by the day. In recent weeks, in complete defiance of Council resolutions, Hizbullah established outposts on Israel's sovereign territory. Thanks to Iran, we are closer than ever to severe escalation on our northern border, and the result will be far-reaching and devastating.

But the Iranian threat is not merely a regional one. From cyberattacks in Albania and the endangering of maritime trade to supplying attack drones used against Ukrainian civilians, the Ayatollah regime is the cause of destabilization on a worldwide scale. What else must happen for the Council to understand that? Just this weekend, an Iranian terror attack targeting Jews and Israelis was thwarted in Cyprus. The Ayatollahs are exporting terror to all corners of the Earth, and they are doing so with impunity. That is the real impunity. Imagine what their terror apparatus will look like when it is protected by a nuclear umbrella. Imagine, if the Council refuses to take action today, what the response will be like once Iran has a bomb.

The international community as a whole and the Council in particular have a responsibility to tackle true threats. Yet rather than focusing on the root causes of the most pressing security threats, these meetings instead ignore what is truly important. That must not and cannot continue. If the Council is so determined to find a path to reconciliation between Israel and the Palestinians, the time has come to harshly condemn the Palestinian Authority's incitement and funding of terror. If the Council aims to truly fulfil its mandate, it must confront the most pressing threats to global security, which are Iran and its dangerous proxies. Please stop ignoring what is truly important and start taking action where it can make a difference.



**The President:** I would like to express my apologies for the fact that, due to technical errors in the notes today, the established order of speakers was not followed. That does not set a precedent for future meetings of the Council.

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

**Mr. Mansour** (Palestine): I accept your apology, Madam President.

I will not dignify with a response the customary barrage of lies and distortion in complete contradiction to international law, the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the resolutions of the Security Council and General Assembly. We must reject that behaviour. To those who repeat it and — judging from the representative's body language — their expression of outrage and resentment, thinking that the continuation of that behaviour will change the positions of the members of the Council and the international community is an exercise in futility. Nevertheless, stubborn fascist enemies of peace will not learn from the fact that the Council is not responding in any positive way to this failed attempt over the meetings that we have so often. Yet, they continue to behave in that manner. That is why I will not dignify those assertions, and I think that the example speaks for itself. These are the types of peacemakers that the Council is invited to work with — filled with hatred, rejection of the other, rejection of any notion of peace, accusing the victims of being the victimizers. This is the theatre of the absurd. Those are not the peacemakers that we are extending our hand to.

Let me now go back to the text of my speech.

Allow me to congratulate you, Madam President, and the brotherly nation of the United Arab Emirates on assuming the presidency of the Council and for your efforts to mobilize the Council to address, as it is its responsibility, the situation in Palestine, notably the occupation and colonization of our land in breach of international law and the Council's resolutions. I thank Mr. Tor Wennesland for his briefing, and I thank Mr. James Zogby for being with us in this important meeting of the Security Council and for his powerful statement. Mr. Zogby has been a good friend of mine for many years. I am delighted to see him in our meeting and to see him share with the Council his insights and thoughts.

For years, we have been warning of what is unfolding before our very eyes, of the cost of Israeli impunity with regard to the Palestinian people and peace. This Israeli Government is bringing to its ultimate conclusion a plan decades in the making — a State for the settlers in place of the Palestinian State.

Israel has always had a colonial settlers' agenda, but now the settlers themselves control Israel and the agenda. The settlers believe that this is their chance to get it over with. They look around, they hear a lot of noise, but see no real resistance except the one the Palestinians themselves are mounting through their resilience and steadfastness in keeping their ancestral land.

The settlers know that their actions are condemned worldwide — and that has been demonstrated once again today — that their image is tarnished, but as long as they can displace Palestinians and transfer more settlers, they will continue. The only will facing them is the will of the Palestinian people. But they have the military, financial and political advantage. Who cares about the moral ground and international law if no resources are deployed to uphold them?

The settlers have at their disposal all the resources of the Israeli State. So they continue doing all they can to grab land — they steal, they terrorize, they destroy, they burn and they kill. The heads of Israeli military services themselves could not but speak of the settlers' terrorism. But who will rein it in?

The Council condemned this terrorism — as it should. But what does one usually do in the face of terrorism? One arrests and prosecutes. Will that be done? One blocks accounts and drains financial means. Will that be done? One prevents terrorists from travelling. Will that be done? One holds accountable those who give terrorists the means to perpetrate their attacks. Will that be done?

The Israeli Government simplified the process for settlements approval and gave the keys to Smotrich so that Netanyahu can pretend to be the hostage of the most extremist elements in his Government, while his rhetoric and his policies are what got them to power in the first place.

Israel approved more than 5,000 settlement units just yesterday. I think that even the Israeli Government is stunned by how much it can get away with and, therefore, just keeps crossing every red line, every day.

What would my colleagues here today do if they were a Palestinian, if their life was made of blockades and walls, if every day could be their last, killed in the street or their homes, if settlers or soldiers could invade their homes and harm their children, if they were deprived of their land and freedom and if their human dignity was under daily assault? What would they do if they faced that situation on a daily basis?

We asked for protection, a protection our people deserve, a protection they are entitled to. Is protection on the way? The Council adopted resolutions; the Secretary-General produced reports. Is there any concrete idea being worked on that would provide some level of protection for our people and our children? Anything?

