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Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Dame Barbara Woodward	(United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
<i>Members:</i>	Albania	Mr. Spasse
	Brazil	Mr. França Danese
	China	Mr. Zhang Jun
	Ecuador	Mr. Pérez Loose
	France	Mr. De Rivière
	Gabon	Mrs. Ngyema Ndong
	Ghana	Mr. Agyeman
	Japan	Mr. Ishikane
	Malta	Mrs. Frazier
	Mozambique	Mr. Afonso
	Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
	Switzerland	Mr. Hauri
	United Arab Emirates	Mr. Abushahab
	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 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Algeria, Argentina, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Chile, Cuba, Egypt, Guyana, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Israel, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Malaysia, Morocco, Namibia, Norway, Pakistan, the Philippines, Qatar, the Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, the Syrian Arab Republic, Türkiye, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Yemen to participate in this meeting.

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

There being no objection, it is so decided.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Khaled Khiari, Assistant Secretary-General for Middle East, Asia and the Pacific in the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations, to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I also invite the following to participate in this meeting: Mr. Thibault Camelli, Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations; His Excellency Mr. Maged Abdelfattah Abdelaziz, Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States to the United Nations; His Excellency Mr. Ahmad Faisal Muhamad, Vice-Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People; and His Excellency Mr. Paul Beresford-Hill, Permanent Observer of the Sovereign Order of Malta to the United Nations.

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

I give the floor to Mr. Khiari.

Mr. Khiari: Since Special Coordinator Wennesland's previous briefing to the Security Council, on 27 June (see S/PV.9361), the deterioration

of security situation in the occupied West Bank has continued, punctuated by a two-day Israeli operation in Jenin, the most intensive of its kind in nearly 20 years. This deterioration is taking place alongside the absence of a peace process, the continuing economic challenges facing Palestinians and the Palestinian Authority, and ongoing unilateral steps that undermine a two-State solution. It is critical that all parties take urgent steps to stop the downward spiral and engage with each other to seek a constructive path forward.

From 27 June through 24 July, in the occupied West Bank, 21 Palestinians, including five children, were killed, and 249 Palestinians, including five women and 22 children, were injured by Israeli security forces during demonstration clashes, search-and-arrest operations, attacks and alleged attacks against Israelis, and other incidents. Another 20 Palestinians, including a woman and five children, were injured by Israeli settlers or other civilians in shooting attacks, stone throwing and other incidents. According to Israeli sources, two members of Israeli security forces were killed, while another 39 Israelis, including four women, three children and eight members of Israeli security forces, were injured by Palestinians in shooting and ramming attacks, clashes, the throwing of stones and Molotov cocktails, the detonation of improvised explosive devices and other incidents.

The period included significant escalation of the ongoing wave of violence in the West Bank. On 3 and 4 July in the Jenin refugee camp, in area A of the occupied West Bank, Israeli security forces carried out an operation marked by multiple drone air strikes and more than 1,000 ground troops. A total of 12 Palestinians, including four children, were killed, and more than 140 injured, the most in a single operation in the West Bank since the United Nations began tracking casualties in 2005. According to eyewitnesses, a 17-year-old was killed — he was unarmed and not engaged in the fighting at the time he was shot. The Palestinian Islamic Jihad Al-Quds Brigades claimed 8 of the 12 fatalities as members, including the 17-year-old and other children. The Israeli authorities say that none of the Palestinians killed in the operation were non-combatants. One Israeli soldier was killed by live fire in circumstances that the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) said were unclear, and another was injured. Israeli security forces say that they destroyed multiple caches of explosives and weapons, including two that were located under mosques, as well as operation

centres used by militant groups. The targeted sites included locations adjacent to United Nations facilities and schools. In addition, extensive fires took place near a hospital and other health facilities, with reports of Israeli security forces firing tear gas in or around the facilities. The only health clinic run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) inside the camp was damaged and remains closed.

In addition, on 3 and 21 July two Palestinians, one of them a child, were killed by the Israeli security forces in clashes following protests near the Beit Awwa checkpoint, north of Ramallah, and in the village of Umm Safa, respectively. Also in Umm Safa, on 7 July a Palestinian was killed by Israeli security forces during clashes following a confrontation between Palestinians and Israeli settlers. On the same day, two armed Palestinians whom Israeli security forces accused of perpetrating a shooting attack were killed in an Israeli security forces operation in Nablus. On 20 July Israeli security forces killed a Palestinian man in an armed exchange in Nablus during a heavily secured visit to Joseph's Tomb by Israelis, including Israel's Police Commissioner and settler leaders, in accordance with established procedures. Palestinians carried out a number of attacks or alleged attacks on Israelis, including a ramming and stabbing attack in Tel Aviv on 4 July that injured eight Israeli civilians, one of whom was a pregnant woman; a shooting attack near the Kedumim settlement on 6 July, in which an Israeli soldier was killed; an attack on 10 July near the settlement of Halamish, in which a Palestinian man allegedly shot and threw an explosive device towards Israeli security forces; and an alleged ramming attack on 21 July on Israeli soldiers in the village of Sebastia. Four Palestinians were killed while carrying out such attacks.

In addition to the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in Jenin, the period also saw Palestinians from the so-called Al-Ayyash Brigades attempting for a second time in two weeks to launch rudimentary rockets from the Jenin area towards Israel or Israeli settlements on 10 July. Two rockets landed in open areas in Israel, with no damage or injuries reported.

Settler violence continued, albeit not on the scale witnessed in June. On the night of 3 July Israeli settlers attacked Deir Dibwan village, near Ramallah, in subsequent confrontations in the presence of Israeli security forces. Palestinians threw stones and settlers

fired live ammunition, injuring one Palestinian. On 13 July settlers assaulted Palestinian herders in Arab Al-Kholi in the northern West Bank, injuring four elderly men, leaving two in a serious condition. At least one Israeli was injured.

Amid the escalating violence, Palestinian security forces conducted a series of arrests across the occupied West Bank, including of a senior Palestinian Islamic Jihad leader in Bethlehem accused of forming armed groups, on 17 July, and a senior Hamas official from Tubas, on 20 July. Both were subsequently released. In a statement on 17 July, a Palestinian Islamic Jihad spokesperson noted that to date 10 of its members had been arrested by Palestinian security forces.

While the situation in Gaza remained relatively calm, militants fired five rockets from Gaza towards Israel, responding to the operation on the night of 4 July in Jenin. All were intercepted by Israel's aerial defence system, with shrapnel landing in the city of Sderot. In response, the Israeli air forces carried out air strikes against what it said were Hamas targets in the Strip. On both sides, property was damaged, but no injuries were reported. On 3 and 4 July, during demonstrations near the security fences east of Gaza City, six Palestinians were injured by Israeli security forces, two by live ammunition.

The Israeli authorities placed eight Israeli civilians under administrative detention for their involvement in the violent attacks on Palestinians in June. On 12 July the Israeli authorities indicted an Israeli civilian and an off-duty Israeli soldier on charges that included carrying out acts of terrorism against Palestinian civilians during the attacks in June.

I reiterate that acts of terror and the targeting of civilians are unacceptable and must be condemned and rejected by all. All the perpetrators of violence must be held accountable and swiftly brought to justice. 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. As the Secretary-General has noted, security forces must exercise maximum restraint and use lethal force only when strictly unavoidable in order to protect life. I am appalled that children continue to be victims of violence and that militant factions have claimed some as members. Children must never be targets of violence, made use of or put in harm's way. I also

reiterate that the indiscriminate launching of rockets by Palestinian militants towards Israeli population centres is a violation of international humanitarian law and must cease immediately.

The humanitarian situation in the occupied West Bank remains concerning. The large-scale operation by Israeli security forces in the Jenin refugee camp took a devastating humanitarian toll on the camp and its residents. More than 460 houses were damaged, including 70 that were severely damaged or destroyed. There was also extensive damage to roads, as well as to water and sewage infrastructure. Around four kilometres of road were dug up by Israeli forces, which they said was to neutralize buried IEDs. Of the 3,500 residents who fled the violence, some 20 families remain internally displaced as a result of damage to their homes or a lack of basic services. Throughout the operation, access to the camp was limited to one entrance by Israeli security forces, which initially hindered most ambulances from reaching casualties. Access was fully restored on 5 July, though movement around the camp remains difficult due to the widespread damage and contamination by unexploded ordnance left by both sides.

Assessments made by the United Nations and its humanitarian partners identified a number of priority needs, including the clearance of unexploded ordnance; the restoration of water and sewage provisions; food, rental, and psychological assistance to the worst affected families; the restocking of medical supplies; and repairs to schools and the UNRWA clinic. The Palestinian Authority has committed to repairing the damage sustained in Jenin. Financial pledges have also been made by donors to help with the reconstruction, including \$30 million from Algeria to the Palestinian Authority and \$15 million from the United Arab Emirates through UNRWA. Despite that generous response, several funding shortages continue to curtail the ability of the United Nations to provide support to Palestinians throughout the occupied Palestinian territories. UNRWA faces gaps of some \$200 million in its ability to maintain its services from September onwards and \$75 million to sustain the food pipeline in Gaza. In addition, the World Food Programme needs \$41 million if it is to continue providing assistance to the 350,000 prioritized Palestinians in need until the end of the year.

On 3 July, in response to the Israeli operation in Jenin, the Palestinian leadership adopted a number of decisions. They included the freezing of all contacts with Israel, as well as continuing the unannounced

suspension of security coordination and stepping up Palestinian international efforts, including joining United Nations agencies and bodies and pursuing the prosecution of Israel in the International Criminal Court. The leadership also called for a meeting of all Secretaries-General of Palestinian factions on 30 July in Cairo. On 12 July, President Mahmoud Abbas visited the Jenin camp refugees. He laid a wreath in memory of the Palestinians killed and made remarks praising the camp as an icon of the struggle and vowing that the Palestinian Authority would rebuild it.

On 9 July, Israel's Security Cabinet voted "to prevent the collapse of the Palestinian Authority", noting that the Prime Minister and Defence Minister would present the Cabinet with steps to stabilize the civil situation in the Palestinian sector. Separately, in recent weeks the Israeli authorities have taken some steps aimed at relieving pressure on the Palestinian Authority's fiscal situation, including reducing the handling fee for fuel transfers to the Authority and expanding electronic payments to Palestinians working in Israel.

On 17 July, Prime Minister Netanyahu spoke with President Biden. Between 18 and 21 July, President Herzog made an official visit to the United States. Among other things, according to official readouts, the leaders discussed steps to restore calm in the West Bank, including by reconvening the Aqaba-Sharm El-Sheikh format, in addition to regional developments, and proposed changes to the judiciary in Israel. On 24 July, despite months of protests, the Israeli Knesset enacted a law barring the Israeli courts from reviewing the reasonableness of Government actions and appointments. The so-called reasonableness standard had been used by courts in the past to block or limit certain Government actions, including those related to policies in the occupied Palestinian territory.

As violence in the West Bank surged, Israeli steps to expand settlements continued. Israeli authorities demolished, seized or forced owners to demolish 44 Palestinian-owned structures in Area C and 12 in East Jerusalem, displacing 70 Palestinians, including 38 children. The demolitions were carried out due to a lack of Israeli-issued building permits, which are nearly impossible for Palestinians to obtain. On 11 July, Israeli security forces evicted a Palestinian family from their home in the Muslim quarter of Jerusalem's old city and handed the property over to a settler organization, after a decades-long legal battle ended several months ago, with the Supreme Court rejecting the family's

last appeal. Close to 1,000 Palestinians, including 424 children, face possible eviction in East Jerusalem. On 10 July, 36 Palestinians, including 20 children, left their community of Al Baqa'a, near Jerusalem, following the establishment of a settlement outpost in their community on 21 June and subsequent settler attacks.

Turning to the region, the ceasefire between Israel and Syria in the Golan has been generally maintained despite continued violations of the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement of Forces by both parties. On 19 July, the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) observed the Israel Defense Forces fire at least 350 machine-gun rounds, while on 24 July the IDF fired five projectiles into the area of separation. UNDOF has continued to note the presence of Syrian armed forces personnel in the area of separation. UNDOF has remained in contact with both sides to prevent any escalation of tensions.

As the Special Coordinator for Lebanon and Under-Secretary-General Lacroix highlighted in their briefings to the Council on 20 July, we continue to witness tensions along the Blue Line, in particular in the Shebaa Farms and northern Gaza, related to Israel's occupation of northern Gaza and construction work by the IDF in sensitive areas, as well as the placement of a tent south of the Blue Line claimed by Hizbullah. The United Nations reiterates the importance of ensuring that all the parties concerned exercise restraint and utilize the liaison mechanism of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon to de-escalate tensions.

I am deeply alarmed by the scale of violence and scope of destruction we have witnessed in recent weeks, particularly during the Israeli security forces operation on 3 and 4 July and the ensuing armed exchanges in Jenin, as well as the attacks during the past month that have targeted Palestinians and Israeli civilians. I reiterate the call on all parties to take concrete steps to de-escalate tensions on the ground and ensure that all civilians are protected. The United Nations remains engaged in extensive contact with all parties, including those in the wider region, to help lower tensions and prevent a renewed outbreak of violence. As the Special Coordinator has emphasized, those steps must be integrated into a broader effort by all parties to restore the political horizon and address the underlying drivers of the conflict. The United Nations remains committed to helping Palestinians and Israelis resolve the conflict

and end the occupation, with the aim of achieving a two-State solution, in line with the relevant United Nations resolutions, international law and bilateral agreements.

The President: I thank Mr. Khiari for his briefing.

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

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Madam President, on your country's assumption of the presidency of the Council, and to thank Mr. Khaled Khiari for his briefing.