I often repeat myself by telling the Council that it adopted resolution 904 (1994) when the massacre in Al-Haram Al-Ibrahimi took place in 1994. Why does the Council not implement that resolution and all other resolutions? Who is preventing the Council from doing so? Resolution 904 (1994) stipulates that settlers should be disarmed, not given more weapons, and certainly not be allowed to build new militias of 25,000 settlers to make up yet another force attacking our people. That resolution also stipulates a temporary international presence to protect our people from those who are supposed to protect us in accordance with international humanitarian law. When those who are supposed to protect us, kill us, what are we supposed to do? We come to the Security Council; it adopts a resolution. Why does the Council not then implement it in order to provide us with protection until the end of the occupation, when we will have independence and freedom in our homeland.

We sought accountability. Does not everyone here recognize it as the best way to prevent the recurrence of crimes? Are not Palestinian victims entitled to justice? Are they less human or less worthy? Are their lives less relevant?

We have left no stone unturned, pushing for commissions of inquiry, trying to activate universal jurisdiction, joining the International Criminal Court (ICC). Can it be that the ICC is the only institution not aware of the crimes under way and of the criminals committing them, when these perpetrators are confessing their crimes every day, committing them in broad daylight, legislating them, adopting budgets for their commission, spelling them out in Government guidelines and plans, and boasting about them?

Why is it that accountability must be immediately delivered to some and can be obstructed forever for others, like us? Not listing Israel, given the actions of Israeli occupation forces and settlers against Palestinian children, gives them licence to continue killing and maiming our children, which should have led to the country being listed in the recent report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2023/363), but the Secretary-General chose not to list Israel in that report.

We were told to be patient, that these are complicated processes, that they take time, that there are stages and that violators need to be given every chance before listing them, as an incentive to correct course. And then we saw other situations where things were much simpler and happened much faster — where a different logic is at play. Our people have fallen victim once again to these double standards. And, by the way, there is another victim: the credibility and authority of the list and of this international law-based order.

What message is being sent to the Palestinian people? I ask Council members to please think hard: what message is being sent to the Palestinian people? No one wins if despair prevails. Let me repeat: no one wins if despair prevails. Despair will not lead to surrender; it will lead to more anger. The Palestinian people are faced with an existential threat, and every day they become increasingly convinced that there is no help on the way. I ask the mighty Security Council and the mighty international community to show them that help is on the way.

Around this table we have brothers, sisters, friends and allies. We have people who believe in what we believe. They believe in the rule of international law. They believe in the sanctity of life. They believe in just peace, not unjust wars. Some have experienced first-hand the evils of colonialism. All have fought for their independence. Many consider that their tenure in the Security Council must be to preserve and consolidate the international law-based order. They all support the two-State solution, based on the 1967 borders; they all support an independent Palestine living side by side with Israel. They all condemn settlements. They all condemn violence and terrorism against innocent civilians.

How, then, is what is happening in Palestine possible? If we all stand for and honour these lofty principles, why is what is happening in Palestine happening in Palestine? How come it has been happening

for so long? It has been 75 years since the Nakba. The Nakba is what happened to us. We are grateful to the international community that this year it acknowledged the Nakba and called for a commemoration at the highest level in the General Assembly (General Assembly resolution 77/23). The commemoration happened and acknowledged the Nakba of the Palestinian people, which was a giant step in the direction of reconciliation.

How come the entire world cannot stand up to the settlers and their sponsors? If every Council member says that settlements are illegal and that they should stop — and each Council member does — why are we not succeeding in stopping this evil behaviour — the theft of our land and the threats to the lives of our people — from continuing? How come the entire world cannot stand up to the settlers and their sponsors?

I understand political, geopolitical and diplomatic realities. That is my job. That is the job of all diplomats and of all people at this table. I have spent my life navigating these realities, and yet everything about this situation feels wrong. Political realism should dictate action not inaction. The world has invested so much in peace but has never taken the necessary decisions to protect its investment from the colonization that deprived us and the world from the benefits of this investment.

Is there anything that this Israeli Government or Israeli settlers would do that would change the equation and bring about accountability? Do Council members want the Government or the settlers to do more before they wake up and do something based on what they believe and what they have decided? Do Council members want to see thousands of Palestinian women and children — civilians — slaughtered at the hands of terrorist settlers under the protection of the Israeli authorities before they wake up? Is it not the Council's responsibility to prevent these massacres

from taking place before they take place? When will Council members wake up? The Israel Government and the settlers are betting that there is nothing they could do that would change the equation and lead to accountability. They are betting that Council members will continue not to act. And if they are right — and they have yet to be proven wrong — if they are right, God help us all, because what we have seen is not the last word; what we will see will be even worse.

For the global South, and for many people across the world, Palestine is an indicator of how healthy or how ill the international law-based order is. Let me repeat: Palestine is an indicator of how healthy or how ill the international law-based order is. They see in our fate the proof of double standards and injustice, of the fact that this system is designed to work for some and not for others. It creates grievances far beyond Palestine. It entrenches mistrust and misunderstandings.

We should be standing shoulder to shoulder together, finding ways to provide protection, pursue accountability and achieve justice, so that freedom and peace can prevail. Is there anywhere where these discussions are taking place?

The stakes are too high to just go through the motions of meeting and stating and condemning. We repeat ourselves a great deal. These are needed as a prelude to action, not as a substitute for it. We stand ready to do our part as Palestinians for as long as we humanly can. But time is running out. Regardless of how hard taking the necessary decisions may seem now, the consequences of not taking them are infinitely greater.

**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 the subject.

*The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.*