Why is it that the warmongers are full of certainty and the peacemakers are full of doubt? Why are the warmongers implementing their decisive plan while we are unable to implement United Nations resolutions? We know exactly where their decisive plan, or to be more accurate their destructive plan, leads. And we know that our collective vision is the only viable path to freedom and peace.

The Israeli Government is a Government of the settlers, by the settlers and for the settlers. The settler Ben-Gvir has once again stormed the Al-Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram Al-Sharif in yet another provocation and breach of the historical status quo. There are more than 700,000 Israeli settlers in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, so let us start by calling things by their name. The Israeli occupation is a settler-colonial occupation. The international community as a whole has called for ending that occupation. The only way to do that is by addressing its settler-colonial nature. Israel gives incentives to settlers. The world needs to ensure there are disincentives for becoming a settler, opening a business in a settlement, going to university in a settlement, farming in a settlement or opening a bank branch in a settlement.

We have one task — one task that can determine if we head towards peace or fall into further conflict. We need to translate United Nations resolutions into an action plan, with measures to be taken by every peace-loving State on Earth to dissuade Israel from entrenching its occupation instead of ending it. Israel has effectively annexed large parts of the Palestinian territory and restricted Palestinians into disconnected enclaves, with confinement for Palestinians and expansion for Israeli settlements. It wants maximum Palestinian land with minimum Palestinians. If it can build Israeli settlements and destroy Palestinian homes without consequences, it will continue to do so.

Settlers are armed. They walk into our villages, torch our homes, burn our crops and wreak havoc in our streets because they can. They do it because no one will hold them accountable, and no one is providing the Palestinian people with the international protection they deserve. We have resolutions that address all those issues with clear determination but with no implementation. We need an action plan, with the necessary resources and the will to implement it. We cannot allow the warmongers to have momentum and the peacemakers to have regrets. We need to generate momentum against occupation and for peace. We need a forum in which we can discuss and take concrete steps to roll back and end the settler-colonial occupation and advance just and lasting peace.

Israel is pursuing a settler State in our territory and some countries continue to delay recognition of the State of Palestine and its membership in the United Nations — a decision they should make with no further delay. The investigations of the International Criminal Court need to start yielding results, as a matter of justice for the victims and deterrence for the perpetrators. The advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice will give guidance to the United Nations and all States on their legal obligations, and I take this opportunity to thank all States and regional organizations that have submitted written statements in support of the Court's jurisdiction and role. A very large number of countries — approximately 50 countries — have submitted such statements, which, as far as I know, is the largest number that the Court has ever received.

If we are to be guided by the rule of international law and the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, then we have an obligation to act, to hold Israel accountable and to advance just and lasting peace. Wherever we do not defend those principles, the warmongers prevail. And they promise us just that — war. Jenin is a case in point. Those who want peace need to stand up to them. They need to act. They need to act now, boldly and decisively.

The Charter starts with the words “[w]e the peoples of the United Nations determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war”. Save this Palestinian generation from the scourge of war. Fares Abu Samra was 14 years old when he was killed a few hours ago by the Israeli occupying forces who shot him in the head during an Israeli military incursion into Qalqilya at dawn. More than 200 Palestinians have been killed since the beginning of the year, including

37 children. Our children are, from the moment they are born, confronted with forcible displacement, arbitrary arrests, blockades, walls, destroyed homes and schools, killing and maiming.

Despite those evils, our nation has found a way to ensure that they are educated in order to find, with the international community's support, ways for them to express their talents and creativity and to help them grow with some semblance of childhood and some sense of hope. But if we fail to protect their lives, all that vanishes with a bullet. Every life is sacred, but the life of a child holds special meaning, as it is the most vulnerable, with promises yet to be fulfilled. Protect our children, as they are the primary target of the warmongers. They always come for the next generation. The peacemakers should do the same. War and peace start there. Hope and despair start there as well.

The Palestinian people will not die in silence or in vain. They will not surrender. They will not yield. They will continue their struggle for freedom, while always striving for peace. They no longer believe that help is on the way. Prove them wrong. Restore hope in collective action. We need to show that the peacemakers will not accept defeat, because they are well aware of the alternative to peace. In the coming weeks and months, we will all have important decisions to make. May we be guided by the rule of international law, with no exceptions or exceptionalism allowed.

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

Mr. Erdan (Israel): Today is Tisha B'Av, the ninth day of the Jewish month of Av. It is the saddest day on the Jewish calendar. It is a day of solemn mourning, fasting and prayer, during which we commemorate the destruction of both our temples. On this day, 2,600 years ago, the first holy Jewish temple in Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonian Empire, and we were exiled from our homeland to Babylon. We returned, we rebuilt, and Jewish sovereignty was restored. Yet again, on this very day, nearly 2,000 years ago, our second holy temple was razed to the ground, that time by the Roman Empire. And the Jewish people were once again dispersed among the nations and exiled from our homeland. On 9 Av, today, the Jewish people mourn what we lost. Our holy temple has not been rebuilt since then, and today Jews can only pray at the temples' only remaining structure — the Wailing Wall. But thank

God, Jewish sovereignty has once again returned to the Jewish homeland and, above all, to Jerusalem, our eternal capital.

Sadly, the idea of the Jewish people coming back home and rebuilding the Jewish State is a concept that the Palestinians have always refused to accept. And they use every tool at their disposal to attempt to destroy the realization of the Jewish people's 2,000-year-old dream to live freely in the land of Israel — in the land promised to Abraham by the Almighty, the land from which so many of my ancestors were forcefully exiled by other nations, the holy land of Zion, in which the Jews have lived continuously for thousands of years. But the Palestinians' arsenal of weapons to destroy the Jewish State is never the focus of these meetings.

The Palestinian Authority, with its mandated incitement in school textbooks poisoning the minds of students or its pay-for-slay policy of handing money to terrorists, has spawned a generation of hate-filled youth. Hamas and Islamic Jihad joined the Palestinian Authority in the glorification of martyrdom and even established terrorist summer camps where they educate children that murdering Israelis is the only path and train them to do so. Shockingly, that fact was not even mentioned in the recent report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2023/363). But do not be fooled: the primary threat is not only terror organizations. The Palestinian Authority is fully responsible for promoting terror, demonizing Israel and Jews and delegitimizing the Jewish people's right to a homeland. That was true of the Palestinians' leaders in 1947, when they rejected the United Nations partition plan, and it remains true to this very day. The outcome of that hate and refusal to work towards a solution is that terrorists are emboldened, and Palestinian terror prevents any chance for progress. Since the beginning of this year, more than 4,000 — I repeat, 4,000 — Palestinian terror attacks have been committed against Israelis, 28 innocent civilians have been murdered, including young children, and hundreds have been injured.

I will repeat this at every meeting: although the United Nations refuses to verify our reports, those are the facts. That is what is truly happening on the ground. A few weeks ago, a Palestinian rammed a pickup truck into a crowded bus stop in Tel Aviv. He then exited the vehicle, pulled out a knife and proceeded to stab every person he could lay his hands on. Saba Gavriyot, one of the victims injured in the attack, was pregnant and,

owing to her injuries, she tragically lost her baby, which she had been able to conceive only as a result of two long years of in vitro fertilization treatments. That is the horror that Israelis must face — Palestinian terrorists who accelerate into bus stops at which pregnant women and children are standing. Such acts of terror, and those who perpetrate them, must be condemned — if not by President Abbas, who never condemns them, then, at the very least, by the United Nations and its bodies. I am not talking about a general condemnation of terror. When I hear the words "I condemn all acts of terror", as the Secretary-General recently stated, I cringe. Are those barbaric acts of Palestinian violence not deserving of a more detailed description? Are Israeli victims of terror so insignificant that they are merely generalized? Do the terror organizations perpetrating the attacks not have names? Those responsible must be held accountable. Saba Gavriyot lost her baby because she was run over and stabbed by a Palestinian Hamas terrorist. Is that so hard to say? The Council should show the Palestinians and the world that it thinks Hamas is committing heinous crimes and also harming the Palestinian people.

Today I want not only to describe the situation on the ground but to ask what Council members would do in the face of relentless terror. Would they sit patiently and wait for the next attack? Would they rely on the international community to come to their aid? In the past few years Jenin, and its refugee camp in particular — I will get to that later — has become a hotbed of terrorist activity. It is a place ruled by organizations such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad that are designated as terrorist. It is where so many — more than 50 — of the recent deadly terror attacks were planned and carried out from, and it is a city of refuge for terrorists on the run. Jenin is a cancerous tumour of violent Palestinian extremism and terror. And I therefore ask Council members once again what they would do. For Israel, like any other country, the answer is clear. Action must be taken in order to prevent the next terror attack.

Here are the facts of what really happened in Jenin, and any other version of the events is a blatant lie and a distortion of reality. Israel launched a two-day surgical counter-terror operation focused solely on Jenin-based terror infrastructure targeting innocent Israeli civilians. During the tactical operation, 12 Palestinian terrorists were killed, two terrorist command centres uncovered, two shafts to terror tunnels sealed, five labs making explosives found and hundreds of improvised

explosive devices (IEDs) and weapons discovered. Weapons caches were uncovered in mosques. The Jenin governmental hospital was taken over by terrorists, who used it as cover when firing at Israeli forces. Explosives were stored mere metres from a United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) school and kindergarten. Terrorists planted IEDs all along the main roads in the centre of the camp. Yet despite the terrorists' cynical use of Palestinian civilians as human shields and critical civilian infrastructure as cover, thanks to Israel's efforts and care there was not a single civilian casualty during the operation. Any military expert will attest that that is a remarkable achievement that defies all odds. Israel does everything possible to avoid collateral damage and civilian casualties.

Imagine my shock, therefore, when rather than commending Israel for uprooting terrorists with surgical precision, the Secretary-General — the Secretary-General — condemned only Israel, making claims completely detached from reality. Rather than lambasting a terror organization for exploiting innocent Palestinians and murdering Israelis, he panned Israel for defending itself. The Secretary-General, and United Nations bodies, which we also heard here today, are repeating brazen Palestinian lies about Israel preventing access for humanitarian and essential care. The exact opposite is true. Throughout the operation Israel ensured that there was a constant humanitarian corridor and that ambulances could tend to the wounded. Any other claim is a fabrication. The fact that the Secretary-General chose to condemn Israel, a law-abiding democracy, as opposed to the bloodthirsty Palestinian terrorists seeking to murder innocent Israelis, is a disgrace, and such remarks only embolden the terrorists. Words carry immense weight, and if we have not taken the time to study and analyse the facts, it is far better to refrain from saying anything that may do harm.

Rockets have already been fired at Israel from Jenin, and if Israel did not take action now against the growing terror, we would have to do it later on and on a much larger scale. This preventive operation should have had the full support of all Council members, but since it did not, I would like to ask what the Council would have us do instead. We hear constant calls for de-escalation, and statements are made about improving the situation on the ground. We agree. Yet how can any responsible actor utter such words while completely

ignoring the side that is truly responsible for the death and destruction? Precision strikes on terror targets were necessary only because the Palestinian Authority neglected Jenin, handing it over to terrorist groups. Time after time, Israel requested that the Palestinian Authority combat the growing terror infrastructure in Jenin, but time after time the Palestinian Authority refused. Suddenly, as we heard here today, following Israel's counter-terror operation President Abbas felt safe enough to visit Jenin for the first time in a decade, and the Palestinian Authority security forces are finally beginning to show signs that they are enforcing law and order. Yet here in this Chamber the truth is ignored while Palestinian lies are accepted at face value.

However, today I would like to take advantage of the fact that we are focused on Jenin's refugee camp to share with the Council the ultimate proof that the Palestinians are interested not in peace but only in the Jewish State's destruction. The proof is the very existence of Jenin's refugee camp and all the other Palestinian refugee camps. How can it be that after so many decades there are still refugee camps inside Palestinian cities? It is mind-boggling that after nearly a century, there are still Palestinian refugee camps in Syria, Lebanon and Jordan, where, by the way, the residents are treated like third-class citizens. In most of the camps Palestinian refugees are not even given citizenship and are prevented from working in decent jobs, all in order to preserve the problem and perpetuate the conflict with Israel. It is impossible to fathom the fact that today, within an entity that claims that its goal is to establish a functioning Palestinian State — and peace, of course, peace — there are still Palestinians who are relegated to refugee camps decades after first arriving in them.

Have Council members ever stopped to ask themselves why the descendants of the descendants of Palestinian refugees are still living in refugee camps? Why have they not been integrated into Palestinian society? What is the reason for that? We are talking about camps in Palestinian cities. If the Palestinian Authority's main goal were truly to establish an independent State, those second- and third generation refugees would be living in regular Palestinian cities, not camps. But that is not the Palestinians' goal. Their goal is the annihilation of the Jewish State, and one of their weapons for achieving that goal is by brainwashing generation after generation of Palestinians that Palestinian cities are not and will not be their homes. After all, they are still refugees. Their home is in Israeli cities such as Haifa, Tiberias, Safed

and many others. The aim of the Palestinian leaders is not to live beside the Jewish State but rather to destroy and replace it, and they plan to do so one day by flooding Israel with more than 5 million so-called Palestinian refugees. That is why there are still refugee camps in Palestinian administrative areas, from Nablus, Jenin and Tulkarm to Bethlehem, Ramallah and Jericho. That is why the descendants of Palestinian refugees are still separated from Palestinian society.

However, that plot to destroy the Jewish State would be impossible without the help of a very important partner — the United Nations and its destructive agency UNRWA. What makes the descendants of Palestinian refugees different from all other refugees? Why must there be a separate United Nations Agency for Palestinian refugees while all other refugees from Syria, the Sudan, Ukraine or Afghanistan are aided by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees? Why, for Palestinians, is their refugeehood hereditary? Why is not UNRWA's primary goal to settle refugees to end their identity as refugees? That dysfunctional system has no parallel anywhere else in the world and is a huge part of the problem.

When the United Nations and the international community promote an Agency that preserves refugee camps and the refugee identity nearly a century after the problem began, then all that is accomplished is the perpetuation of the conflict. UNRWA continues to feed the Palestinian people a lie that the world supports their right of return; that as long as the original refugees, along with their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, have still not returned to where they came from, they will always be excluded from society, and they will forever remain branded as refugees.

Let me be clear: there is no right of return. Council members all know that. The demand of returning millions of descendants of refugees is the demand to obliterate the Jewish people's right to self-determination, and that will never happen. So, if the aim of these meetings is to remove the obstructions to solving this conflict, then here is one of the most fundamental obstructions: the perpetuation of Palestinian refugeehood, both by the Palestinian Authority and sadly, by that very organization, UNRWA.

Yet that is not the only obstruction ignored by the international community. On 1 August 2014, two hours into a United Nations-brokered humanitarian ceasefire, Hamas terrorists murdered Lieutenant Hadar Goldin and abducted his body. Almost exactly nine years later,

Hamas still refuses to return Hadar's body, nor the remains of Oron Shaul, another soldier they murdered and abducted. The same can be said of Avera Mangistu and Hisham Al-Sayed, two Israeli civilians suffering from mental illness who are currently being held captive by the terror organization in Gaza. That is a flagrant violation of international humanitarian law which must be at the top of the Council's agenda. Nevertheless, hardly any action has been taken to pressure Hamas to return our boys.

The Council could play a focal role in rehabilitating the Gaza Strip. Hamas and the other Gaza terror groups, hell-bent on destroying Israel, are an obstruction that the Council should focus on. Yet in these meetings many Council members prefer to fixate upon marginal non-issues, while falsely branding Israel as the primary impediment to improving the lives of Palestinians in Gaza.

While the Palestinians, with their incitement, terror and rejectionism remain the only obstacle to any solution, they are not the only threat that Israel faces or the singular danger to regional stability. Iran and its terror proxies are becoming more emboldened every day. The Ayatollah regime is responsible for providing funds, weapons manufacturing, know-how and directives to terror groups both along Israel's borders and in Gaza and Judea and Samaria. As a result, tensions have been drastically increasing, but it is along Israel's border with Lebanon that those rising tensions are reaching a point of no return. And when the situation explodes —

The President: Could I ask the representative of Israel to bring his remarks to a close shortly?

Mr. Erdan (Israel): I need two more minutes to conclude.

And when the situation explodes, which it will, sadly, if immediate action is not taken, the consequences for the region will be disastrous.

Over the past year, the designated terror organization Hizbullah, in flagrant violation of resolution 1701 (2006), has erected concrete military outposts and observation towers along the Blue Line. Recently, Hizbullah terrorists crossed into sovereign Israeli territory and erected tents guarded by Hizbullah operatives. Hizbullah continues to operate freely in the area of operations of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, holding military drills with live

fire and attacking United Nations peacekeepers. Those inflammatory steps are not only a spit in the face to the Council and its resolutions, but they are also going to be the spark that ignites the entire region. Why does the Council not hold emergency meetings on that deteriorating situation before it is too late? I truly have no answer to that question.

Israel can protect its borders and citizens from any and all threats — whether by terror organizations or by rogue regimes that call for its annihilation — but the time has come for the international community to stand alongside Israel in this fight or at the very least refrain from falsely condemning Israel. We are defending ourselves from extremist forces that want to export their violent ideologies globally. If this body and the Organization it is part of refuse to hold the terrorists accountable for their crimes, the situation on the ground will only continue to deteriorate. And as long as the Security Council does not address the true impediments to reconciliation, a solution will never be possible.

The only way to de-escalate is to hold those accountable accountable and to put an end to Palestinian obstructions.

The President: 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 Assistant Secretary-General Khiari for his briefing.

The United States remains deeply concerned by the level of violence in the West Bank. In the first six months of this year, the number of Palestinian deaths has already surpassed the number of deaths in all of 2022. The number of Israelis killed by terrorism this year is quickly approaching that of the whole of 2022. The escalating trend of violence underscores the fragility of the situation in the West Bank and the urgent need for the parties to take immediate steps to de-escalate and restore calm.

We condemn all extremist violence — whatever the nationality of the perpetrator — and extend our deepest condolences to those affected by those senseless acts. We welcome the joint statement by top Israeli security officials, along with other statements from Israeli officials, condemning extremist settler violence against Palestinian civilians. We expect the Palestinian Authority to also clearly denounce terrorist acts committed against Israelis, and we urge all parties

to take proactive measures to counter all forms of violence and incitement and to ensure accountability and justice are pursued with equal rigour in all cases of extremist violence.

To that end, the United States is concerned by the provocative visit an Israeli Minister made to Al-Haram Al-Sharif/Temple Mount in Jerusalem on 27 July and the accompanying inflammatory rhetoric. That holy place should not be used for political purposes. We call on all parties to respect its sanctity. Furthermore, I want to reaffirm our long-standing position in support of the historic status quo at Jerusalem's holy sites.

Israel faces real security challenges, and the United States supports its legitimate right to defend its people, including against threats posed by Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and other terrorists and militants. We recognize that Israel took steps to avoid civilian harm during its operation in Jenin earlier this month. We are nevertheless concerned by the large number of injuries and the extensive damage to property resulting from the operation in Jenin. We urge all parties to comply with their obligations related to the protection of civilians, as well as to provide humanitarian access, particularly for medical care. Additionally, the United States condemns the practice of militants operating in houses of worship and seeking cover by establishing themselves near United Nations facilities and schools.

We welcomed the 9 July decision of Israel's national security cabinet to consider new steps to bolster the Palestinian Authority. We likewise applaud the steps taken by the Palestinian Authority to reassert control of Jenin. We encourage Israeli and Palestinian security forces to increase their cooperation to improve the security situation in the West Bank, including in Jenin and other areas that have been loci of violence. And we call on all parties to refrain from actions and rhetoric that further inflame tensions, including settlement activity, evictions and the demolition of Palestinian homes, terrorism and incitement to violence, such as payments to the families of terrorists.

While we are discussing international threats to peace and security, which is our mandate, we should not forget the destabilizing role Iran plays in support to groups in the West Bank and Gaza itself. We would also like to take a moment to urge Hamas to return the remains of Oron Shaul and Hadar Goldin and also release the two Israelis who are currently held captive by Hamas in Gaza.

During Israeli President Herzog's visit to the United States, we emphasized the need for the parties to work towards de-escalation. We will continue our engagement with Israel and the Palestinian Authority to promote steps aimed at lowering tensions and restoring goodwill. Good-faith dialogue remains the best chance for achieving stability.

The United States continues to believe Israelis and Palestinians alike deserve equal measures of security, prosperity and freedom, and we will keep working towards these goals in tangible ways in the immediate term. We continue to support a two-State solution, promote dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians and seek ways to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians.

Mr. Hauri (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Mohamed Khaled Khiari for his detailed briefing. It is a reminder of the ever-increasing cost of a lack of political will. We must all do better.

I would like to make three main points.

First, in the face of the current spiral of violence, de-escalation and the protection of civilians must be the priority. The number of civilian victims of the conflict continues to rise. In particular, more than 40 children have died since the beginning of the year. This is unacceptable and must stop. Last February's presidential statement (S/PRST/2023/1) raised hopes of a resumption of dialogue. Switzerland calls on the parties to implement their commitments made in Aqaba and Sharm El-Sheikh. Switzerland also calls on the leaders of all parties to refrain from any provocation, such as this morning's visit by Israel's Minister of National Security. The historic status quo on the Haram Al-Sharif/Temple Mount, including Jordan's role as custodian of the holy sites, must be respected. Furthermore, Switzerland considers East Jerusalem to be occupied territory. The final status of the city, notably as the capital of the two States, will have to be negotiated between the parties.

Secondly, Switzerland is concerned about the acceleration of settlement activity in the occupied Palestinian territory, including through infrastructure development. We recall that the settlements are illegal under international law. They also contravene several Security Council resolutions and constitute a major obstacle to peace based on a two-State solution. They contribute to the spiral of violence we see every

day. Israel must refrain from taking measures that would introduce permanent changes, particularly demographic and administrative changes, in the occupied territory. In East Jerusalem, the eviction of the Sub Laban family illustrates the threat that exists for some 150 other families. We also condemn the coercive environment that has led in recent weeks to the forced displacement of the communities of Al-Baq'ah and Khirbet Widady. The lack of protection for these populations in the face of increasing attacks by settlers is also particularly worrisome.

Finally, we deplore the weakening of the Palestinian Authority and its consequences for security and the provision of basic services. We encourage security coordination between the Palestinian Authority and Israel to ensure the protection of civilians. Switzerland also reiterates its call for elections to be held throughout the Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. This would help to restore the legitimacy of the institutions and political unity essential to a two-State solution. To this end, Switzerland encourages the parties to return to the path of dialogue and genuine peace talks, addressing the root causes of the conflict.

Mrs. Ngyema Ndong (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I would also like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Khaled Khiari for his enlightening briefing this morning. I welcome the participation of the representatives of Palestine and Israel at today's meeting.

On Tuesday, 25 July, three Palestinians were killed by the Israel Defense Forces in the city of Nablus, in the occupied West Bank. For the Israeli army, this was retaliation fire against armed terrorists who had opened fire on its soldiers from a vehicle. These events are part of the upsurge in violence seen in recent months, marked by the Israeli army's massive military operation in the Jenin camp on 3 July, following which the Security Council met in closed consultations.

We are concerned by the deteriorating security situation on the ground, and civilians on both sides continue to bear the brunt, women and children in particular. We condemn all attacks against civilians. Similarly, the detention of children under any pretext whatsoever is unacceptable.

Escalating violence benefits neither side. On the contrary, it deprives the Palestinian and Israeli peoples of any hope of peace, and it distances the prospect of a two-State solution.

Another source of concern is the continuing expansion of settlements, demolitions and expulsions, particularly in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. This is in clear violation of international law, all the more so as it stands in the way of building a comprehensive, just and lasting peace.

In view of the harmful practice of detaining the bodies of those killed, we call for the return of remains to their respective Palestinian and Israeli families, in accordance with international humanitarian law. Furthermore, with a view to the peaceful coexistence of the Israeli and Palestinian peoples, Gabon calls for respect for the status quo of the holy sites in Jerusalem, and it reiterates its attachment to the crucial role played by the Kingdom of Jordan as official custodian.

We note that the situation in Gaza remains fragile, even if the latest ceasefire has been relatively respected. Despite some easing of restrictions on access to Gaza, the private sector, as well as United Nations agencies and partners, continue to face significant challenges. Much remains to be done to alleviate the humanitarian situation and improve the economy. We are aware that only lasting political solutions will restore hope to the long-suffering population of Gaza.

We also note the lack of progress in implementing the Algiers declaration signed on 13 October 2022 by the various Palestinian factions, in particular the holding of elections within a period not exceeding one year. We also encourage the Palestinians to engage in dialogue and combine their efforts to ensure the reunification of Gaza and the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, under a single democratic national Government.

We reiterate our call for funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and the World Food Programme, whose stabilizing action, in addition to being a humanitarian response, no longer needs to be demonstrated.

In conclusion, Gabon reiterates its call for restraint, a cessation of hostilities and dialogue. We urge the parties to respect the resolutions of the Security Council, in particular resolution 2334 (2016), and to implement the commitments made in Aqaba and Sharm El-Sheikh. We call for greater involvement of the States that exert influence on the parties in order to achieve a lasting political solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which is polarizing tensions throughout the region.

Mr. Pérez Loose (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Khaled Khiari for his briefing this morning, and I welcome the delegations of Israel and Palestine, as well as the other delegations that are participating in today's open debate.

Once again the Council heard a troubling and discouraging report. In recent weeks we have witnessed new acts of violence that have resulted only in more suffering and destruction, more mistrust and resentment.

We reiterate our condemnation of all acts of violence or terror against civilians and recall that the parties are obliged to comply at all times with the rules of international law and international humanitarian law.

Military operations and acts of violence or terror may last only moments or a few days, but their consequences last for long periods and are sometimes irreversible, for destruction is always easier than reconstruction and nothing can bring back a life.

Of particular concern at this time is the humanitarian situation in Jenin and the physical destruction caused by the military operation at the beginning of this month. We appreciate and support the efforts of the United Nations agencies to restore basic services and repair the affected infrastructure. We also call on those who are able to do so to contribute financially to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East so that its necessary activities can continue smoothly.

In his address to the Council last month (see S/PV.9361), Special Coordinator Tor Wennesland rightly said that the absence of a political horizon is rapidly eroding the hope of Palestinians and Israelis, particularly young people, that a solution to the conflict is possible. We therefore consider it essential that the parties demonstrate through action their commitment to the two-State solution, which is threatened by the prevailing dynamics on the ground.

For our part, from the Council, we will support any measure or initiative that encourages the parties to resume direct negotiations and renew the political horizon of a solution to the conflict, without which the most likely outcome is a deepening of violence. We must persevere in the search for paths to peace.

I conclude by reaffirming our solidarity with the Palestinian people and reiterating our commitment to the alleviation of their plight, as well as to the right of

the Israeli people to live in peace, through a political, definitive and just solution for the parties, with the existence of two States — Palestine and Israel — on the basis of the recognized 1967 borders and the relevant resolutions of the Council.

Mrs. Frazier (Malta): I would also like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Khiari for his insightful briefing.

This debate comes at a critical juncture. At this year's midpoint, we are witnessing a situation of precarious escalations, high levels of violence and dangerous rhetoric, which are pushing us further away from peace.

The deterioration of the security situation on the ground is leading to tragic numbers of Palestinian and Israeli casualties, including children. Malta remains concerned about the high number of grave violations against children, as noted by the Secretary-General. We call on all parties to continue working to end and prevent such violations and ensure accountability.

These past months have been marked by worrisome levels of violence and casualties in the West Bank following operations by Israeli security forces that left several Palestinians dead.

In Gaza, urgent attention must also continue to be given to civilians, particularly children who suffer under these dire conditions. It is disheartening to see a generation of Palestinian children so devoid of hope and aspirations — a generation that knows only life under the blockade. The psychosocial repercussions of these circumstances must not be minimized or underestimated. Malta urges Israel to exercise maximum restraint in the use of live fire and explosives in populated areas, to abide by international humanitarian law, to prioritize the protection of civilians and to ensure unhindered humanitarian access to Gaza.

Malta continues to recognize the crucial efforts of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to assist, protect and advocate for Palestinian refugees. In the absence of a political solution, UNRWA remains an essential stabilizing force in the region, yet it is facing significant funding shortfalls. We appeal to the international community to bolster financial support in order to guarantee the Agency's service provision.

We are also alarmed by the persistent threats to Israeli civilians and security. Malta condemns all instances of discrimination, intolerance, hate speech, violent

extremism and terror attacks, including indiscriminate rocket fire towards Israel's territory. Such acts serve only to perpetuate a vicious cycle of violence and insecurity.

We equally condemn settler violence against Palestinians in the West Bank, which has also seen a worrisome upsurge recently. In that connection, we welcome remarks by senior Israeli officials condemning those acts.

Israel's recent decisions to advance planning of thousands of new illegal settlements and expedite illegal settlement expansion procedures in the West Bank are a flagrant violation of international law and the relevant Security Council resolutions.

We reiterate our call on Israel to cease illegal settlement building, demolitions and evictions in the occupied Palestinian territories. Those unilateral acts constitute a major obstacle to the achievement of the two-State solution.

Malta also underscores the need for parties to refrain from unilateral actions and incitements that attempt to alter the status quo of the holy sites in Jerusalem, respecting Jordan's custodianship role. Unilateral visits to the Temple Mount/Al-Haram Al-Sharif, such as the one that took place just this morning, provoke further tensions and escalation. Peaceful coexistence among the three monotheistic religions is essential.

Turning to the political situation, it is evident from recent events that the lack of any form of constructive dialogue is preventing any prospects for peace. Recent declarations from the Palestinian Authority (PA) that it is ceasing contact with Israel are concerning. Malta urges both parties to resume coordination and recommit to implementing the commitments made earlier this year in Aqaba and Sharm El-Sheikh.

Bolstering the PA's financial situation through implementing the commitments made in the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee is also essential to ensuring its ability to provide security and vital services to the Palestinian people. We call for renewed focus on inter-Palestinian reconciliation and for the PA to organize its postponed national elections. Taking such steps while allowing for a democratic and inclusive Palestinian civic space will strengthen the PA's legitimacy and bring us closer to achieving lasting peace.

In conclusion, Malta reaffirms its commitment to a just and comprehensive solution to the Middle East 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 Security Council resolutions and internationally agreed parameters. We remain firm in our belief that this is the only viable path to peace.

Mr. Zhang Jun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the outset, I thank Assistant Secretary-General Khiari for his briefing.

As we have heard and seen for some time now, the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories has been rapidly deteriorating, with clashes of increasing frequency and intensity. China is therefore deeply concerned. The Security Council should pay great attention to the issue and to the current situation, take effective action and prevent the situation from spiralling out of control.

First, we must firmly oppose violence. At the beginning of the month, Israel launched its greatest military operation against Jenin in nearly 20 years, resulting in the death of 12 Palestinians and the injury of more than 100. More than 3,000 Palestinian refugees were forced to flee. The Council held emergency consultations to discuss the matter, during which many members expressed grave concerns about the situation. China condemns all violence against civilians in the occupied territories and calls on all parties concerned to keep calm, exercise restraint and avoid any unilateral actions that could escalate tensions. The occupying party must fulfil its obligations under international law, prevent the excessive use of force by the military and the police and avoid any violation of the safety of civilians and their property in the occupied territories. Israel and Palestine are neighbours, who cannot be moved away from each other. They should break the cycle of violence and seek common security.

Secondly, it is essential to effectively uphold the rule of international law. It is indisputable that settlement activities in the occupied territories violate international law and the relevant Council resolutions. According to data from relevant organizations, Israel has already approved the construction of more than 13,000 new settlement housing units this year — the highest number in nearly a decade. At the same time, Palestinians are continuously being evicted from their homes in places such as East Jerusalem, where they have lived for generations. Relentless settlement expansion is continuously altering the status quo of the occupied

territories, squeezing the living space of Palestinians and fuelling the conflict between Israel and Palestine. We call on Israel to cease all settlement activities and return to the correct path of the two-State solution. Religious holy sites are important to followers' religious sentiments. We call for the effective preservation of the historical status quo of religious holy sites in Jerusalem, respect for Jordan's custodianship and the avoidance of provocation and incitement. As the representative of Palestine said, there should be no double standards in the implementation of international law.

Thirdly, economic and livelihood improvements must be supported. The prolonged occupation and conflicts spanning over half a century have severely hindered the economic and social development of Palestine and continuously worsened the plight of the Palestinian people. Unreasonable restrictions on the movement of people and supplies and on the use of land in the occupied territories should be lifted immediately to create conditions for the development of Palestinian communities in the West Bank along the Jordan River. We also call for the swift removal of the blockade on the Gaza Strip and the elimination of barriers to access to humanitarian aid and reconstruction materials.

The international community should step up development assistance and humanitarian aid for Palestine and support the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East to effectively meet the economic and livelihood needs of the Palestinian people.

Fourthly, it is necessary to comprehensively implement the two-State solution. The question of Palestine, which is both a political issue and a matter of international morality and justice, poses a common challenge for the Council and the international community. The recurring escalation of the situation on the ground clearly demonstrates that piecemeal crisis management is unsustainable and there is no substitute for a comprehensive and just solution. The longer action is delayed, the graver and more complex the situation will become, and the greater the difficulties in achieving peace will be. The United Nations, including the Security Council, and all parties in the international community must, with a profound sense of urgency and on the basis of the relevant resolutions, exert greater efforts in promoting the resumption of Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations, take vigorous action to advance the two-State solution and raise a stronger voice to uphold fairness and justice.

China has always attached great importance to the Palestinian question and firmly supports the just cause of the Palestinian people to restore their legitimate national rights. President Xi Jinping has repeatedly put forward proposals for a just resolution of the Palestinian question. In June, President Xi Jinping met with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas during his visit to China and emphasized that the fundamental way to resolve the issue is to establish an independent Palestinian State that enjoys full sovereignty, based on the 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital.

China stands ready to continue working with the international community to actively contribute to a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Palestinian question at an early date and to enduring peace and stability in the Middle East.

Mr. Agyeman (Ghana): The briefing we just received from Assistant Secretary-General Khaled Khiari gives much cause for concern. It is regrettable that, despite an overwhelming desire around the world for peace in Palestine and Israel, the actions on the ground manifest the contrary. We regret that the period under consideration contained some of the worst forms of violent clashes in recent times. Since the beginning of the year, we have seen some of the highest numbers of Palestinian fatalities and injury to children and unarmed civilians, as well as the highest number of Israeli military incursions into Gaza and refugee camps in the occupied Palestinian territories, including Jenin. They have been accompanied by the widespread destruction of civilian infrastructure and private property, carried out through intense operations, sophisticated weapons and live ammunition. Rockets have also continued to be fired into Israel, and innocent Israeli citizens have been harmed during their normal daily routines.

Ghana condemns the interminable cycle of violence in recent months and calls on both sides to exercise maximum restraint. We hold that the increasing use of inciteful remarks and acts and the adoption of radical policies on matters that affect the well-being of Palestinian citizens and Israeli-Arab citizens will not assure the security of Israel — nor will attacks by terrorist and militant groups against innocent Israeli citizens advance the cause of Palestine. We urge the occupying Power to respect its international obligations and comply with the relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2334 (2016), especially on the need for distinction and the complete abatement

of Israeli settlement activities. We also strongly deplore all acts of terror and urge the resumption of security cooperation to mitigate such attacks.

Ghana believes that the increasing mistrust between Israel and Palestine makes it imperative for the Council to enhance its actions to support direct engagement by the parties in a manner that will enable the Palestinian people to exercise their inalienable rights while assuring the security of the State of Israel. In that regard, we urge renewed support by the international community for the two-State solution to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian question on the basis of the 1967 lines, with Jerusalem as a shared capital. We also urge the parties to embrace dialogue and establish lines of communication to de-escalate the situation on the ground.

Ghana is extremely worried by the humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, particularly in the Gaza Strip, where the blockade affects more than 2 million people, including women and children. The humanitarian situation affects the prospects for peace in Palestine, and we accordingly urge enhanced international financial support for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East to help address the compounding humanitarian needs.

We also believe that a viable Palestinian Authority is a necessary partner for dialogue and the de-escalation of tensions on the ground. No one should contemplate the consequences of a non-viable Palestinian Authority. We urge further easing of restrictions and call upon Israel to release to the Authority all withheld Palestinian revenue. We also encourage the Authority's further democratic and good governance efforts.

Finally, with the fate of Palestine and Israel woven together by history and by the Council's previous decisions, we have an enduring responsibility to support Israel and Palestine to find the peace that will enable them to live side by side, with their interests protected by their adherence to international law.

Mr. Ishikane (Japan): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Khiari for his briefing.

Violence and clashes have resulted in multiple casualties in various locations, including in Jerusalem and the West Bank, especially since the beginning of the year. Japan once again urges all parties to exercise the utmost restraint and refrain from inflammatory action in

order to prevent the situation from deteriorating further. We are gravely concerned about the repeated visits to holy sites in Jerusalem by an incumbent Minister, the latest of which took place earlier today. Japan reiterates its recognition of Jordan's special role as custodian of the holy sites and attaches great importance to preserving the historical status quo. We believe that the problems faced by Israelis and Palestinians can never be resolved through violence, but only through direct and sincere dialogue between the parties, alongside efforts to build mutual trust. In that context, we urge all the parties to come back to and implement the commitments made in the joint communiqués in Aqaba and Sharm El-Sheikh earlier this year.

We strongly condemn all acts of violence targeting civilians, including terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. In that regard, we are seriously concerned about the Israeli forces' large-scale military operation in a crowded Jenin refugee camp earlier this month, which resulted in a number of deaths of innocent civilians and displaced thousands. Civilian populations should be protected from all forms of violence. Israel's settlement activities, including demolitions and evictions, are a clear violation of international law and run counter to the relevant Security Council resolutions. We demand that Israel comply with resolution 2334 (2016) and immediately cease its unilateral actions, which undermine the possibility of a two-State solution.

Japan will continue to be a strong supporter of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). While some additional pledges were made at the General Assembly pledging conference last month, the amounts were not sufficient to meet the Agency's financial needs for 2023. What will be the fate of Palestinian refugees if UNRWA's support for basic services ceases in September? For its part, Japan has so far contributed more than \$40 million in 2023. In the light of the continuing tremendous needs on the ground, we strongly encourage our fellow Member States to make the contributions needed to ensure that the Agency is adequately funded.

A two-State solution, whereby both Israelis and Palestinians live side by side in peace and security, continues to be the only viable path to resolving the long-standing conflict in the region. In that regard, we appreciate Special Coordinator Tor Wennesland's efforts to de-escalate tensions. The international community, including the Security Council, must not

stand idly by, and both parties must take meaningful steps in good faith. Japan will spare no effort in contributing constructively to that end.

Mr. Abushahab (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the Assistant Secretary-General, Mr. Khaled Khiari, for his comprehensive briefing.

At the Security Council's previous monthly meeting on the topic (see S/PV.9361), we heard several warnings about the deteriorating security situation in the occupied Palestinian territory. At the time the United Arab Emirates emphasized the need to take practical steps to curb the growing escalation. Less than a week after that meeting, the Jenin refugee camp witnessed one of the most violent incursions seen in nearly two decades, which confirmed once again that tensions are escalating to unprecedented levels. A return to calm has become an elusive goal in the light of the ongoing illegal practices in the occupied Palestinian territory and the prevalence of hate speech.

Concerns are increasing about the mounting sentiments of anger and resentment, as well as the deep-rooted despair felt among Palestinians, especially young people, about the possibility of a just political settlement. Against that worrisome backdrop, it is imperative that the international community stop acting as a bystander. The current situation demands that we avoid the worst by taking a comprehensive approach to de-escalating tensions and pursuing a revival of the Middle East peace process. In view of that, we must consider all the options available for broadening our understanding in order to achieve those goals. We must also find creative approaches to rebuilding trust among the parties. It is not enough for the Council to convene meetings as a reaction to specific events.

The current situation also demands that we spare no diplomatic efforts, regionally or internationally, to make it clear that unilateral measures are unacceptable and that the recent levels of violence are putting the security and future of both peoples in jeopardy. A return to constructive dialogue in good faith remains an urgent necessity and an international demand. In that context, it will be crucial to reinvigorate the momentum generated by the Aqaba and Sharm El-Sheikh meetings held several months ago. The emphasis should be on ensuring compliance with the commitments agreed, which include concrete steps to address the current situation. We must firmly reject any attempts to undermine the agreed international terms of reference

for resolving the conflict, which call for working to achieve a two-State solution, to which the Council reiterated its commitment in its presidential statement in February (S/PRST/2023/1). The concept of a two-State solution must continue to serve as the foundation for all political endeavours. We cannot allow it to be marginalized under any circumstances.

We once again underscore the importance of halting all settlement activities, which constitute a threat to the possibility of a two-State solution, especially if the approval and construction of new settlement units continue at the pace we have been witnessing, particularly in the past few years. Such activities violate international law and the relevant Security Council resolutions. It will also be critical to maintain the historical and legal status quo of the city of Jerusalem, which remains one of the final status issues. That means ceasing demolitions, property confiscation and the unjust displacement of residents in East Jerusalem. As we affirm the need to respect the Hashemite guardianship over the holy places of the city, we condemn the repeated storming of the Al-Aqsa Mosque by extremists and members of the Israeli Government, the most recent of which happened today, resulting in clashes and further tensions. We reiterate our calls for ending the continued and repeated raids against our brother Palestinian people, whether they are conducted by the Israeli authorities or settlers. We condemn the storming of the Nur Shams camp earlier this week, as well as the recent incursion into the Jenin camp, which resulted in casualties and damage.

In order to contribute to alleviating the difficult living conditions of the Palestinian people, especially refugees, the United Arab Emirates pledged \$15 million this month to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to help families affected in the city of Jenin and its camp. That is in addition to the \$20 million that the United Arab Emirates pledged to the Agency in June. The international community must continue its support to UNRWA, considering the critical role it plays in assisting refugees and supporting stability in the region.

In conclusion, we underscore that the upcoming period will be critical for intensifying efforts to prevent tensions from reaching a point of no return. We must preserve the gains previously achieved in decades-long political process and guarantee the Palestinian people's right to establish an independent Palestinian State,

within the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side with Israel in peace, security and mutual recognition.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Assistant Secretary-General Khaled Khiari for his comprehensive briefing on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question.

The unresolved Palestinian question was and has continued to be a major source of tension in the Middle East. Regular outbreaks of violence not only in the West Bank, throughout the Gaza Strip and in Israeli Arab cities, but also along the entire northern perimeter from the side of Lebanon and Syria, have led to greater levels of instability in the region, as a whole, undermining the prospects of reviving the Middle East peace process, on the universally recognized international legal basis, with the central role played by the two-State solution, which we have always supported.

The most recent example of the deterioration of the situation in the Palestinian-Israeli area of conflict was the military operation of the Israel Defense Forces in Jenin from at the beginning of this month, which was the first such operation in 20 years involving Israeli armoured vehicles and aviation, including military helicopters. As a result, approximately 500 Palestinian families, or 3,000 people, were forced to flee their homes yet again, more than 100 people were injured, more than 10 were killed and another 300 Palestinians were detained. In the same context, Israeli casualties have also been on the rise.

Under the cover of the Israeli military, settlers are also behaving increasingly aggressively throughout the West Bank. Against that backdrop, the Israeli leadership is continuing its policy of the wholesale approval of settlement projects in the occupied Palestinian territories. In addition, the Israeli Air Force continues to arbitrarily launch strikes into Syria, as the country continues to occupy the Golan Heights. It is alarming to note the increase in the number of incidents on the Blue Line in southern Lebanon.

Despite those worrisome trends in the Middle East, there has recently been some encouraging news, including the improvement in relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran and Syria's readmission as a member to the League of Arab States. Those positive trends were made possible thanks to the path that regional countries adopted aimed at the peaceful resolution of conflicts and disputes, in line with their national interests and based

on dialogue and the principles of good-neighbourliness. At the same time, we must acknowledge that the issue of the Middle East peace process remains outside the scope of such positive processes. We unfortunately note that collective diplomacy in that area has effectively stalled, which was largely the result of the irresponsible and short-sighted decision by the United States of America and the European Union (EU) to freeze the activities of the Middle East Quartet, made up of international mediators from Russia, the United States of America, the EU and the United Nations. In parallel, Washington continues its attempts to monopolize the peace process and slow down the deterioration of the situation on the ground by supplanting a meaningful peace with an economic one. As the recent history of the region shows, such an approach is absolutely futile and could have the opposite effect.

Given the unprecedented nature of the escalation, we believe that the planned visit by Secretary-General António Guterres to the Palestinian-Israeli area of conflict is coming at the right time. At the same time, we would like to recall that, for many years, Russia has supported the idea of sending a Security Council mission to the Palestinian territories and Israel, which we believe to be a particularly needed visit in the current situation.

Following Russia's presidency of the Security Council in April, Russia took the initiative to hold consultative meetings among Russia, the League of Arab States and a group of countries of the region that are actively involved in the dossier of the Middle East peace process. As part of those efforts, on 18 July, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Russia, Mr. Lavrov, held consultations with all interested countries in the region. We hope that the realization of our ideas, which are not aimed at establishing new formats or structures, will rekindle the international process for the implementation of previously adopted international decisions and initiatives in the area, including the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, the Arab Peace Initiative, the Madrid principles, including land for peace, and the two-State solution, with Palestine and Israel coexisting in peace and security, within the 1967 borders.

Mr. França Danese (Brazil): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Khiari for his briefing. I also welcome the participation of the representatives of Israel, the State of Palestine and the many countries interested in this crucial matter.

Unfortunately, like many others, Brazil is growing ever-more concerned about the situation in Israel and Palestine, particularly in the light of the events in the past months. The escalation of violence continues unabated, as does the significant risk of a downward spiral, with very serious potential consequences. The Jenin camp has been targeted in the largest Israeli military operation in the occupied West Bank in the past two decades. We condemn those attacks, which, besides claiming many lives, led to at least 3,000 Palestinian refugees being forced to flee their homes. We also deplore the fact that critical civilian infrastructure, including water, sewage networks and roads, was severely damaged. It is particularly disturbing that facilities belonging to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, including the only health centre available in the camp, were also severely affected. The reconstruction work in the Jenin camp will put the Agency under significant financial pressure. According to its most recent appeal, \$23 million will be needed to address the consequences of the military operation.

We remain troubled by Israel's continued non-observance of its obligations under international humanitarian law. It is imperative that civilians be protected at all times during armed conflicts and military operations of any kind. Civilian infrastructure must also be protected. We call on Israel to strictly adhere to the fundamental principles of proportionality, precaution, necessity and humanity in all of its military operations. Brazil condemns yet again all violence against civilians in the region, be they Palestinians or Israelis. We reiterate our firm and clear condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. Under no circumstances and on no grounds can terrorism be justified, tolerated or accepted.

My delegation has consistently reiterated that the continued occupation of the West Bank is unlawful under international law, which has been clearly and repeatedly stated by the Security Council itself. In addition, it seriously undermines the prospects of peace by making the possibility of a Palestinian State ever-more elusive. The recent decision by the Israeli Government to expand settlements in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is a source of deep concern for Brazil and many other States. In that regard, we must be clear once again: such activities constitute a clear violation of international law, including resolution 2334 (2016), and must cease immediately.

The violence by settlers also fuels further hatred and contributes to the fragility of the current situation. There is a constant risk of events in the West Bank spilling over into Gaza, where the humanitarian conditions continue to deteriorate, owing to the blockade, which violates human rights and international humanitarian law and hinders development efforts. It is evident that the status quo is unsustainable and requires urgent and sustained attention. The mere administration of the conflict is not a viable alternative. As we have so often said in the past, a just and comprehensive solution can be achieved only through dialogue, mutual respect and the acknowledgment of the legitimate rights and aspirations of both Israelis and Palestinians. Addressing challenging outstanding issues and working towards a sustainable and lasting peace in the region is critical. We must do more than merely remind all parties of their obligations and express concern about non-compliance. The Council has the political responsibility to respond to the recent negative developments. Not doing so will weaken its authority and make further violence more likely.

Mr. Afonso (Mozambique): I would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Mr. Khaled Khiari for his update and perspectives on the region. Listening to the update, it becomes clear that the situation in Palestine remains volatile and perilous at a time when we are continuing to witness a surge in violence against a backdrop of an unacceptable stand-off between the parties. We are very concerned about the bloodshed in the relentless vicious circle of violence that now has a firm grip on the region. That untenable situation is driving up the death toll and sparking the worst fighting between Israel and the Palestinians in the West Bank in nearly two decades.

In that context, Mozambique regrets the increase in violence, which has resulted in more than 150 Palestinians killed by the Israelis in the West Bank and East Jerusalem this year alone. We urge Israel's security forces to exercise maximum restraint, use proportionate force and respect the lives of the Palestinians. We reiterate our call to all parties to refrain from unilateral actions that would further exacerbate the situation. The recent surge in violence should serve as a wake-up call to action and compel all Council members to redouble their efforts towards a lasting and sustainable peace in the Middle East.

Mozambique reiterates its long-standing and principled position in support of a two-State solution, based on the relevant decisions of the Security Council

and the resolutions of the General Assembly. That should remain the guiding framework for the Council's work. Reaching a two-State solution is the primary issue that must be addressed in a genuine and constructive manner in the interests of peace and stability for both the Palestinian and Israeli peoples. In order to achieve that noble goal, the dialogue for peace and peaceful coexistence between Israel and Palestine must be based on that fundamental principle. It is a principle that enjoys broad acceptance among Council members.

We are deeply concerned about the financial crisis facing the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). We urge regional actors and the international community at large to act urgently to extend their financial support to the Agency. The humanitarian situation has been particularly critical and untenable since the UNRWA health centre in the camp of Jenin was severely damaged. There is a need to support UNRWA in restoring that infrastructure and basic services such as education and primary health care, as well as other facilities, in order for the Agency to continue its efforts to rebuild the lives and livelihoods of the Palestinian families affected.

Before concluding, we want to underscore the Council's fundamental duty to guarantee compliance with its relevant decisions and with General Assembly resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference and the Arab Peace Initiative.

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Khiari for his presentation.

The situation on the ground has not improved, and trust between the parties is at an all-time low. France is deeply concerned about the escalation of tensions. We condemn all attacks targeting civilians, Israeli or Palestinian. Given the heavy toll of military operations in Jenin, France would like to point out that Israel's security imperatives do not absolve it from compliance with its international obligations under humanitarian law, including the imperatives of protecting civilians in the occupied territories and ensuring the proportionate use of force. France condemns in the strongest terms the terrorist acts against Israel and reiterates its unwavering commitment to Israel's security. We also condemn Israel's continued colonization of the Palestinian territories, which contravenes international law, fuels tensions on the ground and constitutes a major obstacle to peace. France will never recognize the illegal annexation of territories or the legalization of informal

settlements. We call on the Israeli Government to stop building new housing in settlements. And violence committed by settlers is unacceptable and must not go unpunished.

The Council has a responsibility to defend the concept of a two-State solution and to enforce its own resolutions. It must mobilize to restore a political horizon, which alone will enable the rebuilding of trust and make the implementation of a two-State solution possible. That is the message that our Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna conveyed last week to her Israeli and Palestinian counterparts. She encouraged them to restore a credible political horizon on the basis of the only viable solution, that of two States living side by side in peace and security. She stressed France's readiness to assist, the importance of respecting the commitments undertaken at Sharm El-Sheikh and the need to put an end to unilateral acts, which undermine any possibility of restoring trust. The United Nations has an important role to play in supporting those efforts. Israelis and Palestinians alike deserve to live in peace and security.

Mr. Spasse (Albania): Let me start by thanking Assistant Secretary-General Khiari for the information he provided.

The recent developments in the West Bank continue to be troubling and disturbing. We are almost at a loss for the words to deplore the pervasive cycle of violence and its consequences, but we will never lose the will and desire to call for restoring the political horizon as soon as possible. The fact is that the situation is not sustainable, and it can only lead to more violence and hopelessness if not properly and quickly addressed.

We have said it many times, and we will reiterate it now. Only a clear perspective on peace for both sides, Israelis and Palestinians, will help reduce the violence, bloodshed and never-ending suffering. For that to happen, the parties must first commit seriously and resolutely to de-escalation, just as they did in Aqaba and Sharm El-Sheikh, where they committed to refraining from unilateral steps. But commitments have real meaning only if they are kept and implemented, not just because they are voiced or written.

We condemn any and all acts of indiscriminate violence against civilians and recognize the right of Israel to self-defence. We reiterate that every security

operation should strongly abide by the principle of proportionality and be in full respect of international humanitarian law.

We call on the Palestinian youth to distance themselves from the instigation of violence and extremism. Young people should lead the change on the ground for themselves and for the future of Palestinian generations. Everyone should condemn terrorism and violent extremism.

We strongly condemn the settlers' violence against Palestinian civilians and call for a full investigation and accountability for those responsible. In that regard, I would like to reiterate our concern for the impact the increase in violence is having on women and children.

We also reiterate our concerns about the plans to advance settlements. They contradict international law and are an impediment to peace efforts. We call for the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016) and the strict observance of international law. All unilateral steps that obstruct peace and the viability of the two-State solution must be withdrawn.

Let me conclude by recalling that the end of the conflict in the Middle East requires genuine and sustained efforts for peace, development and prosperity for all. It requires respect for rights, freedoms and dignity, which in our view, can be achieved through the two-State solution, a secure Israel and a viable and democratic Palestine, living side by side with full and equal rights. It represents the best prospect for the stability, peace, security and prosperity of the more than 400 million people in the wider region and a precious contribution to peace and stability worldwide.

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

I would like to start by thanking Assistant Secretary-General Khiari for his briefing today.

I have three brief points to make.

First, we are alarmed by rising violence across the occupied Palestinian territories, which this month culminated in Israel's operation in Jenin. There have been 153 Palestinians killed by Israeli security forces in the West Bank since January, more than the entirety of those killed in 2022. We support the Palestinian Authority's independent role in securing Area A of the West Bank, as agreed in the Oslo Accords. We urge Israel to support the Palestinian Authority in

that endeavour, and work collaboratively to ensure the safety and protection of civilians across the occupied Palestinian territories. We reiterate our condemnation of all indiscriminate attacks on civilians, including recent terror attacks in Tel Aviv and Kdumim.

Secondly, we are appalled by the unprecedented scale of settlement advancement in Area C of the West Bank, which we urge Israel to reverse. Settlements are illegal under international law, raise tensions and undermine the prospects for a two-State solution. We also urge Israel to uphold its responsibility to protect Palestinian communities in Area C, particularly from rising settler violence that has recently led to appalling violence in Turmus Ayya and the relocation of the Palestinian Bedouin community of Al-Baqa'a. We are concerned by the forced eviction of the Ghaith-Sub Laban family from their home in the Old City of Jerusalem. We urge Israel to desist from further settlement expansion, demolitions and evictions.

Thirdly, the United Kingdom is concerned by the provocative visit and inflammatory language used by Israeli Ministers at Al-Haram Al-Sharif/Temple Mount today. We reaffirm our support for the historic status quo and Jordan's role as custodian. The United Kingdom calls for all actors to respect the sanctity of the holy sites and avoid actions that undermine the cause of peace.

Finally, the United Kingdom underlines its firm support to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, which has a stabilizing impact on the region. We call on the members of the Council to ensure critical funding gaps are filled, so that vital services continue to be provided to Palestinian refugees.

All Palestinians and Israelis deserve to live in peace and security. That can only be achieved through a two-State solution.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I would like to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than three minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Flashing lights on the collars of the microphones will prompt speakers to bring their remarks to a close after three minutes.

I now give the floor to the First Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba.

Mr. Peñalver Portal (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): We align ourselves with the statement to be delivered by the representative of Azerbaijan on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, and the statement delivered by the representative of Malaysia in his capacity as Vice-Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

In the past three months, we have witnessed an escalation of aggression against the Palestinian people, who continue to suffer from Israel's apartheid practices on its own territory.

We condemn in the strongest terms Israel's military operation in the Jenin refugee camp, which has left eight people dead and more than 50 civilians wounded, a fact that is a serious threat to stability and peace in the Middle East.

We reject Israel's decision to accelerate its plans to build settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem. At the same time, Israel's destruction of homes and properties and forced displacement of Palestinian families on those territories continue. We reiterate our strong rejection of the Israeli military aggression and occupation of the Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, together with Israel's illegal annexation policy and all its colonization practices. We condemn the continuing blockade of the Gaza Strip and the latent plans for the annexation of the Palestinian territories in the Jordan Valley and other parts of the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

It is time to put an end to Israel's impunity, in which the United States has historically been complicit by repeatedly obstructing Security Council action and maintaining unilateral decisions in violation of the Charter of the United Nations, international law and relevant Security Council resolutions, undermining peace, security and stability in the Middle East.

The Security Council must fulfil its mandate to reach a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, leading to the establishment of an independent and sovereign Palestinian State within the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital and where the right of return of the refugees is also guaranteed.

We will continue to strongly support the accession of the State of Palestine as a full member of the United Nations. We support its President's call for an international peace conference.

We reiterate our demand for the total and unconditional withdrawal of Israel from the Syrian Golan and all occupied Arab territories. We demand the cessation of external interference in Syria and full respect for its sovereignty and territorial integrity, while supporting the search for a peaceful and negotiated solution to the situation imposed on that fraternal Arab nation.

We welcome the decision of the League of Arab States to readmit Syria to the Organization, an important step towards the full reintegration of Syria, which adds to other important developments that favour rapprochement among the States of the Middle East and should contribute to regional stability.

We reaffirm our support for the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action with Iran and our support for the inalienable right of States to the peaceful use of nuclear energy. We reiterate our rejection of the unilateral withdrawal of the United States from the agreement.

We demand an immediate and unconditional end to the arbitrary and illegal unilateral coercive measures imposed by the United States against sovereign nations in the Middle East.

We must put an end to double standards, selectivity and political manipulation, which, to the detriment of the mandate of the Security Council, undermine the cause of international peace and security.

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

Ms. Mrad (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): We meet in the Security Council Chamber on a quarterly basis to assess the situation in the Middle East and evaluate the developments and events that have taken place in the region, aspiring to a breakthrough and reasons for hope. However, and unfortunately, this region seems destined for misery and stalemates, notwithstanding the human skill, natural resources, vital potential and social and cultural diversity it enjoys.

The egregious aggressions we have witnessed on the Palestinian arena recently are a reminder of what had happened previously. The events that took place in Jenin camp recently, especially against children and vulnerable groups, as the world watched in silence, are deplorable, in addition to unrestrained and unprecedented settlement expansion in the West Bank, in gross violation of international law. That undermines any prospects for peace, including the two-State

solution. Meanwhile the world remained totally silent. For its part, Lebanon is not spared such dismal scenes, such as daily incursions into its southern territory and the systematic violation of its air space.

What a paradox that the Israeli aggression and provocation is heightened these days, as we start the countdown towards the Security Council's renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) in southern Lebanon. Israel's actions are clear attempts to drive Lebanon into taking actions that lead to escalation and make it the blameworthy party. Is it not clearly a paradox that in the last two months, Israel has increased its complaints to the Security Council and the Secretariat simply because we are on the eve of the UNIFIL mandate renewal?

Israel wants to beguile the world into thinking that Lebanon is the party that possesses military arsenals, nuclear warheads and intercontinental missiles. However, Lebanon, which is currently presiding over the third session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, yesterday completed intensive meetings on a working paper that will pave the way for adopting an international instrument that establishes such a zone. Lebanon wishes to underscore that we were the first to call for disarmament. The party that possesses a nuclear arsenal is not in a position to act like a victim under the pretext that its security and safety are threatened. Israel is the only party that possesses a complete nuclear programme and does not attend the Conference, despite the fact that it has a seat reserved for it at the table and that the Secretariat of the Conference, as a show of good faith, invites Israel to attend and express its concerns. Yet so far that has never happened.

Lebanon reiterates its full commitment to resolution 1701 (2006), and its right to liberate its occupied territories by legitimate means and in accordance with international instruments, including Sheba'a Farms, the Kfar Shuba hills and the Al-Mari hills, which are in part connected to the village of Al-Ghajar. Lebanon reiterates in the Council today its readiness to complete the demarcation of its southern land borders and, through tripartite meetings with the United Nations in attendance, address remaining disputed issues.

While we are currently preparing for the renewal of the UNIFIL mandate, we would like to thank the penholder, France, and all the members of the Security

Council that participated in formulating the draft mandate-renewal resolution. As the Permanent Mission of Lebanon in New York, we stand ready with the relevant Lebanese authorities to cooperate with all parties to achieve the following joint objectives: first, maintaining stability and security in the southern region along the Blue Line; secondly, preserving the security and safety of the peacekeepers and holding those who assault them to account, while maintaining harmony between the peacekeepers and the residents there; and thirdly, protecting the mission's freedom of movement and ability to implement its mandate in coordination with the Lebanese army and pursuant to the Status of Forces Agreement and resolution 1701 (2006) without any amendment.

In conclusion, I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate Lebanon's appreciation for the important role UNIFIL plays in southern Lebanon in the achievement of peace and security in the region. We are also grateful to the mission's force command and the countries that have contributed troops to it for their commitment for decades to maintaining peace in Lebanon. We look forward to a constructive renewal meeting that takes into account local specificities within the framework of a comprehensive tripartite perspective to restore calm and stability to the region and which transcends absurdities, such as a tent here or a kite there or a farmer who has lost his way. We look forward to a perspective that benefits our southern region, UNIFIL forces and Lebanon in general.

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

Mr. Gaouaoui (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Madam President, for the success of the United Kingdom in presiding over the Security Council during this month of July, and I wish you continued success, given the increasingly complicated international and regional circumstances we are seeing.

The question of Palestine has recently been subject to serious escalation on the part of the occupying Power. That escalation has claimed the lives of many innocent Palestinians, especially in the West Bank, as a result of the use, for the first time in more than two decades, of heavy weapons and drones. The Jenin massacre and the brutal aggression that followed it by the occupying Power and the settlers, in addition to the repeated incursions of Al-Aqsa Mosque and the desecration

thereof, as well as the persistent settlement policy and detention of brotherly innocent Palestinians, portend a downward spiral that will spin out of control, especially given the impunity enjoyed by the occupying Power, whose unwavering policy is to entrench the status quo and change the demographic nature of the areas and regions it occupies, especially Al-Quds Al-Sharif. That is undoubtedly a gross violation of all international laws and norms.

I reiterate Algeria's strong condemnation of the recent aggression undertaken against the Jenin camp and call for making the perpetrators of those heinous crimes accountable, which was a reminder of the reality of the Palestinian diaspora and the misery and hardships borne by our Palestinian brothers while the international community is unable to put an end to the bitter reality they face.

In addition, we stress the importance of the unity of the international community and the strict implementation of all resolutions of international legitimacy, especially Security Council resolutions, so as to put an end to the persistence by the occupying Power of its arbitral policies, which undermine any hope and prospects for achieving comprehensive and just peace for the Palestinian question. We also call on the international community to help the Palestinian Authority to repair the damage to Jenin as a result of the brutal aggression against it. In that context, the President of the Republic, Abdelmadjid Tebboune, decided to grant \$30 million to help in the reconstruction efforts of the Palestinian city of Jenin, especially the infrastructure.

Algeria reiterates its firm solidarity with the Palestinian people languishing under the yoke of occupation, and we support their legitimate aspirations, primarily the establishment of the independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital. We also stress the importance of revitalizing all mechanisms for supporting and protecting the Palestinian people, including by implementing resolution 904 (1994), which is violated daily by the occupying Power and through arming Israeli settlers in the West Bank.

Algeria has always been a staunch supporter of the Palestinian question. Under the personal and direct supervision of the President of the Republic, we hosted the reunion conference for realizing Palestinian national unity, ending division and achieving reconciliation among Palestinian factions as a step to promote

Palestinian national unity. That conference culminated in the Algiers Declaration. Algeria also hosted the Arab Summit in November 2022, which asserted anew the centrality of the Palestinian question and absolute support for the rights of the Palestinian people.

In conclusion, the only way to guarantee a lasting solution to the Palestinian question, which should be the objective of any move in the future, is through realizing the inalienable rights of the brotherly Palestinian people to establishing their independent State, with Jerusalem as its capital, and ensuring the return of refugees in accordance with the relevant international legitimate resolutions, especially resolutions 194 (III), 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), as well as the Arab Peace Initiative.

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

Mr. Hmoud (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, let me congratulate you, Madam President, on the United Kingdom assuming the presidency of the Security Council. I wish you every success in your Council endeavours for this month. I would like also to thank the Assistant Secretary-General, Mr. Khaled Khiari, for his valuable briefing.

Jordan reaffirms the importance of putting an end to the serious escalation in the Palestinian occupied territories. The persistence of Israel's unilateral measures and its ongoing incursions into occupied Palestinian cities, as well as the ongoing building and expanding of settlements and seizure of lands, displacing Palestinians from their homes and assaulting them. These are all illegal, rejected and condemned practices. They constitute serious violations of international humanitarian law and undermine any prospects for peace and a two-State solution.

Meanwhile, Israel must seriously engage in negotiations to put an end to the current situation and to resolve the conflict by achieving the two-State solution. That is the only way to stop the deteriorating situation, restore calm and achieve peace. We also stress that Israel must shoulder its responsibilities and obligations under the signed agreements, including the outcomes of the Aqaba and Sharm El-Sheikh meetings. Jordan warns that the consequences of the Israeli Government's recent decision, especially the acceleration of building and expanding thousands of illegitimate settlement units in occupied Palestine, is a dangerous decision. We stress that expanding settlements and displacing people from their homes constitute a gross violation

of international law and all relevant Security Council resolutions, especially resolution 2334 (2016). We call on the international community and the Security Council to immediately take serious steps to put an end to those unilateral Israeli measures, which undermine peace and the two-State solution.

Jordan condemns the attempt today by the Israeli Minister of National Security to again storm into Al-Aqsa Mosque/ Al-Haram Al-Sharif. That is a continued violation by Israel of international law in occupied Jerusalem and of the legal and historic status in Al-Quds and its holy places. In that regard, we reiterate that Israel has no sovereignty whatsoever over occupied Jerusalem. We warn against the dangerous consequences of permitting extremists to storm into Al-Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram Al-Sharif and any provocative actions that threaten a new downward spiral of tension and violence.

Since Jordan is the Hashemite historical custodian of all Islamic and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem, we will continue to take all the necessary measures and steps to protect them and maintain the legal and historical status of Jerusalem. The Kingdom of Jordan will spare no effort to resist any attempt to impose a spatial or temporal division on the Al-Aqsa Mosque/ Al-Haram Al-Sharif or to obliterate the Islamic and Christian identity of Jerusalem. We stress that the Jordanian Awkaf Ministry is the only and exclusive department in charge of organizing entry to the Al-Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram Al-Sharif, with its area of 144,000 square metres.

In that regard, I would like to reiterate that Jordan, in coordination with international and regional partners, will continue to support the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) so as to enable it to continue to provide its vital and necessary services to more than 5.7 million Palestinian refugees, in accordance with its United Nations mandate, until the Palestinian refugee question is fairly and comprehensively resolved in accordance with international law, the relevant international resolutions and the two-State solution.

I would like to inform the Security Council that Jordan, in partnership with Sweden, will organize a ministerial conference on the margins of the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly, with the attendance of the Secretary-General, on 21 September 2023. We invite all regional and international partners

to actively participate in order to mobilize the necessary political and financial support for UNRWA, given its unprecedented financial deficit, in order to support the Agency and to guarantee that it can continue to provide its services in its five areas of operation. That would promote regional security and stability.

In conclusion, we reiterate that the achievement of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace, in keeping with international law, the Arab Peace Initiative and the international terms of reference, is an Arab-Jordanian strategic stance to put an end to the occupation and to establish a sovereign independent Palestinian State along the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Muhamad.

Mr. Muhamad: The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People thanks the United Kingdom for its presidency of the Security Council this month and expresses appreciation for the briefing of the Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific, Mr. Mohamed Khaled Khiari.

In recent weeks, Israel's excessive use of force and deployment of heavy weaponry against densely populated civilian areas has caused Palestinian casualties, including children, as well as widespread destruction. The raid on the Jenin refugee camp on 19 June — the largest Israeli incursion in the West Bank in 20 years — triggered a cycle of violence, resulting in more than 12 Palestinian and 4 Israeli fatalities, and fuelled tensions in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. The Committee seconds the plea of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights — for Israel to align its policies and actions in the occupied Palestinian territory, including in East Jerusalem, with international human rights standards and humanitarian law. Such measures include safeguarding the right to life and fulfilling its obligations under international humanitarian law to maintain public order and safety.

Increasing violence by armed settlers, working in coordination with Israel's security forces, deserves the urgent attention of the Security Council. The settlers' systematic attacks on Palestinian civilians and their raids on Palestinian villages, setting fire to dozens of homes and vehicles and agricultural fields, have intensified dramatically. From 20 to 25 June, Israeli settlers targeted several Palestinian towns and villages in the occupied

West Bank, causing extensive damage and terrorizing civilians. As stated by Special Coordinator Wennesland in his 27 June briefing (see S/PV.9361), those attacks often happen with the protection or in the proximity of Israeli occupying forces. In May, the living structures of the Palestinian herding community of Ein Samiya in the occupied West Bank were repeatedly demolished. Community members were subjected to settler violence and were eventually displaced.

Israel condemned such settler attacks, with the Head of its Security Agency and its Police Commissioner referring to them as nationalist terrorism. Other senior Israeli figures called them pogroms. But condemnation is not enough. Israel must immediately take decisive steps to halt those attacks, ensure accountability and protect Palestinians in line with its responsibility as the occupying Power. We renew our appeal to the Security Council to ensure a mechanism to protect the Palestinian people from the occupying forces' incursions and provocative actions.

Such attacks are the direct result of Israel's expanding settlement policy in utter disregard for international law and resolutions of the Security Council, including resolution 2334 (2016), which repeatedly declared all settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, to be illegal and demanded an immediate halt to and the reversal of related policies and practices, as they are tantamount to de facto annexation. Thus far this year, Israel has advanced plans for over 10,000 housing units in the occupied Palestinian territory, including in East Jerusalem, with the clear intention of further colonizing and fragmenting the Palestinian territory and illegally cementing its own control.

It is of utmost concern that Israeli political actors are inflaming the situation, rather than calling for calm. During the violence in Jenin, an Israeli Cabinet member urged Israeli security forces to blow up buildings and assassinate terrorists in the dozens, hundreds or, if needed, thousands, and called on settlers to run to the hilltops and establish additional outposts. The Committee strongly condemns the inflammatory rhetoric and actions of the Israeli authorities, which support illegal land confiscation and violate international law. We urge Israel to stop incitement and provocations against the Palestinian people and fully comply with its obligations as the occupying Power under international law.

The Committee decries the lack of accountability for illegal Israeli actions, including during the Israeli military aggression on Gaza in May 2023. We call for the immediate lifting of the blockade on that part of the Palestinian territory and for respect for the relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 1860 (2009). The Committee reiterates that the indiscriminate launching of rockets towards Israeli population centres is prohibited by international humanitarian law.

People worldwide hope for their children to inherit good health and prosperity. The children of Palestine, however, have inherited only occupation. In his report of 5 June 2023 on children and armed conflict (S/2023/363), the Secretary-General reported more than 3,133 verified grave violations against Palestinian children, including the killing of 54 of them between January and December 2022 in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. The Committee calls for a halt to Israel's use of force against children and appeals to all stakeholders in the conflict — Israeli and Palestinian — to abide by their domestic and international legal obligations and to protect children.

The Committee further calls on all United Nations human rights mechanisms, including the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, to take action in accordance with their mandates, to ensure accountability for Israel's human rights violations in the occupied Palestinian territory. The Committee expresses appreciation in that regard for the efforts of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel since 1967 in advocating for the protection of Palestinian children and the civilian population as a whole, in accordance with international law.

Israel's occupation has now become doubly punitive towards Palestinian refugees. As the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) struggles to sustain its life-saving activities for Palestinian refugees, the two-day Israeli military operation in June in the Jenin refugee camp — home to nearly 24,000 people — damaged at least 900 houses, rendering many of them uninhabitable, interrupted essential services and left UNRWA's crucial health centre unusable and at least 3,500 refugees displaced.

The Committee condemns Israel's actions against Palestinian refugees and the destruction of UNRWA's life-saving investments. We call on all donors and

partners to make funds available immediately to UNRWA for the humanitarian response in the Jenin camp and to ensure sustainable and predictable funding for the Agency, to enable it to faithfully uphold its mandate.

The Committee reiterates that a just and lasting peace will be achieved only with the end of Israel's occupation, the end of illegal settlements that further and entrench the occupation, and the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including to self-determination and freedom, which they have been too long denied.

The President: May I once again remind colleagues, in the interest of conducting Council business expeditiously, to attempt to limit their remarks to three minutes?

I now give the floor to Mr. Beresford-Hill.

Mr. Beresford-Hill: I extend my sincere appreciation to the presidency of the United Kingdom and to the members of the Security Council for organizing this crucial debate on the Middle East and for granting us the privilege of being part of this discussion. I also thank Assistant Secretary-General Khiari for his briefing.

The Sovereign Order of Malta was created 900 years ago in Jerusalem. Our first mission was to care for sick pilgrims visiting the Holy Land. Our hospitals soon became a haven of support and care not only for Christians, but also for Muslims and Jews. While we now operate in over 122 countries, providing humanitarian care and medical services to those of all religions and none, the Middle East — particularly Israel and Palestine — are very close to us.

Permit me to highlight two issues pertinent to the current conflict in Palestine that are of concern.

First, our humanitarian efforts in the Middle East are extensive, with multiple clinics, hospitals and health-care facilities. In response to the growing needs and regional upheaval and conflict, we have a prominent role serving displaced communities in refugee camps in Syria, Jordan and Lebanon. In Palestine, the Holy Family Hospital in Bethlehem, run by our Order, stands out as a source of hope, offering comprehensive medical care and services to a geographically diverse yet largely impoverished community. Similar essential health-care services are provided by our Alliance confrères, including the Venerable Order of St. John, which

operates the renowned St. John Ophthalmic Hospital. However, amid the ongoing conflict in Palestine, providing essential health-care services to its people has become increasingly difficult. The prevalence of roadblocks and delays at checkpoints has worsened the health situation for those in need, resulting in unnecessary and untimely suffering and even death. The provision of medical care has been severely limited due to ambulances and aid workers becoming frequent targets of attack, endangering patients and medical personnel alike. According to the World Health Organization, 750 health-related attacks were recorded in the Palestinian territory between 2019 and 2022. These have led to the death of one health worker and caused injuries to 568 others. Additionally, 315 ambulances and 160 health-care facilities were affected by those incidents, and the number is still rising.

Furthermore, as a result of financial constraints and complex tax arrangements negotiated under the 1994 Paris Protocol, we encounter frequent obstacles to the smooth movement of medical aid across borders. Additionally, the intricacies and delays within customs and excise bureaucracies create hurdles that impede the timely and efficient entry of essential medical supplies and equipment into the region. Addressing those issues is vital to making health care more readily available to the sick and the poor. We respectfully call on both the Israeli and Palestinian Governments to fulfil their commitments to the international community. We ask that Israel, as agreed to in the Oslo II Accords, abide by the clauses reflecting the Paris Protocol signed between the Palestine Liberation Organization and the State of Israel. Likewise, we appeal to the Palestinian authorities to work to unify the opposing factions in the State and thereby reduce confrontation through dialogue and diplomacy.

The second issue is freedom of belief and tolerance for religious diversity because it remains a concern in the conflict. Actions prejudicial to religious freedom in the region have dramatically increased. There has been a marked rise in physical and verbal abuse, directed not just at Christian clergy but also at pilgrims, worshippers and religious sites. Christian locations that have been targeted include the Catholic Basilica of the Annunciation in Nazareth, as well as Orthodox and other denominational churches. The desecration of the Anglican cemetery in Jerusalem earlier this year caused an international outcry. Similarly, there have been distressing attacks on mosques, and as we have heard,

some of those happened this very day. However, strikes against places of worship and the intimidation of their congregations tragically reflect a broader international trend that is not exclusive to Palestine or to Israel, but is inspired by extremism. It is a trend that has led to an alarming global rise in Christianophobia, Islamophobia and, I might add with emphasis, antisemitism.

The protection of civilians, especially medical and aid workers, in conflict zones has always been a priority of the United Nations, as referenced by resolution 2286 (2016). Combined with resolution 2686 (2023), it provides a clear directive to the international community that violations of those principles not only exacerbate tensions but contribute to instability and pile intolerance on intolerance.

Let me conclude with a quotation from our Grand Master, His Most Eminent Highness Fra' John Dunlap, who recently remarked with regard to global conflict that

“I express my grave concern about acute human rights violations perpetrated against defenceless civilians, and I hope that the international community will step up its action to prevent the erosion of those human rights, particularly in the area of unrestricted access to health care and the fundamental right to religious freedom”.

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

Mr. Muhith (Bangladesh): I am delivering this statement on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), in my capacity as Acting Chair.

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation expresses its grave concern about the rapidly deteriorating situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, due to the ongoing blatant Israeli violations of international law, including resolutions of the Security Council. The recent escalations of Israeli aggression, including yet another attack by the occupying forces on the Jenin refugee camp, which resulted in scores of civilian casualties, including women and children, as well as widespread destruction of vital civilian infrastructure, including water and electricity networks and roads, and the displacement of families that have once again had to flee an Israeli onslaught, should be condemned and constitute grave breaches of the Fourth Geneva Convention, for which there must be accountability. The intensification of Israeli military raids, arrests and

destruction in the West Bank cities, towns, villages and refugee camps, as well as the violence and terrorism that continues to be committed by extremist Israeli settlers, has severely exacerbated suffering among Palestinians. The constant state of aggression against the Palestinian people is an affront to human dignity, violating their most basic human rights, undermining their access to basic services and severely eroding their economic development potential.

While the entire rest of the world is focused on the pursuit of sustainable development for the stability and prosperity of their peoples amid daunting global challenges and crises, this historical injustice continues to obstruct the Palestinian people's realization of peace, stability and prosperity. Regrettably, there is no end in sight to the deplorable situation, as Israel continues to evade accountability, while the Security Council remains unable to implement its resolutions and States remain unwilling to uphold their legal obligations, including as High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention. All of that precludes the collective efforts needed, in accordance with international law, to bring an end to the Israeli occupation and to assist the Palestinian people in achieving justice and their inalienable rights, including to self-determination and independence.

The absence of accountability has led Israel, the occupying Power, to believe that it can continue to breach international law without consequences. That is why we have recently been witnessing an intensification of all violations, including Israel's colonization and annexation campaign in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. The expansion of Israeli colonial settlements and related infrastructure, which are illegal under international law, continues to dangerously jeopardize the territorial integrity, viability and contiguity of the Palestinian State. We are particularly concerned about the acts of violence, vandalism and damage to Palestinian property by colonial settlers that have turned deadly.

We reiterate our call for a complete halt to all Israeli settlement activities and for a full, transparent and independent investigation into the crimes being perpetrated against the Palestinian people by Israel, the occupying Power, and its military forces and settlers. We also reiterate today our urgent call for international protection for the Palestinian people, in line with international law, including resolution 904 (1994) and the recommendations made by the Secretary-General

in his 2018 report to the General Assembly on the protection of the Palestinian civilian population (A/ES-10/794). In that regard, the OIC underscores that the Security Council and the international community as a whole should not remain silent in the face of the ongoing Israeli violations and apartheid policies that constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity. Concrete measures and appropriate remedies, consistent with Security Council resolutions, must be enacted in order to ensure accountability and justice.

The situation in the holy city of Al-Quds remains especially grave as Israel has continued its violations of international law and the historical and legal status quo. The OIC commends the continued efforts of His Majesty King Mohammed VI of Morocco, Chairman of the Al-Quds Committee, to protect the Islamic holy sites in Al-Quds Al-Sharif and stand up to the Israeli occupation authorities' measures aimed at Judaizing the holy city. We also praise the concrete role played by the Al-Quds Committee's Bayt Mal Al-Quds Al-Sharif Agency and its steadfastness in carrying out development projects and activities for the inhabitants of the holy city. The OIC also reaffirms that Haram al-Sharif, within its total area of 144 dunams, is an exclusive place of worship for Muslims that is protected by international law and its historical and legal status, and that the Jordanian administration of the Jerusalem Awqaf and Al-Aqsa Mosque Affairs Department is the competent authority to manage the affairs of the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque/Haram al-Sharif. The OIC stresses the role of the historic Hashemite custodianship over the Islamic and Christian holy sites in Al-Quds in protecting their sanctity, identity and historical and legal status. The OIC appreciates the Algiers declaration of the reunification conference for achieving Palestinian national unity, aimed at ending division and achieving reconciliation as a positive step towards national unity, and expresses its deep appreciation to the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria for sponsoring the talks and the unremitting efforts made by the President of Algeria, Mr. Abdelmadjid Tebboune, for the success of that historic endeavour.

The OIC unequivocally reaffirms that resolving the Palestinian question, in conformity with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions and on the basis of the two-State solution, within the pre-1967 lines, remains the only viable path to achieving a just, comprehensive and lasting peace and stability in the region. Indeed, Israel's defiance of international law and resolutions is gravely undermining the prospects

to advance and realize the vision of two States, which requires urgent international action. Restoring hope, confidence and genuine progress on that path requires the Council to uphold its duties under the Charter of the United Nations and implement its resolutions, including resolution 2334 (2016), in order to reverse the negative trends and salvage the prospects for peace. Concrete efforts are needed to ensure the compliance of Israel, the occupying Power, with its obligations under international law, to end its illegal occupation and colonial settlement policy and relaunch a credible, multilaterally sponsored peace process, based on the relevant United Nations resolutions, in order to resolve all final status issues.

In conclusion, I reiterate the OIC's support for and solidarity with the Palestinian people in their just struggle to realize their inalienable rights, including their rights to return, self-determination and sovereignty in their independent State within the 4 June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with international law, United Nations resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative.

Let me now deliver a brief statement in my national capacity.

The President: I shall ask the representative of Bangladesh to be brief, as we have a long list of speakers, and we are already preying on the kindness of the interpreters.

Mr. Muhith (Bangladesh): I will do my best to make it brief.

I commend the presidency of the United Kingdom for its dynamic leadership of the work of the Council in July. I also thank Assistant Secretary-General Khaled Khiari for his comprehensive briefing.

It is sad and deeply worrisome that, in every quarterly open debate on Palestine, we have been raising concerns about new and escalated violence and attacks by the Israeli occupation forces in the occupied Palestinian territory. We strongly condemn the recent military aggression by Israel in the Jenin refugee camp, which killed 12 people, including four children. It is very unfortunate that, despite the series of resolutions and decisions by the United Nations, including in the Council, we have witnessed a gradual escalation of violence, attacks, the demolition of Palestinian homes and the forcible transfer of Palestinian civilians throughout the occupied Palestinian territory by Israel, as well as the continued blockade of the Gaza Strip.

Let me highlight a few points.

First, the Security Council's engagement on the Palestine question cannot be considered as a routine matter in the Council. We need concrete actions by the Council and the implementation of its resolutions, including resolution 2334 (2016).

Secondly, it is completely unacceptable that the activities of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) have been hampered by Israeli attacks. We regret that, even during the recent military aggression, a UNRWA health centre was destroyed. It is no longer a surprise that Israel has deliberately been targeting humanitarian assistance activities. We call for support for UNRWA so that it can continue its operations, without any hindrance until the end of the Israeli aggression.

Finally, we are deeply concerned about the psychological trauma that the Palestinian children face. We refer to UNRWA's comment that children are shaken and shocked. Moreover, many children have been illegally detained by Israel. In such a situation, it is urgent to provide mental and psychological support for the children.

Let me conclude by reiterating Bangladesh's unwavering and steadfast support for the inalienable right of the Palestinian brothers and sisters to a just and lasting solution to their legitimate aspirations through the establishment of an independent, viable and sovereign Palestinian State.

I have delivered an abridged version of my full statement, which I will make available.

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

Mr. Abd Karim (Malaysia): Malaysia thanks the United Kingdom for convening this important debate. Our appreciation also go to the Assistant Secretary-General for his insightful briefing.

Malaysia aligns itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

Malaysia is gravely concerned about the continued cycle of violence and the increase in assaults and destruction in the occupied Palestinian territory. Malaysia deplores the indiscriminate and forceful incursions into refugee camps in the West Bank, which

have also damaged United Nations schools and health facilities. We are, as always, dismayed by the deaths of innocent civilians, including women and children. The Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, of which Malaysia is a member, has reported that the number of Palestinians in the occupied West Bank killed by Israeli forces in the first five months of 2023 was more than double that of the same period in 2022. Clearly, this year will be an even more catastrophic year for Palestinians, which will be further aggravated by forced evictions, home demolitions and forcible transfers in the expansion of illegal settlements, which is a clear violation of international law.

The lack of accountability for the crimes perpetrated by Israel undermines the legitimacy of international law and efforts towards a viable two-State solution. The impunity enjoyed by Israel has emboldened it to continue with its systematic oppression of the Palestinian people through discriminatory policies akin to apartheid. To this day, the Security Council has failed to compel Israel to implement all relevant United Nations resolutions, including resolution 2334 (2016). Malaysia calls on the Security Council to fulfil its duty as the guardian of international peace and security, to stop applying double standards when it comes to Israel and to end the injustices against the Palestinian people. In line with General Assembly resolution 77/247, Malaysia welcomes the call to request an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice. Malaysia believes that the Court will provide an independent and impartial opinion on the illegal settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories. Malaysia urges Member States to contribute on a consistent and predictable basis to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East to ensure that the basic needs of Palestinian refugees continue to be met.

Lastly, Malaysia will always stand with the people of Palestine in their struggle for self-determination. We maintain our support for the two-State solution, based on the pre-1967 borders and an independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as the capital. We believe that that is achievable if the Security Council exerts all efforts to ensure its full implementation.

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

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): Pakistan commends the United Kingdom presidency for convening this timely debate on the Middle East, including the Palestinian question.

Pakistan condemns in the strongest possible terms the recent raids, air strikes and large-scale military operations carried out by the Israeli occupation forces in Jenin, in the occupied Palestinian West Bank. They resulted in scores of civilian casualties and the destruction of significant civilian infrastructure.

Unfortunately, the killing of children, women and men continues in occupied Palestine with complete impunity. On 5 July, three Special Rapporteurs of the Human Rights Council stated that:

“Israeli air strikes and ground operations in the occupied West Bank targeting the Jenin refugee camp and killing at least 12 Palestinians may *prima facie* constitute a war crime”.

The United Nations Special Rapporteurs emphasized that these attacks had:

“no justification under international law. The impunity that Israel has enjoyed for its acts of violence over decades only fuels and intensifies the recurring cycle of violence”.

The Special Rapporteurs called for “Israel to be held accountable under international law for its illegal occupation and violent acts to perpetuate it”.

International law also unequivocally restricts Israel, the occupying Power, from seizing land and building settlements in the occupied territories, including East Jerusalem. Security Council resolutions 476 (1980), 478 (1980) and 2334 (2016), *inter alia*, prohibit Israel from altering the demographic composition of the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967. The continuing expansion of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories, the expulsion and evictions of Palestinians from their properties, and the changes to the demographic structure, historical and legal status and character of Al-Quds Al-Sharif are patently illegal and grave violations of Security Council resolutions and international law, including international humanitarian law.

The rule of law can be upheld only if it is applied universally and consistently, without exceptions or double standards. It is time that Israel was held accountable for its grave human rights violations and

crimes in occupied Palestine. Given the *erga omnes* character of the right of self-determination, it is also incumbent upon all States, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and international law, to ensure that any impediment to the exercise of the right to self-determination by the Palestinian people is immediately eliminated.

It is most regrettable that the Security Council has been unable to exercise its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security in occupied Palestine. We urge the Council to fully and forcefully implement its own resolutions on the question of Palestine. The international community cannot accept the fait accompli Israel is seeking to impose with the design of perpetuating its forcible occupation and destroying Palestinian nationhood. There will be no durable peace in the Holy Land until the creation of an independent, viable and contiguous State of Palestine, established on the basis of the pre-1967 borders, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Iravani (Islamic Republic of Iran): The situation in the occupied Palestinian territories remains a pressing and deeply concerning matter that requires immediate attention and action from the international community. The Israeli regime's violence and gross and systemic violation of human rights against the Palestinian people continue unabated. As documented in United Nations reports, innocent lives, including those of women and children, are being tragically lost owing to Israeli ongoing violence. Additionally, the seizure, demolition and forced eviction of Palestinian homes continue to exacerbate the already dire situation. The recent escalation of Israeli aggression is of particular concern, as illustrated by the attack on the Jenin refugee camp. That aggressive action resulted in the loss of civilian lives, including those of women and children, and the destruction of vital civilian infrastructure.

United Nations agencies' reports provide a heartbreaking depiction of the situation in the Jenin camp, highlighting the widespread destruction and its profound impact on the traumatized population. Furthermore, the intensification of Israeli military raids, arrests and destruction in the West Bank, along with the violence and terror from extremist Israeli settlers, has compounded the already dire humanitarian situation for Palestinians. The constant

state of aggression not only infringes on their basic human rights but also obstructs their access to essential services and hinders their economic development. Meanwhile, as a collective punishment against its population, the continued blockade of Gaza is a clear expression of a war crime and a crime against humanity. It is regrettable that the Security Council has remained silent, rendering United Nations resolutions ineffective and leaving the Palestinian people to endure ongoing atrocities. The lack of accountability has emboldened and even encouraged this despicable regime to continue violating United Nations resolutions, including those adopted by the Security Council.

Sympathy alone is no longer enough. The Security Council must take responsibility for enforcing its resolutions, act decisively to end the occupation and ensure Palestinian rights are protected. The Islamic Republic of Iran remains steadfast in its belief that the conflict in Palestine can only be resolved through ending the occupation and recognizing the inalienable rights to self-determination of the Palestinian people. This requires the full restoration and protection of these rights, leading to the establishment of Palestinian sovereignty over the entirety of Palestine. However, such a resolution cannot be achieved if the Security Council fails to act.

Iran regards it as its duty to support Palestine's legitimate rights to resist the oppression and aggression of that apartheid regime, in line with the right to self-determination, and that will be our principled policy until the occupation ends.

In conclusion, it is regrettable to witness the representative of the Israeli regime abusing this chamber once again to make baseless claims and spout falsehoods against my country. We categorically reject those unfounded claims. Such assertions are not surprising, as fabrications and lies have been tools used recurrently by the regime. Nevertheless, it is evident that the purpose behind those unfounded claims is to divert attention from the urgent matter at hand on today's agenda — the appalling atrocity crimes perpetrated by the apartheid regime against the Palestinian people. Therefore, we are opting not to respond to those false accusations, because they do not merit the attention or credibility that they seek.

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

Mr. Hilale (Morocco) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to commend the efforts of the United Kingdom in leading the work of the Security Council during the month of July. I also thank Mr. Khaled Khiari, Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific, for his valuable briefing.

The Kingdom of Morocco and its King, His Majesty Mohammed VI, chairman of the Al-Quds Committee of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, attach utmost importance to the Palestinian question, attesting to our conviction that the Palestinian question is the central issue of the Middle East. We reiterate that position at every opportunity, based on our belief that the stability and prosperity of the region are closely dependent on finding a just and lasting solution to that question, based on the two-State solution and in line with international law and the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Moreover, the Kingdom of Morocco reaffirms its steadfast and clear stance that the Palestinian question is a just one, and rejects any attempt to undermine the Palestinian people's legitimate rights, foremost among which is the right to establish a viable, sovereign Palestinian State within the June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side with the State of Israel in security, stability and peace. The Kingdom of Morocco also stresses the need to avoid any action that could provoke tensions in the region.

His Majesty King Mohammed VI, in his capacity as Chair of the Al-Quds Committee, has been closely monitoring with interest all the developments related to the Palestinian question and emphasizes the need to preserve the legal, religious and historical status of the city of Jerusalem as a common heritage of humankind and of the peaceful coexistence of the followers of the three monotheistic religions. It is a centre for dialogue and mutual respect, as was explicitly set out in the Al-Quds appeal signed by His Majesty and His Holiness Pope Francis in Rabat on 30 March 2019. The Kingdom of Morocco has repeatedly called for ending all measures that undermine the legal and historical status of the holy city.

The Al-Quds Committee is playing its political and practical role in supporting the Palestinian people in general and the residents of Jerusalem in particular,

bringing together the political endeavours of His Majesty King Mohammed VI and the work on the ground undertaken by the Bayt Mal Al-Quds Al-Sharif Agency under the personal supervision of His Majesty King Mohammed VI. The Bayt Mal Agency continues its initiatives and operations on the ground, under the aegis of the Al-Quds Committee, to improve the social and economic conditions of Al-Quds residents and to provide the necessary financing as part of an annual plan, which is governed by mechanisms to provide resources as part of a joint approach with the residents of Al-Quds city and institutions. The Kingdom of Morocco finances more than 86 per cent of that Agency's budget.

The Kingdom of Morocco is firmly committed to the choice of peace — a peace rooted in dialogue and negotiations — as the only way to reach a definitive settlement to the Palestinian question. In that regard, we underscore that negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians remain the only way to reach a lasting and permanent solution to that conflict.

In conclusion, I wish to recall the content of the letter from His Majesty King Mohammed VI to the Chair of the Committee of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People on 29 November 2022.

“The current deadlock in the political process between the Palestinian and Israeli sides does not promote the peace we are yearning for in the region. Nevertheless, we encourage the positive signs and commendable initiatives undertaken to rebuild confidence and launch meaningful negotiations that help achieve a just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the Palestinian question, in accordance with resolutions of international legitimacy and the two-State solution, which is a realistic option.”

The President: There are still a number of speakers remaining on the list for this meeting. Given the lateness of the hour, I intend, with the concurrence of the members of the Council, to suspend the meeting until 3 p.m.

The meeting was suspended at 1.10 p.m.